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A Translation Including History: Ezra Pound, Paul Celan, and the Rhythms of the Past

Author
Gerard, Philip

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By

Philip Gerard

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Committee in charge:

Professor Judith Butler, Chair
Professor C. D. Blanton
Professor Niklaus Largier
Professor Anne-Lise François

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Abstract

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A Translation Including History tells two interconnected stories: one about how, after the catastrophic ruptures of the first half of the twentieth century, European poetry reckons with its own belatedness through practices of translation, and one about the world market for which that poetry was itself translated. Concentrating on two of the century's central poetic thinkers, I argue that Ezra Pound's vision of a "poem including history" uses modernist aesthetics to rethread lines of historical transmission and linguistic transfer broken by war and commerce, but that Paul Celan, returning to this problem after Auschwitz, shows how the translation of international modernism into post-War German, far from making it possible to include history, in fact contributes to its disavowal. Drawing on Celan's own poems and translations, I argue that remembering Auschwitz requires translation, not because translation makes this history newly available but because, in translation, we confront the loss of the language that might satisfy the desire for restitution.

Argumentatively, the first story about transmission and the second story about markets trace two different axes that, together, open up a space for plotting Pound and Celan's poetics in their obvious differences and surprising points of encounter. On the question of transmission, Pound and Celan represent opposing formal principles and incompatible historical horizons. This contrast is most acute in the different function that rhythm performs in each of their poetics. For Pound, rhythm produces and even guarantees transmission, making the forms of memory and historical curation that impel the *Cantos* not only possible but necessary. For Celan, rhythm is just the opposite: it disarticulates rather than articulates continuities, revokes rather than instates transmission. This contrast exceeds the bounds of poetic form *per se*: it corresponds not only to a divergence in historical attitude—an insistence on the caesura introduced by the genocide in Celan's

case; a political blindness and incapacity to acknowledge loss in Pound's—but also to a starkly differing sense of European poetry's cultural field in the wake of the world wars.

For both poets, that field is inevitably shaped by the incipient fact of the world market, forming a second major axis of opposition, turning explicitly on the problem of translation. Both Pound and Celan pit their practices of translation against the principle of equivalence "decreed," as Pound famously remarked, "in the market place." For his part, Pound assails this form of exchange for its lack of relation to the true ground of value, a base or bass that the rhyming glosses and facing-page translations of the *Cantos* seek to make accessible once again. Like Pound, Celan rejects the version of world literature offered by the market, but, unlike Pound, he also rejects the idea that translation can recover the value that the market distorts. Indeed, from Celan's perspective, the *Cantos* do not represent an actual alternative to the market; on the contrary, Pound's dizzying exchanges of Chinese and Italian, Greek and Provençal, supply the world literary market with a useful precedent for its transactions. The parallels that exist between the form of the *Cantos* and the logic of the market place help explain why Pound circulated through the post-War German literary field—and through the hands of some of Celan's fiercest antagonists—not as a critic of the literary establishment but, ironically, as an underwriter of its valuations. As I show, Pound's brand of modernism was uniquely marketable in post-War Germany: his distinction between translations of *virtù* and the vices of literary usury, between exact value and distorted value, was a rhetorical template with which post-War writers and critics could distance themselves from literature's ideological appropriation by the Third Reich. Celan saw what a valuable import Pound was and what an ominous legacy he represented. Given the suspicions he harbored about Pound's reception, it is all the more surprising that it was exactly the critique of "usura" that Celan persistently took up, turning Pound's rhetoric not only against the German market but also against the anti-Semitic stereotypes in which Pound and his German heirs trafficked. Paradoxically, I suggest, Celan both rejects and intensifies Pound's polemic. His reception of Pound turns usury's master tropes on their heads, laying the groundwork for what amounts to a pointedly *Jewish* critique of usury and the market.

A Translation Including History threads these two argumentative axes through five interconnected chapters. The first two chapters introduce the problem of historical transmission by tracing the stages of Pound's engagement with the medieval Italian poet, Guido Cavalcanti. These two chapters follow Pound's translations of Cavalcanti from Pound's early *Sonnets and Ballate* (1912), through his Futurist "Donna mi prega" (1928) and aborted *Complete Works* ("pieced back together from the ruins" in 1932), before finally addressing Cavalcanti's anachronistic appearance in Pound's 1940 translation of a Qing-Dynasty preface to the *Book of Songs*. The first chapter, "The Rhythms of a Poem Including History," explains the theoretical genesis and clarifies the historical stakes of this surprising series of translations. By analyzing the evolution of Pound's obsession with Cavalcanti, it shows how Pound's philological training and his innovative theory of musical rhythm combine to produce the idiosyncratic version of tradition that is instantiated by the *Cantos*.

My second chapter, "Perpetuale effetto," zooms in on the form of the *Cantos* to discuss the relationship between poetry and ideology in Pound's use of rhythm. I take an example from the China Cantos to show how Pound's poem splices a wide variety of linguistic and cultural codes—ranging from ancient Chinese folksong and medieval Arab philosophy to early Italian lyric and Jesuit diplomacy—into a poetic rhythm that "keeps time" with Mussolini's 1922 March on Rome. I then argue that the Fascist Calendar, which begins with this march, allows Pound to "*keep* time" in another sense, providing an ideological matrix with which Pound can redeem as a politics the losses that he would otherwise be forced to mourn.

My third chapter, "Über Wuchern: Usury in Translation," transitions from Pound to Celan and addresses, through the importation of Pound's notion of "usura" into the post-War German

literary field, the tension between poetry and the market. It examines not only Celan's critique of Pound but also his critique of the cosmopolite, post-War generation of German writers who, by resurrecting the poetics of early modernists like Pound, circumvented the intervening history and evaded the task of confronting the genocide. Against Pound's example, I show how the rhythms of Celan's poetry allow this history to reverberate in the present without the pretense of redeeming what was destroyed.

The fourth chapter "Commonplace, Common Grave" brings my analysis of the rhythms of Celan's poetry to a discussion of Celan's relationship to the German language. I begin with George Steiner's provocative claim that "[a]ll of Celan's own poetry is translated *into* German" and proceed to defend this description even while taking issue with certain parts of Steiner's reasoning. Working from the personal notebooks, correspondence, as well as Celan's major poetic statement, the *Meridian*, I position Celan's use of German in relation to contemporary conceptions of linguistic transfer and literary tradition with which he was all too familiar. I find foils for Celan's understanding of language and literature in a variety of sources, ranging from the notorious 1953 open letter in which Claire Goll claimed Celan's German was an unacknowledged translation of her husband's French, to the theory of a pan-European literary tradition put forward in Ernst Robert Curtius's *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1948), to the so-called "world language of modern poetry" heralded in Hans Magnus Enzensberger's anthology of international modernism, *Museum of Modern Poetry* (1960). Steiner's statement allows us to measure Celan's break with all of these contemporaries and points to how his language bears witness to the history of destruction that cleaves the shared ground of the common tongue, the common market, and the common literature.

"Testament of translation," the final chapter of *A Poem Including Translation*, moves from the place of translation within Celan's own poetry to Celan's translations of other poets. I focus on Celan's 1964 translation of Shakespeare's sonnet 4 to show how Celan uses the translation of other poems as an occasion to mark a definitive rupture in transmission. Sonnet 4 is a particularly telling instance of this breakage, since, as I show, the problem of 'translating' "beauty's legacy" is Shakespeare's declared subject. Rejecting the inheritance of previous German translations as well as the legacy executed by the sonnet's speaker, Celan's version dismantles Shakespeare's tropes of transmission and promises of an afterlife, retaining nothing but a dead letter, a testament to translation. This testament, as I show in the dissertation's final turn, is ultimately inseparable from the self-conscious assumption of afterwardness that Celan calls "Nachsprechen," a "speaking after" in which the problem of translation enters into poetry's very definition and form.

For
V. G. A. S. B.

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P.G.

It can't be all in one language
-Ezra Pound, Canto LXXXVI

An die Zweisprachigkeit in der Dichtung glaube ich nicht.
[I don't believe in bilingualism in poetry.]
-Paul Celan, *Antwort auf eine Umfrage der Librarie Flinker*

Introduction

I. Speaking after

This thesis began as an inquiry into the place of translation in the work of two central, twentieth-century poets. Carried by the rhythms of its materials, however, it ended as a comment on the possibility of European poetry after the historical catastrophe of the first half of the twentieth century and the way poetic language assumes—or refuses to assume—its own "afterwardness." This trajectory from translation to the poem, and from a more regional argument about translation to a more maximal one about "European poetry" was not an entirely welcome one. Thinking back to older uses of "barbaric" (from *βάρβαρος*, not Greek, not the Greek *language*),[1] I had hoped that my focus on practices of translation would introduce some nuance into the dialectical opposition of culture and barbarism blocked out in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and provide a perspective from which I could translate afresh that dialectic's seemingly "terminal" formulation—its *sogenannte* "letzte[] Stufe": "to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric."[2] That this did not happen, and that I returned to Adorno after all, was a personal surprise, though one perhaps without a larger significance. What is remarkable and meriting further reflection is that the poet I selected to deliver me from Adorno's dialectic was precisely the one whose rhythms propelled me most forcefully into it. After years of reading Paul Celan and little else, it was only upon studying Ezra Pound that I began to grasp what was no longer possible for Celan and to understand the necessity of accompanying modern poetry beyond its terminal stage and into its afterlife.

It is not apparent what translation has to do with this poetry after poetry. If anything, the received wisdom that Celan's German is untranslatable, and the related claim that this untranslatability is necessary to guard the memory of the victims of the Nazi genocide, suggests the opposite: that "translation" is precisely not the term we need. While sympathizing with the intentions of those who thus insist on Celan's untranslatability, I have always suspected that the untranslatability thesis[3] was a way of guarding ourselves from the loss that traverses Celan's German,

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[1] *OED Online*, s.v. "barbaric," accessed August 1, 2019. For more on this etymology, see Barbara Cassin's discussion in *Éloge de la traduction*, 32–38.

[2] Adorno, *Prismen*, 30.

[3] "I believe that these poems are in a strict sense untranslatable (*intraduisibles*), including within their own language (*à l'intérieur de leur propre langue*), and for this reason also uncommentable (*incommentables*). They *necessarily* withdraw themselves (*se dérobent*) from interpretation; they forbid it. They are written, in final analysis, to forbid it." What is so striking about Philppe Lacoue-Labarthe's belief here is how it reprises another famous statement about poetry's untranslatability: "You've often heard me say—perhaps too often—that poetry is what is lost in translation. It is also what is lost in interpretation." That Robert Frost should note how his own statement suffered under its excessive repetition invites us to consider whether Lacoue-Labarthe's reading of Celan has fully broken with the tropes of post-

an idiom that "originates" in the forced coincidence of (at least) two tongues: "die Muttersprache" and "die Mördersprache," the language of Celan's mother and the language of her murderers.[4] In his polylingual childhood home, German was the language Celan received from his mother and yet its status as a familial and cultural legacy is indissociable from the circumstances of her murder by the SS. The intersection of that legacy and that memory meant that the language he inherited from his mother was available to him as a poet only in the mode of something that had been lost. I have always thought that Celan's effort to assume this loss in his own poetry is also what made him such an important translator of other poets' work—even and perhaps especially when the confrontation of that loss carries his texts into silence. Such silence, of course, is not the same as untranslatability. On the contrary, it is one of the ways these poems mark their own afterwardness.

But afterwardness, belatedness, mourning—none of these issues are new to European poetry, and in fact might be among its oldest preoccupations. This is why Pound is such an instructive interlocutor for those interested in understanding the rupture that Celan's poetry insists upon. Pound too begins from a recognition of his own belatedness. Indeed, among his fellow modernists, Pound's is perhaps an especially acute sense of loss: the aubade, for him, arrived 800 years in the past, in twelfth-century Provence, and its dawn only persisted as a phantom twilight. What is special about Pound is that his project for *Cantos* aimed to turn the condition of its own impossibility into the condition of its newfound possibility, a chance to "make it new." Pound's is an epic written in a time and place when epic was said to be no longer possible.[5] Pound hoped to reverse this judgment: in his poem, the very modernity that had destroyed epic's historical basis would, in the form of displacements, amalgams, citations, and translations, become the means of its excavation—a "Kulchur" hammered loose by Pound's jolting rhythms and sustained in his poem's bass. From the outset, then, the point was precisely to disarticulate chronology and syncopate the date line—to show, as Pound once said, that "many dead men are our grandchildren's contemporaries."[6] Where individual lives were blasted to pieces a palimpsest would take shape, an "immortal passage" for a vital continuity: "*our* life."

In this context, the dialogue with Robert Browning that opens the early version of canto I is highly significant. Pound begins by pointing out an anachronism in Browning's representation of the troubadour poet Sordello, only to turn this obvious indicator of historical dislocation into evidence of a transmission that transgresses the boundaries of Sordello's life and Browning's life, Sordello's work and Browning's work, Sordello's time and Browning's time:

> …half your dates are out, you mix your eras;
> For that great font Sordello sat beside–
> 'Tis an immortal passage, but the font?–
> Is some two centuries outside the picture.
> Does it matter?
> Not in the least. Ghosts move about me
> Patched with histories. You had your business:
> To set out so much thought, so much emotion;
> To paint, more real than any dead Sordello,

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romantic poetry. See Lacoue-Labarthe, *La poésie comme expérience*, 23. For Frost's statement as cited by his friend Louis Untermeyer, see Untermeyer, *Robert Frost: A Backward Look*, 18.

[4] Buck, *Muttersprache, Mördersprache.*

[5] Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*. On the relationship between Pound's epic and Lukács' theorization, see Blanton, *Epic Negation*, esp. 4-9.

[6] Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, 6.

The half or third of your intensest life
And call that third Sordello;
And you'll say, "No, not your life,
He never showed himself."
Is't worth the evasion, what were the use
Of setting figures up and breathing life upon them
Were't not *our* life, your life, my life, extended?
I walk Verona. (I am here in England.)
I see Can Grande. (Can see whom you will.)
You had one whole man?
And I have many fragments, less worth? Less worth?[7]

What distinguishes the *Cantos* from earlier expressions of romantic nostalgia, and what perhaps distinguishes *these* lines from the final version of canto I, is the repudiation of inwardness and, more generally, the retreat of the poetic subject so that the poem's "rag-bag" of citations, translations, and personae can rush to the fore. This is how Pound overcomes afterwardness as well as his solution to the question, *whose* life? With no "me" about which to move—or when this center discloses itself as just another shade—then the "souls out of Erebus" are simply ghosts on the loose.

And this eruption of the "before" into the "after" without a strong subject to enforce the boundary is quite literally how Pound's epic journey begins. This is Poundian "translation" in one of its most undiluted expressions—all the more so since it is not readily legible as translation. Canto I of course recounts the trip to the underworld of *Odyssey* XI, where Odysseus consults with the seer Tiresias about his future journey. Rather than return to the Greek. Pound translates from a sixteenth-century Latin crib purchased, as Pound recalls, on the Paris quay "in the year of grace 1906, 1908, or 1910."[8] The canto includes this history of transmission in its exposition by interpellating the author of this translation—a certain Andreas Divus—into the necromantic rite, busting through the diegesis with a reference many centuries "outside the picture." Unlike Odysseus who mixes a blood libation to make the dead speak, the "magic moment" of Pound's canto lies in the rhyme Pound produces between Tiresias—the "god-like" seer within the frame—and Divus—the humanist with the "god-like" name outside it. Odysseus's conjuring of Tiresius with blood repeats itself in Divus conjuring Homer in Latin and then in Pound's translation of Divus. As these discrete literary, linguistic, and historical frames crash into and out of one another, it becomes clear that the *Nekuia* or journey to the underworld is not merely an episode to be translated; it has been transposed into the form of the canto itself. Pound resurrects it not as the object of translation but as a rhythm of translation, a "perpetual effect," aggressively syncopated, that rebounds "*out* of Homer," *out* of Divus, and onward onto us:

Lie quiet Divus. I mean, that is Andreas Divus,
In officini Wecheli, 1538, out of Homer.
And he sailed, by Sirens and thence outward and away
(Canto I, 5)

Such verses carry us far indeed from the historical conditions of Celan's poetry—to translate us away from those conditions is, in a certain sense, their expressed aim. Nonetheless, the infallibility

[7] Pound, *Personæ*, 229–30.
[8] Pound, *Literary Essays*, 259.

of transmission for Pound, like the absoluteness of what he calls "absolute rhythm," comes with an important footnote. The ostentatious presence of the bibliographic reference in the main body of the text quoted above ("…Andreas Divus/ in officini Wecheli, 1538") should remind us that, as a rule, the *Cantos* traffics neither in timeless archetypes nor arcane meanings, but—with a concreteness as radical as it is misplaced—in the materiality of *texts*. Tracing many of the *Cantos*' references back to the particular libraries and specific manuscripts from which Pound pulled them, Lawrence Rainey has demonstrated how the *Cantos* continually reflects on the sociomaterial conditions of the historical transmission it enacts.[9] But Pound's materialism is an uncanny one, an unstable amalgam of neoplatonic love and Aristotelian immanence in which inscriptions—and the inscriptions of poetry above all—retain traces of the objects and events that produced them. The *Cantos* is an enormous repository of these inscriptions, carefully cross-referenced by Pound. Pound curates these material traces like the memory of a past love, "breathing life upon them"—pouring "dark blood […] in the fosse" (Canto I, 3)—so that, its luminous detail reignited, the lost object charges back into the present.

Very little has been written on Pound and Celan together. Of the two partway compelling treatments that I have found, one focuses explicitly on how each poet approaches the materiality of such traces. Building on Jacques Derrida's pun on the commonplace "learning by heart" as a dream of a poem whose ideality collapses into the trace its letter leaves on the body,[10] Jean-Michel Rabaté lists both Pound and Celan as part of a shared post-Romantic tradition whose progression "maps out something like an ideogram of poetry."[11] Within this constellation, Rabaté—or Rabaté's English translator Gwendolyn Wells—continues, "poetry […] would have the task of giving something to someone in particular; the gift would begin with idioms that strike readers forcibly with their irreducible and untranslatable abundance."[12] The *Cantos* certainly aspires to be the gift of that givenness, its famous verse "it can't be all in one language" (Canto LXXXVI, 563) not a rueful admission of "it[s]" unavailability but a condition of "its" transmissibility, a paean to idiomatic difference as the ground of the poetically singular. Before making this argument about the *Cantos*, however, Rabaté recounts a memory from his school days in Paris when his German teacher, Paul Celan was tasked with transmitting to him and his classmates the "irreducible and untranslatable abundance" of German poetic language:

> In this context, I still remember how Paul Celan, who tried to teach me and my fellow students how to read German poems in 1969, thus introducing us to beacons of German literature, would interrupt the tedium of word-for-word translation and launch into amazing riffs on individual words. In these frenzied extemporizations, he gave the impression of having memorized entire dictionaries; we were awed by the display of a hubristic wish to record the most varied dialects of French, German, and Romanian. What mattered for him

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[9] Rainey, *Ezra Pound and the Monument of Culture*.
[10] Derrida, "Che Cos'è La Poesia?"
[11] Rabaté, "Sagetrieb," 133. "Ideogram of poetry" is an open allusion to Ernst Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, which Pound edited and had published in 1919. A text of wide-ranging influence on twentieth-century poetry (a version exists in Celan's own library in Eva Hesse's 1956 translation), Fenollosa's essay is the closest Pound comes to an "Ars Poetica," Working from a faulty understanding of the Chinese language, The Chinese Written Character makes the case for a new poetics grounded in the direct presentation and sharp juxtaposition of experienced particulars. With no dull abstractions to dull the image, "a language written in this way," Pound insisted, "simply HAD TO STAY POETIC." Pound, *ABC of Reading*, 22.
[12] Rabaté, "Sagetrieb," 133.

> […] was to plunge whole into semantic seas, to sound the depths of linguistic oceans and the groundswells of pronunciation shifts.[13]

This is not the image of the reticent, intractable, wounded sensibility that, for better and worse, we normally associate with Celan.[14] As Rabaté knows: the text interrupts itself precisely at the moment when it specifies "what mattered" for Celan. "Alas," Rabaté confesses in parentheses, "we never dared ask whether this had something to do with his poetry, ignorant of it as we were."[15]

The tension between Celan's task as a transmitter of the "beacons of German literature" to students like Rabaté and the historical burden of his poetry, which registers the tempering of that luminosity once it passed through the "thousand darknesses of death-bringing speech" is crucial to the difference between Pound and Celan's poetics. In a word, the *Cantos'* "philological nekuia" contains all the light and none of the darkness: not *ad plures ire* but *resplende in sé perpetuale effetto*.[16] So much of Pound's verse shares in the "frenzied extemporizations" that Rabaté remembers: it cuts the mooring lines of word-for-word translation and points itself away from shore, "set[ing] keel to breakers" (Canto I, 3) and "plung[ing] whole into semantic seas." As Rabaté's anecdote reminds us, it is not that Celan was entirely insensitive to such expansive flights; it is rather that Celan's poetry attends to the histories of refused identification, miscommunication, and violence ("Call the shibboleth, call it out"!)[17] that such linguistic expanses traverse. It is only one of the ironies of this story that Celan's profession asked him introduce students to the "beacons" of a literature whose landscape was divided by lethal boundaries—both visible curtains and invisible faults—and whose seas were full of wrecks.

Celan's historical experience as an exile is important here. Celan was born in Czernowitz in 1920, at a time when this city, and the Habsburg province of Bucovina of which it was the historical capital, was a vibrant center German-Jewish life. Punning on the Bucovina's German toponym (*Buchenland*: "land of beech trees"/"land of books"), Celan famously observed how this Eastern European hub of German literary culture, where humans and books lived, had fallen prey to "Geschichtslosigkeit" (to "historylessness" but also to "storylessness").[18] With the murder and exile of the region's large German-speaking Jewish community by the Third Reich, German storytelling in Buchenland had been cut off, the lived cohabitation of books and people reduced to scattered traces and ash.[19] Celan barely escaped this destruction that engulfed both his mother and father. He traveled west, to Paris and away from the German-speaking world. Survival in exile meant 'making a living' as a teacher of German, transmitting the language and literature from which he was so violently severed to a Francophone audience that mostly didn't know the difference.

Mostly. Celan had to remind his Parisian friends and colleagues of the gulf that separated him from his mother language. As he once said to Yves Bonnefoy: "vous êtes chez vous, dans votre langue, vos références, parmis les livres que vous aimez. Moi, je suis dehors…" (*You are at home, in*

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[13] Rabaté, 133.
[14] An image of Celan transmitted in the works of Derrida and others. Cf. Derrida and Grossman, "La langue n'appartient pas: Entretien avec Evelyne Grossman," 82.
[15] Rabaté, "Sagetrieb," 133.
[16] On the philological descent into the underworld, see thesis 71 in Hamacher, *95 Thesen*, 74.
[17] "Ruf's, das Schibboleth, hinaus," from the poem "Schibboleth, in Michael Hamburger's translation. See *Poems of Paul Celan*, 67.
[18] Celan, "Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der freien Hansestadt Bremen," 185.
[19] On this history, see the essays collected in Andrei Corbea-Hoişie and Ion Lihaciu's volume *"Toposforschung (...) im Lichte Der U-Topie": Literarische Er-Örterungen in/aus MittelOsteuropa*. See also the memoir coauthored by Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, *Ghosts of Home: The Afterlife of Czernowitz in Jewish Memory*.

your language, your references, among the books that you love. Me, I am outside…).[20] Although German poems, his own or those of others, were quite literally "gifts" that he passed on to readers and students, they were what he called "Schicksal mitführende Geschenke"—*gifts carrying fate along with them*.[21] This "fate" is different from the history of Pound's "poem including history" and by no means the more "mythological" of the two. If Pound gives the gift of ideograms that strike his readers "forcibly with their irreducible and untranslatable abundance," Celan performs a similar gesture, albeit with the exact opposite effect. The positive "givenness of language" is upended. "Direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective"[22]—one of Imagism's great hauls—is translated into a poetic practice that "keep[s] the yes and no unsplit."[23] Abundance becomes destitution such that the "shade" (*der Schatten*) the poem speaks, far from grounding its idiom, ungrounds it abysmally. One of Rabaté's fellow students from the *École normale supérieure* has been particularly attentive to the ambivalence of this gift. Parodying the portentous enjambments of Ernst Meister, Jean Pierre Lefebvre has recalled,

er war unser
Deutsch-
lehrer.[24]

Broken this way, "Deutschlehrer" (*German teacher*) puns on the homophony between "lehren" and "leeren." Paradoxically, those who have received sufficient German to catch the joke will hear how, in this context, the gift of language is also the gift of its loss.

he was our
German
emptier.

A legatee of German and French, today Jean Pierre Lefebvre is Celan's foremost French translator.

Yes/no, full/empty, plus/minus, original/translation: as foundational as such binaries seem, there is nonetheless a limit to how far they can take us in naming the afterwardness at stake here. Celan's shade indeed speaks truly when, in Michael Hamburger's translation, it counsels us to keep such opposing pairs "unsplit." Even Pound's ghosts, "strong with blood" though they may be, do not answer to such an accounting. Such oppositions, after all, hypothesize a full-bodied, full-blooded original, of which the translation—partial, transfused, and resuscitated—would be the anemic afterlife. But this is precisely the received wisdom that Pound contested: not only did foreign blood already flow through the "original" but, as Pound already put it in 1913, "the history of English poetic glory is a history of successful steals from the French."[25] What elevates the language of the tribe is the luminous trace of another's tongue. Pound also said, "one might as well say that there never were any English poets until they began to study the French." Such statements should not be read simply as provocations. They make translation integral to poetry's form and definition such that, as Pound might say, English poetry is the repetition of French poetry "learned by heart."

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[20] Bonnefoy, "Paul Celan," 306.
[21] Celan, "Brief an Hans Bender," 178.
[22] Pound, *Literary Essays*, 3.
[23] "Sprich – / Doch scheide das Nein nicht vom Ja.": from "Sprich auch du" in Hamburger's translation. See Celan, *Poems of Paul Celan*, 69.
[24] Lefebvre, "Paul Celan – Unser Deutschlehrer."
[25] "The Approach to Paris" in *Ezra Pound's Poetry and Prose*, I:154.

According to Rabaté's "ideogram of poetry," the "poetic dream is that of a writing that is unique and singular, and nonetheless repeatable because it is already the repetition of a repetition, inscribed on the body itself, within the body's most intimate aspect, the heart. In this sense, poetry would separate itself from a certain ideality proper to 'literature.'" In this dream, dreamt in common by Pound, Celan, Derrida, and others, poetry would not be the incarnation of a prior ideality; it would be the recurrent motion of localized translation that propels an inscription across time and idiom. Such translations would not substitute for the original poem but realize the down beats of a prosody rebounding through the original and beyond it, out of Homer, out of Divus, "outward"—*aus-wendig*—"and away." In this dream, as Rabaté explains, "poetry would be less literature than rhythm and event, the dictation of a rush of literality." To illustrate this point, Wells, Rabaté's English translator, in "a rush of literality," transcribes a typo in Peggy Kamuf's English translation of Derrida's "Che cos'é la poésia?": "*Literally*, you would like to retain by heart an absolutely unique form, an event whose intangible singularity no longer separates the ideality, the ideal meaning as one says, from the body of the letter. In the desire of this absolute inseparation, the absolute nonabsolute, you breath [*sic*] the origin of the poetic."[26]

"To have gathered from the air a live tradition" (Canto LXXXI, 522): there is no doubt that Pound dreamed this dream until very late. It sustained him through the physical and psychological trials of captivity at the U.S. military prison camp near Pisa.[27] Confined to a six-by-six-foot outdoor steel cage and anticipating what he believed to be his imminent execution for treason, Pound addresses these intimate words to his "dear little one," perhaps his daughter, Mary:

> remember that I have remembered,
> mia pargoletta,
> and pass on the tradition
> (Canto LXXX, 526)

Celan too was familiar with this dream, though he was wary of its consolations.[28] Written in the weeks following Nazi Germany's surrender, at almost the same time Pound entered American custody (May 1945),[29] Celan's poem "Death Fugue" is an experience of waking up from this dream, choking. Celan's knowledge of the crematoria and the unbounded "grave in the air" (*Grab in der Luft*) forced him to hesitate over the conjugation of poetic "breathing."[30] The poetic ceases to be a "live tradition" summoned from a mouthful of air than something "agglomerating in its intervals,"[31] "a terrifying falling silent" (*ein furchtbares Verstummen*) whose punctuated rhythm that "takes away" (*verschlägt*) our "breath and words."[32] If poetry is, as Rabaté suggests, "rhythm and event," then the event that returns Pound's verse is the iterative origin of the poetic itself, the "live tradition" in its continued possibility. This is not, however, the event performatively reinstated in Celan's rhythms.

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[26] Rabaté, "Sagetrieb," 137–38. See also Derrida, "Che Cos'è La Poésia?," 229, 231.
[27] On the historical context of the Pisan sequence, see Richard Sieburth's helpful introduction in *The Pisan Cantos*.
[28] Celan's friend and fellow poet Jean Daive recalls Celan telling him that his lifelong engagement with the translation of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* "began" (*a commencé*) during his years as a forced laborer in Romanian work camps from 1941-1944. Daive, *Paul Celan: Les Jours et Les Nuits*, 65. See also Badiou, "Chronologie," in *Correspondance 1951-1970*, Vol. II : 470–72.
[29] See Barbara Wiedemann's commentary in Celan, *KG*, 606.
[30] "Todesfüge," Celan, 40–41.
[31] Cf. Celan's unsent letter to René Char from March 22, 1962 in Celan and Char, *Correspondance 1954-1968*, 152.
[32] Celan, *Der Meridian*, 7.

On the contrary, what returns in Celan's verse is the rupture that severs the poem from the dream of its transmission: a poetry not out of Homer but after Auschwitz.

II. Schibboleth … in the middle of the market.

Unlike Rabaté's essay, my interest in the dream that Pound and Celan share lies less in reconstructing "a particular itinerary through a postromantic tradition," and even less in the question with which Rabaté concludes, "can we, must we, forgive Pound?"[33] Instead, I argue that understanding Pound and Celan's different relationships to the dream allows us to situate their poetry historically in relation to the catastrophic events whose traces it bears, if with radically opposing degrees of consciousness and responsibility.

For this, however, I will have to introduce another axis of comparison, which, unlike their divergent interpretations of the poetic dream, actually brings Celan and Pound into an unexpected accord. This other axis is constituted by the world literary market and by its imposed formal idiom. The critique of the modern literary marketplace is an integral part of the "ideogram of poetry" discussed by Rabaté and it targets that value for which the dream of an "absolute inabsolute" has absolutely no use—namely the "ideality of the literary object." Such ideality abstracts poetry from the local movements of transmission and makes possible a kind of "literary production" and an accompanying market for literature. As John Guillory has argued, the market as a site of representation and exchange, is the historical condition for the emergence of an autonomous discourse of artistic value and a model of transmission opposed to a use of poetry that coincides with the unaccountable desire to learn it "by heart."[34] Both Pound and Celan take this distinction between literary exchange value and poetic use value quite far. For both, "literature" is a Medusa's head in that it petrifies the intimate rhythm of transmission, freezing the poem learned by heart into the token of an abstract value and thereby forcing, Midas-like, the poetic gift economy onto a gold standard. Punning on the commonplace that 'money speaks in a language all peoples understand,' Celan calls this "hard currency" the "language and responsibility weary lyric koine of our times."[35]

The "times" Celan's lyric koine refers to are the early 1960s, the high period of the Gruppe 47 and what Helmut Böttiger calls German literature's own "economic miracle" (*das Wirtschaftswunder der Literatur*).[36] Although "lyrisches Koine" is Celan's coinage, it self-consciously picks up and intensifies a particularly "Poundian" problematic about language and markets from several decades earlier. Pound's avant-gardism of the 'teens is inseparable from his contempt of contemporary "litterachur" whose spurious surplus lured writers away from "direct treatment of the thing either subjective or objective" and towards the equivalences decreed on the marketplace.[37] After the 1914-1918 war, Pound notoriously expanded this critique from the "world of letters" to the money-dominated and market-oriented Western world, which, in the persons of usurious bankers, oil magnates, and arms dealers, Pound blamed for the deaths of many friends and millions of others. *After* the war, the poetic dream of "welding word and thing" acquires an ever more sinister, political edge, growing all the more "totalitarian" with Pound's discovery of Fascism and the deepening of

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[33] Rabaté, "Sagetrieb," 141.
[34] Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, esp. 324-325.
[35] Celan, *The Meridian*, 170. The commonplace that 'money speaks a language that all peoples understand' is usually traced back to Alphra Behn's 1681 play, *The Rover*. See Shell, *Wampum and the Origins of American Money*, 5.
[36] Böttiger, "Eine lange Nacht über die Gruppe 47: Das Wirtschaftswunder der Literatur."
[37] Of the many missives sent in this spirit at this time, see Pound to Edgar Jepson, May 29, 1917 in *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, 112.

his economic obsessions.[38] And, at the heart of this "synthesis," as the mediator between Pound's poetics into his economics, stands *translation*. "Indefinite verbiage," bad translations—these form the literal precondition for the perfidious hegemony of market jargon like "price" and "demand," which as determinants of value, have supplanted indexes like "use." Predictably, the distortion goes back to the transmission of Aristotle, and Pound singles Harris Rackham's 1926 translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* as evidence of the complicity of financial abstractions and practices of translation:

> Yet again it makes an infinite difference whether you translate χρεία as *demand* or USE. Here the black curse of university obfuscation descends on Rackham. The man has met somewhere a university professor of economics or some work exuded from such licery. He falls into class-room jargon, he translates χρεία as demand.
> The value of a thing depends on USUS, its price may be distorted by its OPUS.[39]

Passages like this one take us close the core of Pound's understanding of the cultural heritage, its "obfuscation," and its potential excavation through a "rectification of the names." As Rabaté explains in his monograph on Pound, "it was enough to eliminate the *-ura* suffix from *usura* to find *usus* as the true basis of life." And, I will add, the true basis of translation.[40]

Today, the calamitous trajectory of Pound's disgrace, which takes him from Greek and Latin translation to Fascist collaboration, is well documented. As his intellectual fixations become more self-referential, the "clean lines" of Pound's beloved Tuscan aesthetic morph into a blueprint for Mussolini's "idea statale." The pre-war revolt against the distortions of literary value becomes an increasingly hysterical rant against the global tyranny of financial value. Then, in 1941, after war has broken out again, Pound offers his services to Radio Rome to convince his compatriots not to fight on the behalf of the international Jewish conspiracy. Pound's collaboration lands him in American custody and gives rise to *The Pisan Cantos*. Elegiac in tone, the new sequence casts a backward glance on all that went wrong. Although written from the perspective of "we who have passed over the Lethe" (Canto LXXIV, 469), Pound's meditations on loss only dig so deep. As Peter Nicholls has argued, Pound's refusal "to surrender either the empire or the temples/ plural" (Canto LXXIV/ 454) prevents his "poem including history" from (consciously) including its own history, fixing it as the statement of a modernism unrepentant of its collaborations with barbarism: "Here error is all in the not done,/ all in the diffidence that faltered …" (Canto LXXXI, 542).[41]

"Here," one could say, is where Pound after 1918 intersects with Celan after 1945, linking the two moments into the same historical circuit. *The Pisan Cantos* were translated into German by Eva Hesse in 1956 and a 1958 reprint of this translation appears in Celan's personal library with the date "August 1964."[42] The presence of *The Pisan Cantos* in German translation is a metonymy for the reconstruction of the German literary field after the war, which, in search of orientation, looked backward to an earlier generation of modernists whose publications had been banned by the Third Reich as well as outward to foreign literatures in translation. Pound checked both boxes, being at

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[38] On the "welding of word and thing," see Pound to Williams, September 11, 1920, in Pound and Williams, *Pound/Williams*, 38.
[39] Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, 324. "Opus" is usually translated as "labor" or "work," and can denote both that act of laboring or that act's product. See Charlton and Short, "Opus."
[40] Rabaté, *Language, Sexuality, and Ideology in Ezra Pound's Cantos*, 205; 229.
[41] Nicholls, "Lost Object(s): Ezra Pound and the Idea of Italy."
[42] Gallup, *Ezra Pound: A Bibliography*, 379.A catalogue of Celan's library is accessible at the Deutsche Literaturarchiv in Marbach, Germany: *Katalog Der Bibliothek Paul Celans in Vier Bänden*, IV:1096.

once a canonical figure of international modernism and a prolific translator who even wrote in Chinese. As Celan put it in a personal note from 1959, *The Pisan Cantos'* mixture of "τὸ καλον + a couple Chinese characters" was perfectly tailored to the market's demand ("das ist im Augenblicke das Richtige").[43] One year later, in 1960, Hans Magnus Enzensberger printed Eva Hesse's translation of canto LXV—the Usura canto—alongside Celan's translations of Osip Mandelstam and Robert Desnos in his important anthology *Museum of Modern Poetry*.[44] Enzensberger's *Museum* became a critical bestseller in the world of German-language poetry and implicitly positioned Pound—one of its most prolific exhibitors—as a primary representative of what the anthology's programmatic afterword called "the world language of modern poetry."[45] Collapsing Enzensberger's leftism into Pound's Fascist-Confucian synthesis, Celan described this "Weltsprache" as a poetic swindle, trafficked in "party- to Pound-Chinese":

> We have, amidst the general loss of language, a lyric Koinē which, multiplying by fission, brings a "chain" of lyric counterfeiters into the world. They converse with each other in party- to Pound-Chinese – (*Sie verkehren in Partei- bis Pound-Chinesisch miteinander* –)

The "chain of lyric counterfeiters" to whom Celan refers in this dense note alludes more or less directly to the Gruppe 47, which at the time (roughly, 1960) had established itself as a literary "mafia" and which counted Enzensberger as one of its most outspoken representatives. Conceived in 1947 as a forum for young writers with the aim of regrounding German literature after its degradation during the Third Reich, the Gruppe 47 gradually rose to become, alongside to the Frankfurt Book Fair, the central institution in the post-War literary scene. Indeed, by the late 1950s its founder, Hans Werner Richter, expressed concerns that the yearly meetings of his intimate "Freundeskreis" had become "a continuation of the book fair by other means."[46] More than a "continuation," perhaps, since the *American Idol*-style spectacle of reading a work before a tribunal of writers, critics, and editors and then silently weathering twenty minutes of searing criticism on the so-called "electric chair" increasingly became a precondition for entry into the literary marketplace.[47] In this free market, some agents were freer than others: prominent figures like Richter and Enzensberger promoted their favorites, a mandarin caste of professional critics weighed in, while publishers waited in the eves and speculated on the next bestseller. "What's important to remember," the critic Reinhard Baumgart has noted, "is that the Gruppe 47 increasingly became a sort of talent auction—what it perhaps did not intend, but which inevitably had to happen. Speaking in the jargon of the stock market, one would say that new stocks (*Werte*) were introduced, existing stocks (*Werte*) certified and tested, [and] launched on a new boom or bust."[48] With respect to influence, capital resources, and integration with the mass media, the Gruppe 47 represented a stage of the culture industry far more advanced than the hegemony of Georgian poetry that, forty years earlier, gave Pound "the sensation of being thrust head downward up to the chin in the mire of an

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[43] Quoted in Celan, *Mikrolithen sinds, Steinchen*, 350.
[44] Enzensberger, *Museum der modernen Poesie*, II: 678–81.
[45] Enzensberger, II:773.
[46] Lettau, *Die Gruppe 47*, 167.
[47] On the relationship between the Gruppe 47 and the German book market, see Arnold, *Die Gruppe 47: Ein Kritischer Grundriß*, esp. 175-204.
[48] Quoted in Böttiger, *Die Gruppe 47*, 238.

open privy."[49] Rupert Brooke, whom Pound deemed "the best of all that Georgian group,"[50] may have been a popular poet, a war hero, and "the handsomest young man in England" (Yeats), but his portrait never appeared as a full page spread on the cover of a popular weekly, as the 28-year-old Ingeborg Bachmann's did on the cover of *Der Spiegel* in 1954.

For a working poet to decry the values decreed on the marketplace, no matter whether that critique is voiced in 1917 or 1957, is such an ubiquitous occurrence that it hardly deserves mention. That said, what is remarkable about Celan's condemnation of the reheated modernism and duty-free internationalism of the post-war scene is that it self-consciously cites the very anti-market discourse out of which modernism had emerged, translating its tropes straight from Pound's mouth, complete with their anti-Semitic overtones:

> When they read Pound, they understand even Chinese. With this 'pound' (*Pfunde*) they happily turn a usurious profit – and not the least for the reason that they want to keep Shylock alive as a cliché[51]

With remarks like these, Celan leashes the ongoing currency of international modernism and the rabid legacy of anti-Semitism together and figuratively encloses the ensemble in the same "pound." Celan's pun on Ezra's family name reissues a coinage that Pound minted himself, but with the opposite effect. Pound's poetics aspired to correct the market's excesses; translated into German, he has become the coin/koine with which one literature may be measured against another. Pound's translations of the *Shi jing* are not the cure to barbarism that Pound naively dreamt they would be.[52] *Pace* Celan, what flows through Pound's translations of Confucius is not the "stright [*sic*] tradition"—"Kung. Mencius. Dante. Agassiz."—but rather capital. The cross-cultural "understanding" (*verstehen*) they produce is the abstract form of reified equivalence for which Europe's Jews have historically been blamed and for which, in Pound's Manichean cosmos, they continue to bear responsibility. Celan's reprise of these tropes is chilling after Auschwitz. After the factory-style killing of the camps, the "pound of flesh" no longer signifies a mythical Jewish blood libel but the historical victims of that anti-Semitic accusation. So too Shylock: the phantasm of the Jewish usurer lives on, whereas more than six million of Europe's Jews do not.

III. "BUT THE POEM IS VERY OBSCURE"[53]

Celan's deeply ironic remobilization of Pound's own rhetorical warhorses for the purpose of discrediting Pound's legacy induces a kind of vertigo whose poetic and epistemological significance cannot be overstated. On the one hand, Celan directs against Pound's modernism the same charge of usury that Pound had reserved for debased, reheated Romanticism early twentieth-century London ("third-hand Keats, Wordsworth, heaven knows what, fourth hand Elizabethan sonority

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[49] Pound, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, 112.
[50] Pound to Harriet Monroe, April [?25] 1915 in Pound, 59. Interestingly, after the second war and deep into his residency at Saint Elizabeth's, Pound teases Eliot for his favorable assessments of Brooke: "To think," he is remembered telling Eliot in 1952, "you called that warmonger Rupert Brooke the best of the Georgians." After which, "Eliot crinkl[ed] with laughter." Quoted in Swift, *The Bughouse: The Poetry, Politics, and Madness of Ezra Pound*, 122.
[51] Celan, *Mikrolithen sinds, Steinchen*, 34.
[52] Pound to Achilles Fang, February 4, 1953, in Pound and Qian, *Ezra Pound's Chinese Friends*, 129–30.
[53] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 211.

blunted, half melted, lumpy"[54]). On the other hand, and where Pound had promoted his own poetics as a "rockdrill" capable of exhuming the real ground of value, Celan alludes to the Nazi genocide—to the memory of "black milk" and "graves in the sky"—as the irremediable contamination and abysmal debasement of the ideology of "ground," from Pound's "great bass/base" to Heidegger's "Grundverfassung des Daseins" to the crudest *Blut und Boden*-style racial nationalism. Rather than to a solid ground—a reminted koine or even "a poetics of a common humanity"[55]—Celan invites the unplumbable losses of recent history and silence of the unburied dead into his speech to protest the easy dream of shared intelligibility or a common humanity. Where Pound had dreamt of "a transmission of knowledge obtainable only from […] concrete manifestation,"[56] Celan only offers the torque of speech on silence that, interrupting the transmission of poetry, "concretely" disarticulates the "concrete manifestation."

This is not a self-evident move. To the contrary, many survivors have understood their responsibility to bear witness to the genocide as compelling a recommitment to forms of historical transmission and the aims of communication. Indeed, survivors have often explained their decision to write about the camps in just these terms. Reflecting on his first book, 1947's *If This Is a Man,* from thirty years distance*,* Primo Levi notes that "it was the experience of the Lager that forced me to write" (*è stata l'esperienza del Lager a costringermi a scrivere*). At the time, he remembers, "problems of style (*i problemi di stile*) seemed […] ridiculous," adding that he hoped to give Italian the clarity, brevity, and matter-of-factness of an end-of-the-week factory report. Far from reproducing the preferences of someone who "had been a mediocre student in Italian," the virtue Levi made of communication follows from his understanding of his moral responsibility as a survivor. This obligation dictates the form of Levi's prose, as Stuart Wolff, the English translator of *If This Is a Man*, explains: "for Primo, there was no separation between content and literary form, even if he was not aware of this when he wrote the book: expression and above all language were fundamental to the sense of responsibility he felt to render comprehensible to ordinary people the experience and signification of Auschwitz."[57]

Nevertheless, "Auschwitz" is neither the only "experience" nor the only "signification" treated in Levi's many novels, stories, essays, and poems; for Levi, the task transmitting such experiences and such significations "without [their] fading or getting lost along the way" (*senza che si attenu[ino] o si perda[no] per strada*) is axiomatic not only for the witness but for the writer in general.[58] This prioritizing of communication leads Levi into a polemic against what, in a 1976 article for *La Stampa*, he calls "obscure writing" (*lo scrivere oscuro*). According to Levi, the writers most susceptible to temptations of obscurity are the poets, who, having internalized Romantic tropes, maintain that authentic writing speaks the "language of the heart" (*linguaggio del cuore*). This language, Levi insists, "is not a language at all"; at best it is "vernacular, an argot, if not an individual invention" (*un'invenzione individuale*). And the more "individual" a poet's idiom becomes, the more its speech gains in "irreducible and untranslatable abundance," the closer it comes to the dream poem "learned by heart." Levi writes,

> Those who write in the language of the heart may prove to be indecipherable, and so it is reasonable to ask what purpose (scopo) they had in writing; indeed (it strikes me that this is a broadly acceptable proposition), the purpose of writing is to communicate (*la scrittura serve a*

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[54] Pound, *Literary Essays*, 205.
[55] Olender, "Mot, monnaie et démocratie: Lieux communs de l'intime," 541.
[56] Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, 28.
[57] Wolff, "Translator's Afterward," 203.
[58] Levi, "The Non-Writer Writer," 1216–17.

> *comunicare*), to transmit (trasmettere) information or feelings from mind to mind, from place to place, and from time to time. Someone who is understood by no one transmits nothing (*trasmette nulla*), is only a voice crying in the wilderness. When this happens, the reader of good-will should be heartened: if you do not understand a text, the fault is in the author, not in you. It is a writer's responsibility to be understood by whoever wishes to do so: it is his profession, writing is a public service, and a willing reader should not go away in disappointment (andare *deluso*).[59]

One can argue whether Levi's own work fits the model here and even question whether, in some cases, provoking "frustration" (*delusione*) or even "disillusionment" (*disillusione*) in the reader may not count as a public service. Nonetheless, it is safe to say that, after first struggling to find a foothold with publishers and in the market, Levi has become one of the best "received" writers of the post-War period, and one of the most translated Italian writers in history. In fact, Ann Goldstein's edition of Levi's *Opere*, is the only *Complete Works* of an Italian author to have been translated into English. Neither Dante nor Machiavelli, neither Montale nor Calvino have attained that degree of transmission.

Levi's insistence that "la scrittura serve a comunicare, a trasmettere" is all the more important for us in light of the authors he singles out for failing to honor this implicit "contract": Ezra Pound and Paul Celan. Levi's polemical article is, alongside Rabaté's Derridian ideogram, the only text I know of that dares treat Pound and Celan together, and it brings them together (and with them the Austrian poet Georg Trakl) as models of "obscure writing," of writing that stands in the way of its own transmission. That said, Levi does not equate the two poets. Celan, a Jewish writer who like Levi "miraculously survived the German slaughter," is regarded as a contemporary whose poetry deserves to be approached seriously and responsibly. Pound, by contrast, is not considered a contemporary. Indeed, Levi does not conceal his personal distaste for the American ex-pat who had lived in Italy for over twenty-five years, an aversion which suggests that the hundred plus miles that separate Levi's native Turin from Pound's home in Rapallo was not far enough.

Pound fares worse than Celan, but the evidence which Levi adduces to make his case is also much weaker. Of course, Levi's desire to distance himself from a collaborator and an anti-Semite is understandable, and there might also be a settling of accounts with an earlier generation of Italian writers, who, like Ungaretti, Saba, and Quasimodo, had pleaded for Pound's release from Saint Elizabeth's.[60] Levi may be alluding to Pound's Italian defenders when he writes

> Personally, I'm also tired of the praise lavished in life and death on Ezra Pound, who may well have been a great poet, but who in order to make sure he was not understood sometimes even wrote in Chinese, and I believe that his poetic obscurity had the same roots as his supermanism (*superomismo*), which led him first to fascism and subsequently to self-marginalization: both grew out of his contempt (*disprezzo*) for the reader. Perhaps the American court that judged Pound insane and unfit to stand trial was right: a writer by instinct (*scrittore d'instinto*), he must have been a very poor thinker and this is borne out both by his political actions and by his maniacal hatred of bankers. Now, people who don't know how to think should be given proper care, and treated respectfully to the extent possible, even if, like Ezra Pound, they might have been persuaded to manufacture Nazi propaganda

[59] Levi, "About Obscure Writing," 2063.
[60] Pulsoni, "Liberate Il Poeta Pound."

> against their own country while it was at war with Hitler's Germany; but they should not be praised or held up as examples, because it is better to be sane than insane (*perché è meglio essere sani che insani*).[61]

Rather than dwell on the infelicities of this portrait of Pound (whom Levi probably did not read), it is better to focus on the implicit point Levi makes about translation. Flaunting the possible paradox, Levi maintains that Pound writes by instinct and that, though Pound himself is not a native Chinese speaker, Pound's instinct produces Chinese. The Chinese written character, with all the attendant clichés that this writing summons for Levi and his readers, becomes a figure for the "language of the heart." The ideogram is not the universal language of reason that Leibniz and, one some level, Pound dream it to be.[62] On the contrary, the Chinese written character is the native language of "unknowability" (*inconoscibilità*) and "irrationality" (*irrationalità*), a language that "STAYS POETIC" because it stays "necessarily obscure," and thus, in final analysis, a language that "is not a language at all," a cipher without a key: the untranslatable itself.

Levi's characterization of Chinese is not only troubling, it gets Pound's use of the ideogram, and, by way of the ideogrammic method, Pound's understanding of transmission exactly *backwards*. No one will deny that the *Cantos* make extraordinary demands on the reader and that one has to work to receive what it transmits. That said, Pound's incorporation of languages like Chinese into his epic does not constitute an obstacle to this transmission; to the contrary, their presence forms its basis. The unfamiliar idioms are not "invenzioni individuali" precisely because, in the vast majority of cases, they are citations. Pound breaks his "contract" with his English (?) reader because that hermeneutic horizon must be historically dislocated and linguistically transgressed for the transmission he proposes to proceed. "It can't be all in one language": rather than refer back to an existing koine—whether English, standard Italian, or Classical Chinese—understanding is routed through the matrix of the poem's form. In effect, the poem is continually translating itself. As Pound once put it,

> Skip anything you don't understand and go on till you pick it up again. All tosh about *foreign languages* making it difficult. The quotes are all either explained at once by repeat or they are definitely *of* the things indicated. If reader don't know what an elefant IS, then the word is obscure.[63]

The "obscurity" of Pound's Chinese concedes nothing to "unknowability"; instead, such "obscurity" is the flip side of the precise, "concrete" manifestation. The obscure spelling of "elefant" is an excellent example. The point is not that the reader is expected to be familiar with the world's largest land animal. Such self-evidence is deceptive. At the time when this archaic spelling was in use, Europeans were largely unfamiliar with the fauna of Africa. "Elefant," which designated an animal from this region, was obscure, sometimes naming an animal with tusks, sometimes an animal with a hump.[64] The stuttering of a realist ontology over the spelling of universals like "elephant" reactivates the historical particularity of the letter. Knowing "what an elefant IS" means attending to an

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[61] Levi, "About Obscure Writing," 2064. "Dello scrivere oscuro," 679.
[62] Cf. Saussy, "Fenollosa Compounded: A Discrimination," 7.
[63] Pound to Sarah Perkins Cope, Pound, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, 250–51.
[64] *OED Online,* s.v. "olend," accessed August 1, 2019.

obscurity which is the phenomenal form of an "irreducible and untranslatable abundance"—an "elefant" that is not an "elephant," since it is both an elephant and a camel.[65]

The irony of Levi's assessment of Pound's Chinese lies in the fact that Levi's own texts are sufficient proof for how the obscurity of words quoted from another language might nonetheless be "*of* the things indicated." The German of the *Lager* was, as Levi recognizes, "orts-und zeitgebunden"—a phrase that Levi reproduces "appunto in tedesco" and which he translates in Italian as "legata al luogo ed al tempo" (*bound to time and place*). Transmitting the specificity of his experience meant at times compromising its legibility—even and perhaps especially to his German readers. In the "Letters from the Germans" section of *The Drowned and the Saved*, Levi recalls the back and forth he had with his German translator over the comprehensibility of the German words and phrases quoted in the Italian edition of *If This Is a Man*:

> Our general pattern was as follows: I would indicate to him a thesis suggested by my auditory memory […]; he would counter with the antithesis "That's not good German, today's readers won't understand it (*non lo capirebbero*)"; I would object, "That's exactly how they said it down there"; and in the end we would arrive at a synthesis, that is, a compromise. Experience later taught me that translation and compromise are synonymous, but at the time I was obsessed by a scruple for hyperrealism (*uno scrupulo di superrealismo*). I did not want the book, especially in its German guise, to lose any of the harshness, any of the violence done to the language, that I had worked so hard to replicate (*riprodurre*) in the original Italian.[66]

For Levi too, the scruples of hyperrealism call into question the possibility of a shared horizon. Nonetheless, the moral, political, and "contractual" responsibility to communicate and not just "cry in the desert" (*chiam[are] nel deserto*) compels Levi to overcome his scruples and translate—in this case, *from* German *into* German. Levi does not deny that speech can express itself as a "grido nel deserto" and that the "experience and signification of Auschwitz" rebounds with the obscurity of those who opened their mouths not to communicate but to scream in pain. But this is no longer language, and, degraded to the mechanical discharge of tension (*per scaricare una propria tensione*), such "noise" (*rumore*) has nothing to say to us. "For this reason I have had enough of praise lavished on texts that […] 'sound the very limits of the ineffable (*al limite dell'ineffabile*), nonexistent (*non-esistente*), the animal howl (*del mugolio animale*).' […] Blank pages (*le pagine bianche*) are blank; and perhaps it's best to call them blank; if the emperor has no clothes, the best thing to do is say that he has none."

With "le pagine bianche" and "[il] limite dell'ineffabile," Levi prepares the move from the obscurity of Pound's Chinese to the obscurity Celan's German. While both of these poets write in the "language of the heart," Levi is careful to exempt Celan from the charge of holding his reader in contempt. In Celan's case, the "breach of contract" (*inadempienza contrattuale*) between author and reader is historically motivated, such that the dereliction of authorial responsibility participates in "the obscurity of his and his generation's fate." Unlike Pound's, Celan's work is, if not exactly legible, then at least 'understandable.' As a testament of the rupture in transmission, it should

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[65] Indeed, the reference is perhaps even more complex, as "elefant" may refer to the stone "aliofants" that Matteo da Pasti's sculpted at the base of the columns of the Tempio malatestiano in Rimini. Matteo had presumably never seen an elephant, which makes his "aliofants" of dark, black porphyry "obscure" in more ways than one. Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 428–29, as well as Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 48.

[66] Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, in *The Complete Works of Primo Levi*, Vol. III: 2540. *I Sommersi e i Salvati*, in *Opere*, Vol. II: 1128.

prompt reflection and mourning. In the end, however, Celan's is a legacy with no possible posterity and an example not be imitated (*imitato*). As Levi writes,

> Celan's obscurity is neither contempt for the reader nor inadequacy of expression nor a lazy surrender to the currents of the subconscious: it is truly a reflection of the obscurity of his own and his generation's fate, and it condenses relentlessly around the reader, squeezing him in a grip of ice and iron, from the harsh clarity (*lucidità*) of *Death Fugue* (1945) to the grim and inescapable chaos of his final compositions. This darkness (*tenebra*), increasing from page to page, up to the last disjointed babble (*disarticolato balbettio*), is as appalling as a death rattle (*cisterna come il rantolo di un moribondo*), and indeed that is precisely what it is. It sucks us in, in the same way that a whirlpool does, but at the same time it defrauds us of something that ought to have been said but wasn't, and therefore it frustrates us and keeps us distant.[67]

Levi's synoptic description of Celan's poetry is almost a phenomenology of reading that moves sequentially from lucidity to darkness, order to chaos, life to death. Celan draws us in like a whirlpool only to later spit us out. It is to Levi's credit that he refuses to reduce such experiences to an aesthetic spectacle prepared for our amusement and edification, but the powerful claim that, in the end, Celan's verse is not "like" (*come*) a "death rattle" but is—"in fact" (*infatti*)—a "death rattle" does a tremendous disservice to the poetry when it elevates Celan's suicide in 1970 to the telos of his work in general. Read backward through the suicide, the obscurity of Celan's poetics becomes, as Levi puts it, "a sort of pre-suicide (*un pre-uccidersi*), a will-not-to-exist (*un non-voler-essere*), a flight from the world (*fuga dal mondo*), ultimately crowned by a yearned-for death."[68]

Although this psychological reconstruction tries to honor the historical particularity of Celan's fate, Levi's interpretation of "Fuga di morte" as the first movement of an unstoppable "fuga dal mondo" reproduces—in *Italian*—a defense mechanism popular among certain of Celan's *German* critics, who, in the words of Günter Blöcker, faulted Celan for neglecting "the communicative character of language" (*Kommunikationscharakter*) and, as a consequence, for "spinning his wheels" senselessly.[69] In both cases, the specificity of Celan's critical engagement with the history of German is ignored. Blöcker's suggestion that Celan, on account of his ethnic and regional origins,[70] does not or cannot communicate in German trades in longstanding anti-Semitic prejudice, which is not the case for Levi. Nonetheless, Levi does obtain retribution for what "ought to have been said but wasn't" by recasting Celan's revolt against the common tongue as the platitudinous expression of a "common destiny" (*comune destino*), effectively translating Celan's poetry into the lowest possible common denominator: the umpteenth repetition of the cliché English translates as 'everybody dies alone.'[71] Drained of all its specificity, death becomes the skeleton key to Celan's corpus: "If what [Celan] conveys is a message, it has been lost in the 'background noise' (*rumore di fondo*): it is not a

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[67] Levi, "About Obscure Writing," 2065. "Dello scrivere oscuro," 679–80.
[68] Levi, "About Obscure Writing," 2064. "Dello scrivere oscuro," 680.
[69] Blöcker, "Gedichte Als Graphische Gebilde."
[70] As Blöcker puts it, "Celan has a greater freedom (*Freiheit*) with respect to the German language than his fellow poets. That may be on account of his origins (*Das mag an seiner Herkunft liegen*). The communicative character of language confines and burdens him (*hemmt und belastet ihn*) less than others. Of course, for this reason he is often driven to operate in a void (*im Leeren zu agieren*)." Blöcker, "Gedichte als graphische Gebilde."
[71] Interestingly, the German translation of this cliché, "Jeder stirbt für sich allein," is the title of Hans Fallada's 1947 novel about German resistance to the Nazis within the Third Reich. Since its publication, the novel has become an international bestseller and the inspiration of several feature length movies.

communication, it is not a language, or at most it's a dark and truncated language, the language, in fact, of someone about to die, and alone, as we are all alone (*come tutti lo saremo*) at the point of death."[72] Again, Levi is quite right to note how Celan's language is itself traversed by loss, but the dislocation of transmission loses its historic and linguistic specificity as it is reduced to mere static on the line. Translated into a "rumore del fondo," the loss that Celan's poetry bears witness to is itself lost in translation.

There are several losses here but foremost among them is what Adorno might call Celan's determinate negation of the shared language, where, in Adorno's loaded terms, "the experiential content of the hermetic has inverted itself" (*der Erfahrungsgehalt des Hermetischen [hat] sich umgekehrt*).[73] This "experiential content" is not a "message" conveyed from sender to receiver, nor is it a "death rattle," produced anonymously and intending no one. Instead, it is the rupture of transmission itself, the frustration of transmissibility as the paradoxical legacy of the catastrophe. From this perspective, Levi's phenomenology of reading holds: Celan's poetry indeed "sucks us in (*ci avvicine*)," and, "at the same time," it "defrauds us (c*i defrauda*) of something that ought to have been said but wasn't, and therefore it frustrates us (*ci frustra*) and keeps us distant (*ci allontana*)." Where Levi errs is in his attribution of this "breach of contract" to a private "language of the heart" rather than to the language supposedly held in common, a language whose acquired darkness prevents what Levi believes ought to be said from being said with the luminous clarity Levi demands. Levi is not yet Celan's contemporary: after "what happened" ("*das, was geschah*")[74] there is no *German* word at the witness's disposal that would *not* be fraudulent. What needs to be "meditated and mourned" is not Celan's individual "flight" before a "triumphant death," but the loss of the common tongue and the compromised, dislocated condition of the language—German—that has survived this loss. This condition does not obtain in the same way for Levi's Italian, which makes his use of the plural pronoun "ci" doubly misplaced. It is not only that Celan does not interpellate his reader in Italian, it is that, when he addresses them, it is almost invariably in the second person, as a "du," "dir" or "dich." This is not because Celan's poetry is untranslatable, but because that poetry cannot count on a language that "we"—that *wir*—hold in common. Or, as Celan puts it in the final verse of "Grosse glühende Wölbung," a poem from 1965's collection *Atemwende*:

Die Welt ist fort, ich muß dich tragen.[75]

Which Pierre Joris translates as

The world is gone, I have to carry you.[76]

IV. Nachsprechen

The burden that Celan's poetry carries is very different from the sort of contractual obligation that Levi's article imagines, since Levi's sense of responsibility presumes the existence of the very shared world whose absence Celan's poetry struggles to register. "Because we are not alone when we are alive, we should not write as if we were. We have a responsibility, as long as we are alive: we must answer for what we write, word for word, and ensure that every word hits its target (*far sì che ogni*

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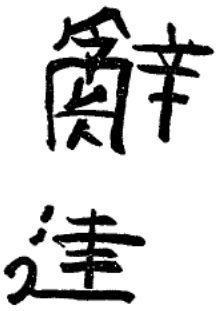
[72] Levi, "About Obscure Writing," 2065. "Dello scrivere oscuro," 680.
[73] Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 477.
[74] Celan, "Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der freien Hansestadt Bremen," 186.
[75] "Grosse glühende Wölbung" in Celan, *KG*, 210.
[76] "Great glowing vault" in Celan, *Breathturn into Timestead*, 174.

parola vada al segno)." For Levi, the writer is answerable to the world as that shared reference whose presence coordinates "word" and "target." It is notable that the boundaries of this world correspond to the boundaries of the living, the sane, and the human, which implies that the living incur no responsibilities vis-à-vis the dead, the insane, and/or non-human.

Without the presumption of a shared world, there are no conditions for ensuring that the word hits its target. The writer has no choice but to detour through the ruins of Babel, reckoning with the "segno" not as an extra-linguistic "target," "Ziel," or "cible" but "literally" (in seiner "Wörtlichkeit," as Celan might say[77]): as a "sign," "Zeichen," or "signe." What Levi calls "obscurity" refers to the gambit of what Rabaté calls the "ideogram of poetry," a "rush of literality" that answers the disappearance of a shared world with a utopia in which transmitting the word sufficed to transmit the target. In this dream, the "segno" is irreducible and non-substitutable.

This literalism is most evident in Pound, where "it can't be all in one language" because "it" is never an ideal, abstract "target" but always a material, concrete "segno." As Pound writes in Canto LXXIX,

> the imprint of the intaglio depends
> in part on what is pressed under it
> the mould must hold what is poured into it
> in
> discourse
> what matters is
> to get it across e poi basta
>
> 
>
> (Canto LXXIX, 506)

Here are several of the needlessly opaque Chinese characters to which Levi objects. Specifically, they are the characters *tz'u*[2] and *ta*[2] and Pound cites them from Book XV of the Analects of Confucius.[78] A "translation" appears immediately to the left on the page: "in/ discourse/ what matters is/ to get it across e poi basta." As the Italian coda "e poi basta" (*and then enough*) indicates, "get[ting] it across" does not mean substituting one language for another. On the contrary, "get[ting] it across" implies ideogramic writing, in which Classical Chinese, English, and Italian are themselves juxtaposed particulars within their own charged complex—an ideogram glossing an ideogram. This practice transposes Imagism's "direct treatment of the 'thing'" into the *Cantos'* strange "historical" notation, where the problems of linguistic translation and historical representation are resolved through techniques of spatial arrangement and graphic presentation. As a matter of fact, it is unclear whether "what matters" for Pound is getting the meaning of the characters *tz'u*[2] and *ta*[2] "across" to the reader, or whether "what matters" is the presentation of the characters "across" the page from his multilingual gloss. In the end, such questions probably have no sense for Pound, since in his poetics both priorities literally amount to the same "thing." In the *Cantos*, what matters—perhaps the only thing that *matters*—is the materiality of the "intaglio."

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[77] See Celan's letter to Werner Weber, March 26, 1960. Quoted in Gellhaus and Großens, "Poetologie des Übersetzens: 'Fremde Nähe': Übersetzen – die andere Seite der Dichtung," 398. See also Wiedemann, "Wörtlichkeiten."
[78] Pound, *Confucius: The Unwobbling Pivot, The Great Digest, The Analects*, 269. In his commentary to *The Pisan Cantos*, Richard Sieburth translates *tz'u*[2] as "words, speech, message," and *ta*[2] as "to apprehend." See Pound, *The Pisan Cantos*, 141.

As a survivor writing in the language of perpetrators, Celan is understandably skeptical of any contractual obligation to the community of "living" German speakers. However, Celan is equally suspicious of the restorative, Poundian fantasy, where, piece by piece, segno par segno, what is lost charges back in a "rush of literality." The phenomenal givenness of the "intaglio," in whose mould Pound pours his epic, resurfaces in Celan's work as a Medusan spell, cast to conjure away afterwardness.

Celan's necessary break with Levi's contract and Pound's method is best illustrated by one last quote. In early 1960, Karl Dedecius, a translator specializing in the transmission of Slavic literature into German, wrote Celan a letter in which he commends Celan's poetry and translations. The letter's tone is not entirely friendly, however, and Dedecius cites Celan's recently published translations of Sergei Yesenin to deliver a decidedly backhanded compliment:

> Your poems have transmitted (*vermittelt*) many a memorable experience to me; even your translations from Russian—very idiosyncratic, as is your art in general (*sehr eigenwillig, wie Ihre Kunst überhaupt*)—are uncommonly expressive as German compositions. That my russified ear often misses the traces of folksong in Yesenin's strophes says very little. The translations of all great poets (cf. Rilke, George) will always bear the trace of the translator's handwriting (*die Spur der Handschrift des Übersetzers*), since his own personality is too strong and is not soluble in the foreign substance (*und nicht im fremden Wesen auflösbar ist*).[79]

At the time he wrote these words, Dedecius was preparing his own translations of Yesenin for publication. These translations would compete directly with Celan's versions, and the solubility metaphor that Dedecius uses here will be recycled in other occasions to promote the greater transparency of Dedecius translations over Celan's.[80] The obscurity of Celan's personal idiom, and above all the contortions of Celan's syntax, will be said to block the transmission of Yesenin's folksong. To use Levi's conceit, Celan's "word" does not hit Yesenin's "target," or, to use Dedecius's, the undissolved traces of Celan's own idiom break the consistency of Yesenin's solution.

In his reply to Dedecius, Celan rejects transparent transmission as a possible outcome or desirable goal for translation. This response is one of the few occasions where Celan addresses his practice of translation. It is all the more significant, however, in that this reflection on "the translation of poems" (*das Übersetzen von Gedichten*) focuses less on the aporias of interlingual translation than on the temporality of "Nachsprechen," of repeating what someone else has said, and of repeating it, as Celan suggests, "word for word."

> Ja, das Übersetzen von Gedichten…Wörtlichkeit im übertragenen Gedicht: Wörtlichkeit <u>des</u> Gedichts. Brücken von Sprach zu Sprache, aber – Brücken über Abgründe. Noch beim allerwörtlichsten Nachsprechen des Vorgegebenen – Ihnen, lieber Herr Dedecius, will es als ein "Aufgehen" im Sprachmedium des anderen erscheinen--: es bleibt, faktisch, immer ein <u>Nach</u>sprechen, ein <u>zweites</u> Sprechen, noch im (scheinbar) restlosen "Aufgehen" bleibt der "Aufgehende" mit/in seinem Anderssein.[81]

The word "Nachsprechen" is itself emphatically "nachgesprochen" in this text, a self-conscious use of repetition which suggests that what is at stake in Celan's theory of "translation" is not only the

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[79] Karl Dedecius to Celan, January 28, 1960, in Zach, *Traduction littéraire et création poétique*, 340–41.
[80] This context is laid out helpfully in Olschner, *Im Abgrund Zeit*, 39–58.
[81] Celan to Karl Dedecius, January 31, 1960, in Zach, *Traduction littéraire et création poétique*, 344–45.

echo a word finds in another language, but also the rhythm of its return in the "same" language. Each of these returns opens up an interval—a "nach," an "after":

> Yes, the translation of poems … worded-ness in the poem that translates: worded-ness <u>of the</u> poem. Bridges from language to language, but – bridges over abysses. Even in the most word-for-word repetition of the precedent – you, my dear Mr. Dedecius, prefer to see it as a "dissolution" in the other's linguistic medium –: it remains, in point of fact, always a speaking <u>after</u>, a speaking <u>second</u>, even in the (seemingly) complete "dissolution," the "solute" remains with/in its difference.

There is something counterintuitive about Celan's decision to elevate "das allerwörtlichsten Nachsprechen des Vorgegebenen" into a paradigm for inter-lingual translation, since, with only rare exceptions, repeating a text word-for-word precludes the possibility of changing its linguistic code. As Celan's underlining seems to emphasize, the difference that "<u>Nach</u>sprechen" thematizes is not a change in the code but a change in the speaker and, even more fundamentally, a change in time. Indeed, while it is conceivable that one might "repeat" (*nachsprechen*) an oath, prayer, or poem that one has earlier prepared oneself, and thereby make "Sprecher" and "Nachsprecher" coincide, the interval that separates what is said (*gesprochen*) from what is repeated (*nachgesprochen*) is irreducible. Simply by virtue of its belatedness, a translation, like a citation, will *never* be a substitute for what it translates.

Celan's response to Dedecius bursts the fantasy that a repetition, citation, or translation could ever dissolve the traces of its own afterwardness, but the opposition Celan creates between a consequent "Nachsprechen" and a "restlos[es] Aufgehen" also contaminates Dedecius's solubility metaphor with the traces of the German language's own recent history. The quotation marks that Celan puts around the term "Aufgehen" suggest that this word cites another's discourse, that it, in effect, has been "nachgesprochen." The fact that Celan refers explicitly to Dedecius's preference for translators who lose themselves (*aufgehen*) in the other language suggests that it is Dedecius himself whom Celan "nachspricht." But this is not so. The word Dedecius chooses is not "aufgehen" but "auflösen." In addition to "dissolve" (the meaning it shares with "auflösen") "aufgehen" can mean 'to rise,' 'to open,' 'to sprout,' and, in the case of fractions, 'to divide without remainder.' Read word-for-word, however, "aufgehen" means 'to go up.' "Wörtlich gelesen," the fantasy of an utterly transparent "Lösung" and a "restlos[es] Aufgehen," of course, calls to mind Celan's own status as a survivor of the genocide. If Celan is indeed citing Dedecius, the trauma of liquidation—the so-called "Final Solution" (*Endlösung*) and the memory of "das Aufgehen in Rauch" (*going up in smoke*)—has nonetheless intervened to interrupt that "rush of literality." The "after" (*nach*) of Celan's "speaking-after" (*Nach-sprechen*) refers not only to Dedecius but to Auschwitz.

To understand poetry after Auschwitz we must understand "Nachsprechen" and, to do this, there is no better way than to contrast it with its perfect antithesis, the *Cantos*. Pound's version of "Nachsprechen" is a speaking-after that paradoxically refuses to acknowledge its own afterwardness. In this respect, the Cantos presents the "poetic dream" at its most affirmative and its most spellbound. It would be a barbarous over simplification to suggest that Celan "nachspricht" Pound. No two poets could be less like one another. And yet, for Celan, "Nachsprechen" is not evidence of a continuity. It bears witness to a rupture.

Chapter 1: The Rhythms of a Poem including History

I. Helicon the hard way

In 1933, Mary Barnard, the poet and future translator of Sappho, mailed a packet of English poems to the Italian city of Rapallo, a small port town on the Ligurian coast where Ezra Pound and his family had been living for nearly a decade. Barnard, who had heard Pound read his poetry at Reed College the year before, sent six poems in free verse and a note asking the older poet for some guidance. Pound's reply came quickly, typed at obvious speed, in the charging, telegraphic English that had become the longtime exile's native idiom. It was bracingly direct: "Age? Intentions? Intention? How MUCH intention? I mean how hard and for how long are you willing to work at it."[82] As became clear over the course of the correspondence that followed, the "work" Pound had in mind was a very specific and very concrete kind of labor. He advised first and foremost that the young poet focus her attention on refining her control of poetic rhythm. A command of the rhythms of the English language, Pound hammered in his own provocatively staccato style, was not a fluency a poet was born with; it was a technical accomplishment, acquired through a long process of apprenticeship. It was a skill, he insisted, that was best developed through the disciplined practice of *translation*.

Such advice wasn't wholly unanticipated: Barnard had reached out to Pound in part because she had been so impressed by his controversial translation of the Roman poet Sextus Propertius. And, as he had, Pound suggested that she too apply herself to the translation of the classics: Propertius, Catullus, Sappho. That said, Pound's understanding of translation was unusual; he was, for instance, less interested in Barnard's ability to reproduce an original poem's meter foot-for-foot, than in her capacity to coax its foreign cadences out of the rhythms of the American vernacular itself. In other words, he suggested she not translate the classical meters into their English equivalents, as was the usual practice, but rather unlock the "foreign" rhythms "native" to American speech. This is an extraordinarily difficult task, since English-language meters are usually considered to operate according to principles entirely different from the rules regulating the rhythms of Catullus or Sappho. This, of course, was the point. "I don't see why you shouldn't 'translate *into* sapphics,'" he wrote Barnard,

> I mean from latin or any other language, where the subject matter is suitable (*whatever the original metre may have been*). Couldn't do any harm to try Catullus' second epithalamium (the one with the long lines [i.e., carmen 62]) in American sapphics.[83]

In her memoir, *Assault on Mount Helicon*, Barnard recalls being less than enthused about Pound's advice to better her English by apprenticing herself to the prosodic structures of other languages. She said as much to Pound in a letter from 1934. Pound's reply was blunt: "You hate translation?? what of it?? expect to be carried up Mt Helicon in an easy chair?" Absolutely unfazed by his reluctant pupil's hesitations, he lost no time in diving into specifics in the same letter:

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[82] Pound, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, 248.
[83] Barnard, *Assault on Mount Helicon*, 58. My italics.

> Try writing Sapphics, and NOT persistently using a spondee like that blighter Horace, for the second foot.
> If you really learn to write proper quantitative sapphics in the amurikun langwidge I shall love and adore you all the days of my life…eh…
> provided you dont fill 'em with trype.[84]

The "proper sapphics" that Pound refers to here, are, as he explains in the remainder of the letter, not English verses hammered into a classical mold, but a purposeful application of the older quantitative metric that would transform the particular music of America's drawling vowels into an expressive medium for poetry. Ironically, it is via this historical and linguistic detour through the poetry of another era and another culture, that, in Pound's estimation, Barnard's verse will arrive most surely in the present time and place of the "amurikun langwidge."[85] Contemporaneity, in other words, is the other face of an unheralded antiquity.[86]
Regardless of whether she followed it or even whether it bore fruit (though she did and it did), Pound's advice to Barnard tells us something important about the way *Pound* approaches the relationship between the practice of writing poetry and the task of translating it.

One might think that a command of the contemporary cadences of the American vernacular would have little to do with a stanza form attributed to a sixth-century Aeolian poet or with this form's adaptation by the Roman poets of the first century B.C.E. Pound says no: for him, it is rather as a kind of free translation of an older, foreign, and, until that moment, "unsung" antecedent that the contemporaneity of the "amurikun langwidge" can effectively emerge in its difference from the staid conventions of the "American language" that one finds printed in Webster's dictionary. For Pound at least, a familiarity with a durational metric like Sappho's, a prosodic system which pits syllable length against vowel sound, helps a poet hear beneath the iambic regularity of the four syllables of "American" (˘ ´ | ˘ ´ |) the drawn out tempo of a distinctly "amurikun" three-note melody. Or, as he puts it in an article published later in 1934,

> The more Greek a man knows the better his English is likely to be, and the greater richness, variety, height, precision, colour of criteria; the greater the variety of his ideas and memories of what verbal melody can be and should be; and the finer his perception of all verbal sounds whatsoever.[87]

Pound had long considered the Sapphic stanza in its best incarnations as a vestige of the mostly vanished "melic" or "songful" tradition in Western poetry. According to Pound, the rhythms of the sapphic invoked a time when verse was composed "in the sequence of the musical phrase" and "verbal melodies" had not yet "rotted" owing to their seclusion from instrumental music.[88] This historical separation from music and the ascendency of abstract metrical regimes which followed in many of Europe's poetic canons was a literary-historical wrong turn which Pound, at the time of his correspondence with Barnard, was actively engaged in righting. In the summer of 1932, he was still

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[84] Barnard, *Assault on Mount Helicon*.
[85] For an excellent account of Barnard's correspondence with Pound, see Barnsley, *Mary Barnard, American Imagist*, 93–106.
[86] On the complex form of historical consciousness animated by the rhythms of Anglo-American modernism, see Patterson, "Time, Free Verse, and the Gods of Modernism," esp. 178.
[87] Pound, "Dust upon Hellas," 211.
[88] Pound, *Literary Essays*, 3. Barnard, *Assault on Mount Helicon*, 54.

at work on musical settings of poems by Sappho and Catullus for voice and violin. These settings were intended as the centerpieces of a planned opera—Pound's third—that would use high-modernist compositional techniques to make the rhythmic continuity of Greek and Latin lyricism audible for modern audiences.[89] Like the Catullus translations he told Barnard to work at and send him, the ill-fated opera, which Pound intended to call *Collis O Heliconii* ("The Hills of Helicon"), is an exercise in getting up Mount Helicon the hard way. It's a highly sophisticated exploration of the particularities of foreign rhythms as well as a creative experimentation with the possibility of transplanting them in a different time and place, for other instruments and other languages. And yet, in neither of these cases is this exercise merely formal and didactic. In the one as in the other, the technical labor of translation and rhythmic transposition—the "grind and study of the MEDIUM," as Pound tells Barnard[90]—opens onto a creative reflection on the historicity of form and effectively transforms the writing of poetry (or the composition of music) into a practice of critical genealogy.[91] To write "amurikun sapphics," for Pound, is first of all to willfully estrange oneself from the traditional iambic patterns inherited from English literary history and come as close as one can to hearing the familiar sounds of the American vernacular as though they were the syllables of a foreign "langwidge." No one can hear their own language with fresh ears, for that would be impossible, but, if we follow Pound, one may occasionally hear it with different ears—Greek or Latin ears, for example, to which the long vowels of "amurikun" will suggest entirely different melodic combinations and rhythmic articulations.[92] The desired consequences of such translations are therefore twofold: in one sense, the verbal music generated by the work Pound recommends will be among the most contemporary heard in English-language poetry. In another, however, it will be among the oldest—for in such instances, the new expressive possibilities of contemporary verse emerge only once such contemporaneity has been refigured as the effective perpetuation of a much older and foreign poetic tradition.

On one level, Pound's perspective on the task of translation, and particularly his obsession with English adaptations of classical meters, represents his personal version of a very old discourse about artistic inspiration. Pound is not the only English-language poet to hold up Sappho as the prime example of musical craftsmanship in Western poetry, and he is certainly not the first to invoke Mount Helicon, the Bœotian mountain sacred to the Muses, as a kind of metonymy for everything fine about this "melopœic" tradition. In one sense or another, Helicon has "inspired" generations of English-language poets from Spenser to Keats to Heaney. It is, in fact, one of English literature's oldest topoi. In a certain sense, Helicon is the proof that Classical Greece and Rome are not real places but only "commonplaces," figures for a desired inspiration that has become complicated by historical and linguistic difference:

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[89] For a full discussion of Pound's technique, see Margaret Fisher's critical introduction to the opera in Pound, *The Recovery of Ezra Pound's Third Opera Collis o Heliconii.*

[90] Barnard, *Assault on Mount Helicon*, 54.

[91] In this respect, Pound's translation practice resembles the critical function Friedrich Nietzsche comes to assign certain forms of "antiquarianism." As Michel Foucault puts it, "[L'histoire antiquaire] s'agissait, là, de reconnaître les continuités dans lesquelles s'enracine notre présent : continuités du sol, de la langue, de la cité ; il s'agissait, « en cultivant d'une main délicate ce qui a existé de tout temps, de conserver pour ceux qui viendront après les conditions sous lesquelles on est né ». À une telle histoire, les *Intempestives* objectaient qu'elle risque de prévenir toute création au nom de la loi de fidélité. Un peu plus tard—et déjà dans *Humain trop humain* —, Nietzsche reprend la tâche antiquaire, mais dans la direction tout à fait opposée. Si la généalogie pose à son tour la question du sol qui nous a vue naître, de la langue que nous parlons ou des lois qui nous régissent, c'est pour mettre au jour les systèmes hétérogènes qui, sous le masque de notre moi, nous interdisent toute identité." Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, 1022. See also Yunte, "Was Ezra Pound a New Historicist?"

[92] On the rhythmic innovations triggered through the process of translation, see Carne-Ross, "Jocasta's Divine Head."

[…] Helicon !
O fountain'd hill ! Old Homer's Helicon !
That thou wouldst spout a little streamlet o'er
These sorry pages. […]

There's no doubt that in their stylized apostrophe to Helicon, these verses from Keats' *Endymion* are in part addressing the problem of their own historicity. It is only when transposed onto an allegorical stage—transformed into a kind of English landscape garden ("O fountain'd hill")—that, as Keats seems to acknowledge mournfully, the streams of Bœotia will flow to 1817 Hampstead. That said, if such allegorical practices represent one way poems may engage their own historicity, the creative translations and rhythmic transcriptions that the muses of Helicon inspire in Pound are quite another. If the one attempts to measure the "pastness" of the past, the other applies itself to dislocating the norms of the present's measure.

This difference in approach implies a very different understanding of poetic form. To *hear* it, simply compare Keats' pentameter with the first three stanzas of "The Return," a poem Pound wrote in a rush of "inspiration" in 1912.[93]

See, they return; ah, see the tentative
Movements, and the slow feet,
The trouble in the pace and the uncertain
Wavering!

See, they return, one, and by one,
With fear, as half-awakened;
As if the snow should hesitate
And murmur in the wind,
and half turn back;
These were the "Wing'd-with-Awe,"
Inviolable.

Gods of the wingèd shoe!
With them the silver hounds,
sniffing the trace of air![94]

These verses are an early attempt at the sort of "quantitative" rhythms that Pound some years later would counsel Barnard to practice in English. The first stanza, in particular, mimes the proportions of a Sapphic stanza, especially the form's final short, "Adonic" verse. And yet, Pound isn't simply transcribing the patterns of longs and shorts into stressed and unstressed English syllables, he is playing with the duration of the English vowels ("*See*," "*re*-turn," "*ah*," "*see*," "ten-*ta*-tive"), counterpointing the native "quantity" of English against the position of word stress.[95] As Pound's

[93] Pound claimed to have written "The Return" in a quarter of an hour to the rhythms of the introductory poem to Henri Régnier's collection of *Les Médailles d'argile* (*The Medals of Clay*). Published in 1900, Régnier's volume also self-conscoiusly positions itself in the shadow of Helicon, particularly in its opening line, no doubt familiar to Pound: "J'ai fent que des Dieux m'aient parlé" (*I feigned that Gods spoke to me*). Cf. Espey, "Some Notes on 'The Return.'"

[94] Pound, *Personae*, 69–70.

[95] For a thorough discussion of Pound's early experiments with quantitative meters, see Adams, "The Metrical Contract of 'The Cantos.'"

lines accelerate over slack syllables and linger on strong ones, one senses a rhythmic shape without, however, being able to recognize in it any of the paradigms of accentual-syllabic metrics. The impression is enhanced by the poem's self-reflective diction. An enjambment like "…tentative / Movements, and the slow feet" enacts its own halting motion and metrical dislocation. The poem straddles different historical prosodies, as the long vowels of the spondee "slow feet" seem to belong to a durational metric foreign to the usual English "foot." In a very concrete sense, what makes Pound's "feet" splendidly mismatched with their "wingéd shoe[s]" is the historical and linguistic difference that Pound has encrypted into the rhythms of his poem, a felt tension between the divergent metrical expectations tugging at "The Return's" syllables in opposing directions.

It is tempting to read "The Return's" divided allegiance as an indicator of its formal failure: as though the poem's English had only "half-awakened" from its classical fantasy and, not yet "master of its own house," still spoke in the disjointed syntax of the dream.[96] This is a common reaction to Pound's poetry; it was a criticism, as we shall see, most famously pronounced by William Butler Yeats, Pound's sometime roommate during these early years.[97] Such a reaction, however, misunderstands the historical predicament choreographed for us by the poem in at least two important respects. In one sense, the obstacle causing all the "trouble in the pace" is "Mount Helicon," but its Helicon is not the "fountain'd hill" of *Endymion* but the Helicon Pound refers to in his letters to Barnard—not the myth, in other words, but the historical meter of the melic poets as this form had been reconstructed by nineteenth century philologists and then disseminated through modern universities like Pound's own University of Pennsylvania.[98] In another sense, however, the "trouble" is not ancient meters at all but rather a particularly *modern* impasse, the formal crisis produced in the last quarter of the nineteenth century when the norms regulating European prosodic systems began to "waver[]."[99] Once these measures faltered, the historicity of poetry emerged with new urgency. The term "free verse," with which all this trouble has often been associated, has had the disadvantage of obscuring just this dimension of the crisis, as if the supposed freedom from metrical bondage implied a correlate freedom from historical determinations.[100] Pound was one of several modernist poets who disliked the term "free verse" for precisely this reason.[101] If anything, he understood the new freedom of verse as an even more aggravated form of historical awareness. Hence his suggestion that Barnard translate Catullus not into English free verse but into a measure of double dislocation, not English and not classic: the "amurikun sapphic."[102] Paradoxically, only such a "half-awakened" idiom, a form of poetic expression fissured by its own historical consciousness, would be contemporaneous with an age that was not contemporaneous with itself.[103]

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[96] For Freud's use of the "Herr seinem eignen Haus" trope, see Freud, "Eine Schwierigkeit der Psychoanalyse," 9.
[97] See Longenbach, *Stone Cottage*.
[98] On Pound's use of his philological training and his relationship to the field, see Smith, "The Energy of Language(s)."
[99] For the canonical account of such "wavering," see "La Crise de vers" in Mallarmé, *Oeuvres Complètes. Texte Établi et Annoté Par Henri Mondor et G. Jean-Aubry*.
[100] For an in-depth discussion of the disavowed historicity of "vers libre" in the French context, see Roubaud, *La vieillesse d'Alexandre*.
[101] See, for example, Eliot's "Reflections on *vers libre*" in Eliot, *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, 31–36.
[102] For a highly sensitive discussion of the history sedimented in the norms regulating the use and perception of poetic rhythm, see Charles Tomlinson's excellent collection *Metamorphoses: Poetry and Translation*. In particular, see his eloquent discussion of why British poets often found it so hard to appreciate the cadences of modern American poetry. Tomlinson, *Metamorphoses*, 7–8.
[103] "No age is ever contemporaneous with itself" is another dictum frequently attributed to Mallarmé (cf. Sieburth, "Channelling Guido: Ezra Pound's Cavalcanti Translations," 264.). Such non-contemporaneity, however, is also the

If this diagnosis of free verse is accurate, then the conscious incorporation of other historical forms through the work of translation, transcription, transposition, etc. is far from incidental to English poetry's modernity. In this respect, the ambivalent assessment of Pound's free verse that Yeats printed in his introduction to the 1934 *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* is an important document in the *history* of English poetic *form*. Alluding to the "style" sustained throughout "The Return," Yeats writes,

> When I consider [Pound's] work as a whole I find more style than form; at moments more style, more deliberate nobility and the means to convey it than in any contemporary poet known to me, but it is constantly interrupted, broken, twisted into nothing by its direct opposite, nervous obsession, nightmare, stammering confusion. […] Style and its opposite can alternate, but form must be full, sphere-like, single. Even where there is no interruption he is often content, if certain verses and lines have style, to leave unabridged transitions, unexplained ejaculations, that make his meaning unintelligible… Even where the style is sustained throughout one gets an impression, especially when he is writing in vers libre, that he has not got all the wine into the bowl, that he is a brilliant improvisator translating at sight from an unknown Greek masterpiece.[104]

It is curious how Yeats choses to describe Pound's poetic limitations: on one hand, Pound's verse *exceeds* proper "measure"; his is a mannerism that stumbles over its own technical virtuosity, becomes monstrous, fragmented, a style without fluency or grace. On the other hand, Pound's work is formally *deficient*. It doesn't really "measure" up. Even when he is not translating, "one gets an impression" that he is leaving something out, "that he has not got all the wine into the bowl." Such faults are only faults in reference to a standard of judgment, a norm which, in Yeats' case, follows explicitly from an understanding of poetic *form*. Style need not imply unity but form, as Yeats insists, "*must* be full, sphere-like, single." Form is the absence of a discrepancy between wine and bowl, container and contained. More to the point: a formally accomplished poem is a poem fully adequate to itself: it is its own original, sets its own measure, obeys its own law. Its "Movements," even when "tentative," are nonetheless equilibrated; they do not, as Pound's often do, lurch manically from one line to another as though their "uncertain/ Wavering!" were somehow both timid *and* exuberant.

As several commentators have observed,[105] Yeats' description of Pound's "style" is, in its own way, uncannily accurate. That said, such perceptiveness doesn't spare the older poet from drawing what from a historical perspective is exactly the wrong conclusion. The terrible irony of this situation is that the version of form that Yeats' stubbornly holds onto has, by the time of his writing (1936), itself become history. And, in fact, it has become historical in precisely the way that Pound's poetics will allow us to appreciate. What Yeats heard in the "stammering confusion" of Pound's verse, in its absence of "sphere-like" coherence and penchant toward fragmentation, was the sound of their "modernism." This modernity, however, asks to be understood in a sense different from the one Yeats proposes. More than any of the other poets Yeats chose for the volume, Pound's work—all those improvised translations without an original that Yeats could not help but admire—resists

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subject of several of Ernst Bloch's works, particularly *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*. For an application of Bloch's notion of "Ungleichzeitigkeit" to Pound's early imagist and voriticist poetics, see Miriam Hansen, *Ezra Pounds frühe Poetik und Kulturkritik zwischen Aufklärung und Avantgarde*, Studien zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft, Bd. 16 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979), 30–31; 51.

[104] Yeats, *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse, 1892-1935*, xxv–xxvi.

[105] See, for instance, Marjorie Perloff's chapter "No edges, no convexities" in Perloff, *The Poetics of Indeterminacy*, 155–76.

the process of anthologizing. It did (and it does) defy such attempts at categorization because Pound's "modernism" is not another literary form but rather a writerly practice which, like the analogous developments occurring more-or-less simultaneously in the human sciences,[106] took seriously form's own historicity. As the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate, it is often precisely those aspects of Pound's poems that for Yeats betray formal deficit—the missing wine—where history, as an obstacle that disarticulates formal measure, enters the poetry most forcefully.

The chapter that follows focuses more pointedly on the two elements of Pound's poetry that Yeats explicitly connects: on the one hand, rhythm, as a kind of "style" that may or may not imply "form," and, on the other hand, translation, both of real and fictive originals. For Pound, rhythm and translation provide technical solutions to the question, "how does poetry include history?" Both, on a very basic level, involve registering temporal discontinuities and lexical differences while at the same time working with them, transforming the disjunctions of history and language into engines of creative elaboration. In fact, although I dissociate them here to bring clarity to my argument, for Pound, rhythm and translation cannot be entirely distinguished. For Pound, translation is grounded in rhythm, and rhythm implies translation. The inviolability that Yeats reserves for the spheres is, for Pound, a rhythmic property scattered across various kinds of linguistic materials and operating at various scales. From Cavalcanti's Italian to Pound's Chinese, rhythm is a *virtù* immanent to words and texts, a momentum that projects these objects beyond their original language. Strictly speaking, a rhythm is only ever equal to itself: it cannot and need not be exchanged for another. For precisely this reason, however, rhythm serves Pound as the "base" or even the "bass" of translation. It exceeds the conventional bounds of the poem and propagates across dissimilar languages by a mathematics of rhythmic accord. Reconstructing the "law" that refers rhythm to translation and vice versa is the aim of the following pages.

II. Melopœia

The first way the phenomenon of rhythm bears on Pound's practice of translation—namely, the coincidence of a poem's rhythms with the sounds of its original language—is easily confused with contemporary debates about "untranslatability."[107] As we noted above, Pound himself usually classes the rhythmic dimension of a poem as an aspect of its melopœia, which he defines as the charging of words "over and above their plain meaning, with some musical property, which directs the bearing or trend of that meaning."[108] Melopœia, however, is not synonymous with rhythm. For Pound, melopœia extends beyond the phenomena usually understood to constitute poetic rhythm (the placement of stress, the pattering of assonances, the ligatures of rhyme, etc.) to include those musical features of verse which, like tone and timbre, are not usually classed as "rhythmic."[109] Melopœia is a poetic "tune." It's the particular melody that one hums when one forgets a word while reciting a poem. Poetic rhythm is a structure; it is slightly more abstract than a poem's tune. A

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[106] For a discussion of the parallels between Pound's "historic method" and the work of Wilhelm Dilthey and R.G. Collingwood, see Longenbach, *Modernist Poetics of History*, 56–57; 87.

[107] For two highly-influential contemporary perspectives on the question of untranslability, see David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003) and Apter, *Against World Literature.*

[108] Pound, *Literary Essays*, 25.

[109] Whether or not all musical phenomena imply rhythm in some form or another is far from an idle question, though one I cannot pursue here. For a philosophical discussion and a carefully weighted defense of a "yes" answer, see Hamilton, *Aesthetics and Music.*

poem's "meter," however, is more abstract still. A meter is a conventional paradigm which may or may not approximate the rhythm of a tune, and which, in certain instances, the tune might even strain against. Nearly anyone with minimal training can identify a line of blank verse, an alexandrine, a hendecasyllable; Pound prided himself on the ability to "feel rhythm" by what he called "the inner form of the line."[110] And, indeed, his poetry and his prose show his unusual attentiveness to the seemingly minor fluctuations of pitch, duration, and stress that distinguish the speech of one region, one class or one historical period from another. To a large extent, Pound's early championing of free verse was simply the affirmation of the musical qualities of spoken language. Poets, he contended, should make use of such rhythms in their verse and do so without adapting them to the templates of conventional prosody.[111] For this reason, Pound generally opposes melopœia to metrical form. In a sense, melopœia is the *sound* of the difference between the way a poem is read and the way it is conventionally scanned.

As such, melopoeia is more than a formal resource for poets; it is also the category of critical judgment that allows one to discuss a poem's musical properties in the greatest detail. Much finer than the semantic differences that constitute a poem's "plain meaning," melopœia registers the specific historical, regional, social, and cultural distinctions preserved in the aural texture of poetry. In this respect, Pound shows his debt to Dante, who famously linked the melopœia of vernacular poetry with the music of dialects across the various stages of their historical development. Some of the most memorable and historically revealing moments of *De vulgari eloquentia* lie in Dante's vivid descriptions of fourteen major and several minor dialects spoken across the Italian peninsula in the thirteenth century: literary history as an archeology of idiom.[112] Listened to in this fashion, melopœia becomes a *de facto* proxy—an index—for an idiom's historicity more generally.

Understandably, when any poet works with the musical nuance of particular regionalisms, shifts between archaic speech with modern vernaculars, or mimics the tones of certain sociolects, the translation of his or her work becomes difficult indeed. But such linguistic challenges may be compounded by more formal ones. The problem is easily demonstrated by glancing at the formal structure of a poem very dear to Pound, Guido Cavalcanti's "Donna mi Prega." Pound published two very important, and very different translations of "Donna mi Prega"—one for the magazine *The Dial* in 1928 and one as the centerpiece of Canto XXXVI in 1934's *Eleven New Cantos*. In the essay "Medievalism," which accompanied his 1928 translation, Pound explains to his English audience the density of musical texture knitting together the original's Italian, where "[e]ach strophe is articulated by 14 terminal and 12 inner rhyme sounds, which means that 52 out of every 154 syllables are bound together into a pattern."[113] For Pound, there is no question of transposing this cross-bracing pattern of rhyme, assonance and alliteration into English. To capture the fine grain of such sonic ligatures in another language is, as he writes in the 1929 essay "How to Read," "practically impossible […] save perhaps by divine accident, and for half a line at a time."[114] This does not mean, however, that the success of the translation is totally at the mercy of divine miracle. In fact, for the diligent reader, the pitch-for-pitch translation of a foreign poem's melopœia is not even necessary. In the same paragraph in which he concedes the extreme difficulty of transposing a poem's music into sounds and durations of a different language, Pound nonetheless asserts that "melopœia *can* be appreciated

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[110] Pound, *Selected Prose, 1909-1965*, 38.
[111] On Pound's use of such "rythmes sans mesure" (rhythms without measure) see Meschonnic, *Critique du rythme*, 214ff.
[112] On Dante's discussion of dialect, see Dante Alighieri, *Dante, De Vulgari Eloquentia*, 22–39. On Pound's use of *De vulgari eloquentia*, see Pound, *ABC of Reading*, 37. Also, Riobó, "The Spirit of Ezra Pound's Romance Philology."
[113] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 216.
[114] Pound, *Literary Essays*, 25.

by a foreigner with a sensitive ear, even though he may be ignorant of the language in which the poem is written."[115] Melopœia may not translate, Pound suggests, but this does not imply that all those with limited access to the original language have no choice but to mourn its absence.

The redundancy of translating a poem's music, the superfluity of duplicating sounds that are already there in the original, is a quintessentially Poundian sentiment whose assumptions and implications are easily overlooked. For Pound, melopœia does not require translation because such musicality is, for him, almost by definition what remains once the passage of time has eroded a poem's legibility, effaced its lexicon and swept away the historical form of life that supplied the enabling conditions of its production and reception. Unlike the context of its composition or the sense of its words, a poem's music is—according to Pound—virtually impervious to age. Melopœia remains ready, even centuries after its author wrote it, to be resurrected for those readers with the adequate patience, skill, and sensitivity.[116] Michael Kindellan has stressed how deeply this confidence in art's transmissibility steers Pound's thought in general:

> Good art, because it is good art, will necessarily survive unscathed, invincibly so. "Literature is news that STAYS news." [The poet] Archibald MacLeish corroborated this notion when he submitted the following blurb to [Pound's publisher] James Laughlin: "Most work ages with time. His doesn't. It keeps the hard sharp glitter." Pound put it differently in one of his many anonymous one-liners he published during his time in St. Elizabeths: "Thought grows, administrative arrangements decay."[117]

This belief in transmission is the hard knot that binds together the vast rigging of Pound's *œuvre*, a knot all the tighter for its resolutely circular reasoning. As Kindellan explains,

> The larger claim here concerns a belief in the permanent condition of real value, a belief that permeates Pound's thinking about not just poetry, but economics and indeed just about every other form of cultural production too. *Guide to Kulchur*, in many ways a kind of prose version of *The Cantos*, is entirely based on the premise that whatever endures, *qua* such endurance, is true.[118]

There is indeed something religious about this credo, a faith which leaves Pound untroubled by what Kindellan calls "the perils of diachronic textual transmission." But Pound's rejection of philology is not the same as a rejection of method *tout court*, nor does it imply a woolly affirmation of intuition. Pound's answer to the perils of diachronic textual transmission is rhythm, which is not the celestial movement of the spheres but a concretely citable pattern of recurrence, a "formed trace" susceptible to *critical* examination. In other words, such perpetual effects can be studied by a "historic method," a kind of scrutiny that merges scholarship with translation, and for which Pound claims scientific—if not properly "philological"—status.[119]

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[115] Pound, 25. My italics.

[116] In this respect, Pound's understanding of melopœia parallels his friend T.E. Hulme's arguments about the enduring claim certain medieval art—Byzantine mosaics, for example—hold on the present, an afterlife which, like Pound's Helicon, refutes the ideal of historical continuity. See Blanton, "The Politics of Epochality."

[117] Kindellan, *The Late Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 38.

[118] Kindellan, 38.

[119] On "historic method," see Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 207. On the relationship between Pound's method and Dilthey's critique of historical reason, again see Longenbach, *Modernist Poetics of History*, 56–57. In *Out of "The*

Pound is at home in contradiction, but his assertion in "How to Read" that even someone ignorant of a poem's language may learn to "appreciate" that poem's melopœia bodes poorly for the method he introduces. The definition that precedes this claim in "How to Read" specifies that a poem's melopœia, though charging words "over and above their *plain meaning*" with some "musical property," nonetheless "directs the bearing or trend of *that meaning*." How can someone who is not adept in the language of the poem appreciate the effects its music has on its "meaning"? Pound provides a provisional answer to this question a few pages further on in a statement whose bravado seems expressly tailored to provoke the ire of some of his readers. "Another point miscomprehended by people who are clumsy at languages," he writes, "is that one does not need to learn a whole language in order to understand some one or some dozen poems. It is often enough to understand thoroughly the poem, and every one of the few dozen or few hundred words that compose it."[120] At stake in the Pound's distinction between "learning a whole language" and "understand[ing] some one or some dozen poems" is a broader historical and philosophical problem about delimiting the horizon of the scene of interpretation. Which contexts are necessary for the understanding of a poem and which contexts are not?

The sorting of the "legitimate" contexts from the "illegitimate" ones requires evaluative judgments which for people operating within established disciplines often become second nature.[121] The consistent irritation when not moral outrage that Pound provokes in generation after generation of professional philologists and accredited linguists owes much (though not all) to his refusal to abide by such norms.[122] Although Pound's revolt against the academic culture that supplied the normative context of his own formation at the University of Pennsylvania and Hamilton College is in its own way highly overdetermined, it is also true that the linguistic and historical criteria by which that culture assesses whether a given reader is adept enough to interpret a poem's meaning, plain or otherwise, are not nearly as self-evident as its representatives might hope.[123] Does such understanding require spoken proficiency? Reading proficiency? And, for languages like Italian where strong regionalisms are the norm, is familiarity with dialect necessary? And of which century? And which social class?[124] To such complexities are added further difficulties related to the use of the verb "understand" in Pound's clause "to understand some one or a dozen poems." What does it

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Western Box," Joon-Hwan Kim contrasts Pound's historic method with the sort of positivist historiography taught in the American universities of Pound's day. Kim's book reminds us that it was in fact Pound who, in essays like 1917's "Provincialism the Enemy," loudly made the case for how the essentializing tendencies of such academic disciplines had become fatally implicated in U.S. imperialism in the Near-East and elsewhere. Kim, *Out of the "Western Box": Towards a Multicultural Poetics in the Poetry of Ezra Pound and Charles Olson*, 95. On this point, see also Stasi, *Modernism, Imperialism, and the Historical Sense*, 77.

120 Pound, *Literary Essays*, 37. Pound had given the same advice to Iris Barry in 1916, in an even more emphatic version: "Really one DON'T need to know a language. One NEEDS, damn well needs, to know a few hundred words in the few really good poems that any language has init. It is better to know the POIKILORHRON by heart than to be able to read Thucydides without trouble…" Pound, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, 93.

121 For a discussion of this hermeneutic problem with reference to the multiple contexts that made up the *Cantos's* own complicated publication history, see Rainey, "Introduction," 3–5.

122 On the institutional forces that have shaped the reception of one of Pound's most "scandalous" translations, his "Homage to Sextus Propertius," see Judge, "Make It Pound." For a bracing example of a modern classicist's ire, see Willett, "Reassessing Ezra Pound's Homage to Sextus Propertius."

123 For a very Poundian critique of the (still) unquestioned assumptions of manuscript editors and academic philologists, see Reuss, "Notizen Zum Grundriss Der Textkritik." Interestingly, Reuss, like Pound, reclaims the Greek term paideuma to describe the shared assumptions that underwrite any act of understanding.

124 This is not, however, to deny the limits of Pound's linguistic competencies, which Pound often confessed and which have been a frequent subject of debate. For an summary of the charges against Pound, see Stauder, "Poetics," 46–48.

mean to "understand" a poem? "Understanding" has its own history and poses its own problems of translation, some of which we will explore in the next chapter but whose broader implications vastly exceed the limits of this dissertation.[125]

Even if we bracket the larger problem of understanding for the time being, we can see that Pound's provisional solution to the intellectual demands of reading poetry from different times and different languages implies a method that defies academic orthodoxy. In certain respects, the priority that Pound assigns the poetic text in didactic pieces like "How to Read," and which becomes highly visible in chrestomathies like *ABC of Reading*, anticipates formalist reading practices, which similarly emerged in opposition to academic hegemony of literary history. Nonetheless, Pound's ambitions are quite different from those of the formalists. His historic method opposed itself less to historical contextualization per se than to the manner in which modern universities "zoned" such knowledge across multiple departments and specializations, projecting the categories of the modern division of labor back upon the creative life of premodern cultures. On this score too, Pound's engagement with Cavalcanti is exemplary. The problem with understanding the "plain meaning" of Cavalcanti's vocabulary, as he explains in the introduction to his early translations of Cavalcanti's sonnets and ballate, is that one never seems to read it "plainly" enough; the intervening history, and particularly the historical rise of "literature" as a distinct object of knowledge, has obstructed our view. "Six centuries of derivative convention and loose usage," Pound writes, "have obscured the exact significances of such phrases as: "The death of the heart," and "The departure of the soul."[126] For Pound, it is not just that Cavalcanti's use of such phrases needs to be distinguished from their history as literary tropes, it must be distinguished from their use by near contemporaries like Petrarch (1304-1374) and even exact contemporaries like Dante (1265-1321). Indeed, to grasp the "plain meaning" of certain portions of Cavalcanti's *œuvre*, one might be better off studying up on Aristotelian logic, Arab natural science, or medieval optics than working on one's competency in Italian (whether of the twentieth century or the thirteenth) or even reading around in the work of other *stilnovisti*.[127]

Hence Pound's initial plan to supply the Italian texts of his *Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti* not with a translation of "word and spirit" but with something he called a translation of "accompaniment," an "unrhymed lexical gloss" that would give readers a sense of the "mental content of the older audience, and of what these others drew from certain fashions of thought and speech."[128] Later Pound would distinguish such a gloss from a more conventional commentary. The goal of such an accompaniment, it seems, was less to render Cavalcanti's verse comprehensible by paraphrasing it in a more modern or more familiar idiom than to set certain "plain meaning[s]" directly before the reader so that he or she could perceive their historical specificity as clearly and

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[125] Thouard, "Dictionary of untranslatables," 1184–87. For a powerful criticism of the central tenets of hermeneutics, see Hamacher, *Entferntes Verstehen*, 7–48.

[126] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 12.

[127] Jean-Michel Rabaté has made just this point to defend Pound's ongoing relevance for comparative literature. "What the University of Pennsylvania professors reproached the young Pound for," Rabaté writes, "was similar to what Adorno saw lacking in Benjamin: It was simply 'theory,' or, in other words, a discursive justification for their assemblage of objects. If Pound was the only graduate student flunked in [Josiah Harmar] Penniman's graduate class on the history of literary criticism, he notes that he [i.e. Penniman] was also the only student interested in the subject." Rabaté continues: "The danger embodied by Pound, which explains his quarrels with most of his professors, was that there was no way of stopping his investigations. His desire to reach a lever, linked with a point of view that might be called 'comparatist,' would not exclude examining issues of prestige and privilege, of class and money." Rabaté, "Ezra Pound and the Globalization of Literature," 131.

[128] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 12.

accurately as possible: "What we need now is not so much a commentator as a lexicon. It is the precise sense of certain terms as *understood at that particular epoch* that one would like to have set before one."[129] At stake here is more than the philological reconstruction of current usage among thirteenth-century Florentines or even among thirteenth-century Florentine poets. At a time when such discriminations were not yet standard practice in Cavalcanti scholarship, Pound insisted that "the sense of certain terms" circulating among cultural elites of thirteenth-century Tuscany was not always consistent. On this subject, Pound was several years ahead of the scholarship, and his early appreciation of the differences that separate Cavalcanti's vocabulary from the vocabulary of his contemporaries in fact anticipates the direction the academic study of Cavalcanti's work would take over the next several decades.[130] Pound's prescience has not gone unnoted by Italianists. The celebrated literary scholar, Maria Corti, for instance, has explained Pound's "intuizione […] accuttisma" as follows:

> It's a matter not only of paying attention to the specific semantic value of a term, but also to note the difference between one milieu and another of the culture of the time; here Pound comes to intuit in some fashion what we today can call mobile semantic fields, that is the different use of vocabulary at different levels of cultural textuality. The notion is certainly not as clear in Pound, but he glimpses something of the sort when he maintains the greater modernity of Cavalcanti's language with respect to the Florentine cultural milieu and even, according to Pound, with respect to Dante. [131]

As Corti explains, Pound's achievement lies less in his understanding of the "plain meaning" of Cavalcanti's language—less, that is, in his having deciphered its sense "correctly"—than in his perception of the difference separating Cavalcanti's use of certain words from their use by others living in the same place and at the same time. The technical rigor of Cavalcanti's vocabulary "literally" set his work apart from the language of his contemporaries, pointing to a fissure in the intellectual culture of his epoch, and encrypting this distinction as poetry. Pound, who hoped to bring this difference into English and to transform the English language through the infusion, naturally came to consider the melopœia of Cavalcanti's verses as inextricably linked to the precision of Cavalcanti's language, since, for Pound, *that* musical tune encoded *that* "plain meaning." Put slightly differently: whereas conventional treatments of the musical form of poetry tend to

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[129] Cavalcanti and Pound, 214. Pound's italics. Consider also Pound's remark, "The poem is extremely clear in a number of places, the philosophic terms are used with a complete precision of technique. […] For the rest, there are certain enigmas, and the celebrated commentators have done nothing to solve them. These which face us to-day are precisely the same ones which faced Del Garbo in 1302 or 1320 or Di Giunta in 1527." Ibid., 211.

[130] Pound's notion of a "translation of accompaniment" also returns to one of the paths not taken in the history of nineteenth-century textual criticism. This concerned the nature and objective of editions and was a quarrel that pitted Jacob Grimm against Wilhelm Grimm, Achim von Arnim, and Friedrich Carl von Savigny. Against the latter three, Jacob had defended a theory of transmission that did not distinguish between re-edition and translation. For Jacob, both fell under the same concept of translation (*Übersetzungsbegriff*). As Roland Reuss summarizes, "The enduring explosiveness of this quarrel in the historical beginnings of what soon thereafter be called "Germanistik" resides […] in the fact that the concept of translation [Jacob] introduced, in its essence, included all possible transformations of linguistic precedents. Which is to say that the argumentation that accompanies Jacob Grimm's use of [the concept of translation] includes translation in the narrow sense just as much as it includes reproductions or textual redactions in the most general sense. Translation: metaphor. Something is made into something else by somebody. From its place back there and inside it is brought over here and outside, it is edited." Reuss, "'Lieder [...], Die Nicht Seyn Sind'," 17–18.

[131] Corti, *Nuovi Metodi e Fantasmi*, 408–9. For Corti's own influential "gloss" on Cavalcanti's technical diction see, Maria Corti, *La Felicità mentale: Nuove prospettive per Cavalcanti e Dante,* 3–37.

dehistoricize and decontextualize their objects, Pound's conjunction of "sound and sense" holds very, *very* specific historical implications.

It also reimagines the task of translation. Consider, for example, Pound's handling of the opening verse of Cavalcanti's Sonnet XIII:

Per gli occhi fiere un spirito sottile

For his *Sonnets and Ballate* of 1912, Pound translated this verse as

Subtle the spirit striking through the eyes.

Cavalcanti's "subtle spirit" is precisely the sort of lexical item whose "plain meaning" has been obscured by "six centuries of derivative convention and loose usage." The phrase, so quaint to contemporary ears, is anything but the kind of commonplace one might class indiscriminately among similar tropes. This is because, as Pound notes in his 1928's "Medievalism," Sonnet XIII's "spirito sottile" is not a "prett[y] ornament" but a technical description of the anatomical-phantasmatical mechanism behind lovesickness, a term with deep roots in medieval medicine and natural philosophy.[132] Specifically, Cavalacanti's "spirito sottile" translates *spiritus phantasmaticus*, a medical and philosophical term designating a central agent in the pneumatic interchange between sense, imagination and intellect.[133] Sonnet XIII's semantic field belongs principally to such specialized discourses; it would be a tremendous error to assimilate its lexicon to the figures of classical rhetoric, Romantic sentiment, or even Dantean allegory. Pound's 1912 translation, however, does something similar. Pound's English line undermines the internal coherence of Sonnet XIII's semantic field by inverting the positions of article and adjective ('subtle the spirit' vs. 'the subtle spirit'), a bit of mannerism that obscures the "plain meaning" of Cavalcanti's syntagm in order to produce the traditional trochaic substitution at the head of an otherwise iambic line. This is exactly the wrong sort of melopœia: a translation of music which uncritically projects the prosodic norms of English verse onto the foreign poem and thus fails to transmit the difference encrypted in the original music.

By his own standards, Pound's 1932 translation is a decided improvement:

A breath of thy beauty passeth through my eyes

Here Pound introduces a Rimbaudian synesthesia of the haptic and the visual not to derealize Cavalcanti's verse, but to make its image more concrete. Even the archaisms signify in a more self-conscious fashion: "passeth's" antiquated verb ending draws our attention to an older understanding of motion. The historically-coded difference audible in "passeth" directs the reader from the present to the past, to the field of medieval optics, where images move by processes of emission and intromission and vision is highly material, involving a physical transmission of forms from the diaphanous medium of air to the viscous medium of the eye.[134] In this respect, Pound's use of archaism differs from that of his Victorian precursors: Dante Gabriel Rossetti's translations of Cavalcanti, for example, abound with archaisms, but the "thee"s, "thou"s, "ruth"s, and "of very

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[132] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 225–26.
[133] Agamben, *Stanze*.
[134] Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti*, 2006, 35ff.

surety"s of Rossetti's "Wardour Street" English represented the accepted poetic diction of *his* time: perfectly contemporaneous in their non-contemporaneity.[135] In contrast to such lexical affectations, Pound's archaisms, published nearly seventy years later, strike a dissonant, anachronistic note, out of the key of both the contemporary vernacular and the literary idiom.[136]

Although an improvement, Pound's 1932 translation cannot be said to render the music of the original. As Pound would be the first to note, the melopœia of Cavalcanti's phrase derives in part from the chiasmic arrangement of the vowel and consonant sounds of *spir-i-to so-tti-le*. And, as Pound would no doubt also point out, the ligature of this little melody most certainly "directs the bearing or trend of [the line's] meaning": *contra* Pound's early attempt, Cavalcanti's "sottile" is not a "subtle" pre-Raphaelite ornamentation but a term of art that distinguishes this particular "spirit" from the various other species of "spirit" in the poem, including a "spirito d'amare," "spirito vile," "spiritello di mercede": a total of fifteen spirits in only fourteen verses.[137] The innate music of phrases like "spirito sottile" proves Pound's point that melopœia is practically impossible to translate. For all their limitations, however, Pound's various translations of sonnet XIII are not failures, certainly not for him. From Pound's perspective, it is absurd to mourn the loss of the music when the original tune is there to be had in the original; Pound simply had to bring his readers to it. Rossetti's *Early Italian Poets* had printed only Rossetti's English translations. For *Sonnets and Ballate*, Pound insisted on a practice that was then uncommon in non-academic books: a bi-lingual, facing-page edition in which the reader was free to consult Pound's reconstructed version of the "original" Italian text.[138] This, at least, was the initial intention for the 1912 volume. As Pound puts it in his introduction,

> It was my first intention to print only his poems and an unrhymed gloze. This has not been practicable. I cannot trust the reader to read the Italian for the music after he has read the English for the sense.[139]

Although Pound ended up compromising and finally published a series of translations that "tried to bring over the qualities of Guido's rhythm" (though not, as he says, "line for line"), the musicality of the *translation* is incidental to the early application of his method. If anything, such musicality would be a liability, for, the more accomplished the English melopœia, the less apparent the subtle sounds of Cavalcanti's "spirit[i] sottil[i]" would be. The objective was to restore the clarity of the original—the granularity of its "hard sharp glitter"—by repartitioning the properties of the original. The translation would be a lens that would refract and magnify the historical luminosity of the original—all except its music. That part of the poetic "partition" required little or no magnification. It could be read directly from the original's score. As Pound put it in a letter to a critic: "*The music is easily available for anyone who will learn Italian pronunciation.*"[140]

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[135] See, for example, Rossetti's translation of Cavalcanti's Ballata "Of a Continual Death in Love" in Rossetti, *The Early Italian Poets from Ciullo d'Alcamo to Dante Alighieri (1100-1200-1300)*, 346.
[136] Preda, "D. G. Rossetti and Ezra Pound as Translators of Cavalcanti," 222.
[137] Cavalcanti, *Rime*, 109.
[138] I place original in scare quotes for no other reason at this point than, as Pound himself knew and as we will have occasion to observe, the text of Cavalcanti's poetry was at Pound's time and continuing into ours highly contested by scholars. In this instance, the "original" is, in a profound sense, Pound's interpretation, when not in fact a translation of the medieval shorthand of the thirteenth century manuscripts into something resembling modern standard Italian. For a highly useful discussion, see Richard Sieburth's "Channeling Guido: Ezra Pound's Cavalcanti Translations," 277f.
[139] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 19.
[140] Ibid., xviii. My italics.

Like the Image, whose iconic syntax is said to bear the trace of the perception itself, melopœia is a time *capsule*, a time *signature*. Pound's concept shares in the anti-philological hubris that he had contracted from reading Ernest Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*:

> Fenollosa was telling how and why a language written in this way simply HAD TO STAY POETIC; simply couldn't help being and staying poetic in a way that a column of English type might very well not stay poetic.[141]

The emphasis here is on the twice repeated "STAY." Pound refutes what Kindellan calls "the perils of diachronic textual transmission" in the name of poetry's special 'staying power,' a virtue which may be partitioned visually—as in phanopœia—*or* musically—as in melopœia.[142] "Literature is news that STAYS news."[143] To hear the music is to hear the music: it possesses a "certain eternal and irrepressible freshness."[144] For those with sufficient patience and sensitivity, the music of a foreign language transcends its linguistic difference. Melopœia does not need to be translated.

III. The Virtù of Translation

From the perspective sketched above, there would seem to be very little the melopœia of the translation would have to "say" about the melopœia of the original. In fact, Pound suggests that a poem's music, unlike its language, doesn't "say" anything; it does not "signify" in the linguistic sense and for this reason does not require translation into *another* symbolic system. The musical aspects of the translation might please readers; such aspects might, in a limited respect, be instructive (a kind of musical crib), but they could not, at least in any deep sense, be considered as essential to the task of translation. That being said, that fact that melopœia does not translate does not imply that it is somehow incidental to the original poem. After all, melopoœia "direct[s] the bearing or trend of [the original's] meaning." Pound frames this aporia differently than most contemporary theorists of translation. For Pound, a poem's melopœia does not imply its "untranslatability"; rather melopœia contests the common assumption that the purpose of translation is to produce an equivalent for the original, that "to translate" means "to substitute," and, particularly, that it means to substitute *one* text for *another*.[145]

From the beginning of his career to the end, Pound shows little sympathy for the ideal of such a one-to-one transfer or for its practical corollary that a translation could or should reproduce all the features of the original: "Rossetti gives the following sonnet," he writes in 1910, "but it would take several translations and some comment to exhaust the beauty of the original."[146] An accurate

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[141] Pound, *ABC of Reading*, 22.

[142] Of the two, Pound's immensely influential application of Fenollosa's immensely problematic ideas about the Chinese language has received the lion's share of scholarly attention. This dissertation is not about the ideogram. It is about rhythm, and it argues, among other things, that rhythm and Cavalcanti are just as important for Pound's poetics as the Image and *The Chinese Written Character*. In fact, Pound's sustained interest in the musicality of the Chinese language implies that the two were never entirely separate. See Saussy, "Fenollosa Compounded: A Discrimination."

[143] Pound, *ABC of Reading*, 29.

[144] Pound, 14.

[145] For an eloquent description of Pound's non-exclusive understanding of translation, see David Anderson's introduction to *Pound's Cavalcanti*. Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, ix–xxx. See also Morrison, *The Poetics of Fascism*, 16–59. Ironically, the link Morrison establishes between Pound's poetics and his fascism has to do precisely with Pound's prescient refutation of the ideology of translation as a singular, metaphoric substitution of one text for another.

[146] Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, 105–6.

translation, in Pound's view, is necessarily *perspectival*: "it is as it were a photograph, as exact as possible, of one side of the statue." Pound does not claim that all translations do or should aspire to the accuracy of photographs. Far from it: Pound himself composed several translations that claim statue-like self-sufficiency for themselves.[147] "The Seafarer," "The Exile's Letter," and "Homage to Sextus Propertius" belong to this category. But Pound regularly points out that such "statues"—such "major personæ"—are also doing a very different kind of work. Unlike the "photographs," such translations "fall simply under the domain of original writing," and for this reason ask to be judged according to their merits as "new poem[s]," independent of their originals, sources, or inspirations. Importantly for us, however, Pound distinguishes his early work on Cavalcanti from his "major personæ" of the teens, categorizing the former in the bibliography he appends to 1920's *Umbra* with poems like "Arnaut" and "Langue d'Oc" as examples of "Etudes." More "scholastic" in aim and more technical in execution, the Cavalcanti translations in particular make no claim to artistic self-sufficiency. Written explicitly for bilingual editions, the Cavalcanti translations published in 1912 and those prepared for *The Complete Works of Guido Cavalcanti* in the late twenties do not purport to "re-present" their originals. Thanks to the format of the editions, the "presentation" is already "there," and the translation needs only to refer its reader to it. The presence of the original on the facing page frees Pound to experiment in the translations he does provide with techniques resembling procedures of distortion, magnification, high contrast and monochromic printing familiar from photography and which, in their deliberate departure from mimetic reproduction, aspire to refine the reader's perception of the original and not just "double" it.[148] Given his long engagement with abstraction in the visual arts, it would be a mistake to assume that Pound is simply preempting future criticism when in the essay accompanying his late translations he explains, "as to the atrocities of my translation, […] they are, I hope, for the most part intentional, and committed with the aim of driving the reader's perception further into the original than it would without them have penetrated." As we noted above, even in the early translations of 1912, Pound was contemplating techniques for getting his English readers to engage the Italian melodies printed on the facing page. The late translations simply return to this axiom, insisting, as the introduction to the 1912 volume had done, that it is ultimately in the "statues" and not in the "photographs," "where the treasure lies."[149]

Framed this way, one would expect such photographs, treasure maps, guides and glosses to lack any melopœic value whatsoever, or else, where the translation has such properties, for its music to have no consequence on the "bearing or trend of the [original] meaning" at all. How could it? *That* music is performed on the facing page, in the "untranslatable" tones and cadences of the original language. Given Pound's premises, this conclusion seems to be inevitable. What's more than a little vexing, therefore, is that such a conclusion in no way reflects Pound's actual practice of translating. If one imagines the gradual evolution of Pound's engagement with Cavalcanti, one would expect the work to become more prose-like, more like the "unrhymed glozes" he had initially planned for *Sonnets and Ballate*. The truth is, if anything, the opposite. If one looks at the translations, one notices that Pound's versions become *more* melodically innovative and rhythmically sophisticated the deeper he digs into the source materials. To hear the change in the translations, consider the difference between Pound's early and late versions of Sonnet VII:
Here's the first tercet of the sonnet, according to the Italian version Pound printed in 1912 *Sonnets and Ballate*.

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147 Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 5.
148 On Pound's relationship to the emergence of abstraction in the visual arts, see Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism*.
149 Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 251.

Non si potria contar la sua piacenza,
Ch'a lei s'inchina ogni gentil virtute,
E la beltate per sua Dea la mostra

In a 1910 manuscript, Pound translated these lines as

Her charm could never be a thing to tell
For all the noble powers lean toward her.
Beauty displays her for an holy sign.

In 1911 he translates them for *The New Age* as:

No one could ever tell the charm she hath
For toward her all the noble Powers incline
She being beauty's godhead manifest.

And, similarly, for 1912's *Sonnets and Ballate*:

No one could ever tell the charm she hath
For all the noble powers bend toward her,
She being beauty's godhead manifest.

And finally, for his 1929 article in *The Dial*:

No one could ever tell all of her pleasauntness
In that every high noble vertu leaneth to herward,
So Beauty sheweth her forth as her Godheade;

From the perspective of Pound's mature verse, the three early translations listed above are of excruciating iambic regularity. If we compare the only line that changes across all three, line ten, we see that Pound's chief concern lies not in the rendering of melody or rhythm but in the English translation of the reflexive verb "inchinarsi." Derived in part from the Latin verb "inclinare" (to cause to lean, slope), in its less figurative senses "inchinarsi" describes the act of bending one's body over as in a bow. In thirteenth-century Tuscany, the word had strong symbolic connotations; it was used by Pier della Vigna, Brunetto Latini and others to signify a gesture done in reverence or out of respect, as before a social superior.[150] In the thirteenth century, "inclinarsi" entered the lexicon of the poets of *la scuola siciliana* and *il dolce stil novo*, both of whom used "inclinarsi" to indicate the proper comportment of the lover vis-à-vis the beloved.[151] The appropriation of the word by the poets of courtly love is significant. The gestures of kneeling and bowing with which they fill their poems dramatize the subversive aspects of their art: it is not before a representative of state or divine authority that the lover humbles himself, but before the "profane" object of his desire.[152] In a

[150] Battaglia and Bàrberi Squarotti, "Inchinare," 666–67.
[151] See Cavalcanti, *Rime d'amore e di corrispondenza*, 58.
[152] See Roubaud, *La fleur inverse: L'art des troubadours*, 13f.

poem like Sonnet VII, "inclinarsi" folds into its gesture of submission this tension between differing hierarchies and systems of valuation. Cavalcanti's verse maximizes this effect syntactically and orthographically. As Pound knew, certain editions of Sonnet VII capitalize "Virtute," a personification which draws out the feudal connotations of "gentil" ("genteel," "noble") and displaces the poem's drama more forcefully onto an allegorical stage.[153] Rather than her kneeling before them, these lords (Pound's "all the noble Powers") bend before *her*. Though "ogni gentil Virtute" is the grammatical subject of Cavalcanti's clause, in another sense "each noble Power" is a submissive subject *of* the lady. Similarly, the lady, though a grammatical object, is by means of a syntactical inversion enthroned at the head of the clause, installed before her bowing suitors.

The conventionality of line ten's image posed serious problems for Pound, and the various shapes into which his early translations "bend" Cavalcanti's line betray his vested interest in downplaying Sonnet VII allegorizing tendencies. It is axiomatic for Pound that Cavalcanti is not an allegorical poet; in Pound's view, the entire rigor of Cavalcanti's terminology is set against such techniques of abstraction and oblique figuration. It's Petrarch, Cavalcanti's successor, who in Pound's version of Italian literary history introduces such "derivative convention and loose usage"; Cavalcanti, by contrast, is scientific, empirical: "Than Guido Cavalcanti no psychologist of the emotions is more keen in his understanding, more precise in his expression," Pound writes in his 1912 introduction; "we have in him *no rhetoric*, but always *true delineation*."[154] In line with Pound's judgment of the essential concreteness of Cavalcanti's images and the psychological sophistication of Cavalcanti's understanding, Pound's translations strain to capture the tension between the various forms of subordination (grammatical, syntactical, political, amorous) at play in line ten without, in the process, blunting its "virtute" into a thing-like reification or worse: into an allegory.

At stake in these translations, in other words, is not Sonnet VII's music, but its subtle manipulation of connotation. Such nuance belongs to Pound's third category of poetic expression, *logopoeia*—"the dance of the intellect among words"[155]—and it was principally with respect to his more sophisticated grasp of this aspect of Cavalcanti's work that Pound hoped to distinguish his translations from Rossetti's. According to Pound, Rossetti had produced some very melodious English versions, but he largely missed "the bearing or trend" of Cavalcanti's sense. In fact, in his introduction to *Sonnets and Ballate*, Pound refers explicitly to Rossetti's mishandling of Sonnet VII's tenth verse to make just this point:

> Ch'a lei s'inchina ogni gentil virtute

means, that "she" acts as a magnet for every "gentil virtute," that is, the noble spiritual powers, the invigorating forces of life and beauty bend toward her; not

> To whom are subject all things virtuous.

The *inchina* implies not the homage of an object but the direction of a force.

> In the matter of these translations and of my knowledge of Tuscan poetry, Rossetti is my father and my mother, but no man can see everything at once.[156]

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[153] De Robertis also prints "Virtute" with an "e": "Vertute." See Cavalcanti, *Rime*.
[154] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 12. My italics.
[155] Pound, *Literary Essays*, 25.
[156] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 14.

Pound's objection to Rossetti's "things" concerns the same "logopœic" subtlety that caused him to equivocate in his translations of 1910, 1911, and 1912. From Pound's perspective, Rossetti, perhaps because his translation deliberately contextualized Cavalcanti among other "Early Italian Poets," failed to see that, *contra* its use by Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, the relevant semantic field for "inchinarsi" is less the figurative landscape of *amour courtois*, with its tropes of sovereignty, vassalage, and homage, than the proto-"magnetic" fields of pre-modern natural philosophy. Cavalcanti's true contemporaries, in other words, are not the poets but the philosophers, the forerunners of modern natural science. As Pound explains in his 1912 introduction, "*La Virtù* ["virtute"] is the potency, the efficient property of a substance or person. *Thus modern science shows us radium with a noble virtue of energy*. Each thing or person was held to send forth magnetisms of certain effect; in sonnet XXXV the image of his lady has these powers."[157] From this reading follow Pound's choices of "leans," "inclines," and "bends" as translations of "inchinarsi." All of these words remove the poem from the symbolic register of "bowing," "kneeling," "saluting," etc. and bring it into the lexical horizon of modern mechanics. Such a practice no doubt *seems* anachronistic; and, in a sense, it *is*. But Pound's point is that Cavalcanti's relationship to his epoch is "in itself" anachronistic, out-of-sync, and non-contemporaneous. Indeed, one of the few accounts we have of Cavalcanti's life comes from *La Divina Commedia's* description of the sixth ring of Hell, to which Dante assigned his "first friend" *before* Cavalcanti had even died. Had Rossetti recognized that Sonnet VII's "ogni gentil virtute" does not, in the first instance, describe a contemporary social relation but rather something closer to an electro-magnetic profile, as when one speaks of the "nobility" of a "noble metal" or a "noble gas,"[158] then perhaps "things" would have been translated differently. As it is, however, Rossetti, due to his failure to perceive Cavalcanti's own non-contemporaneity, "completely loses the significance" of his precursor's poem.[159]

Pound's departure from Rossetti's example principally concerns questions of diction and register; musically, Pound's early translations of Sonnet VII are rather staid, generally less interesting than his precursor's version. In fact, the only substantial rhythmical innovations are 1911's inversion of "toward her," which tries to capture the dramatic irony of Cavalcanti's syntax, and the addition of a feminine ending to accommodate the extra syllable of "incline"—a change motivated, it would seem, less by musical considerations than the desire to express the parallel etymologies of "incline" and "inchinare." Which is to say: the force that is *literally* "bending" Pound's early translations this way and that is not Cavalcanti's melopœia, it's the demands of Cavalcanti's lexicon, and particularly the challenge of translating "virtute." From the very beginning of his work on Cavalcanti, Pound was aware of the difficulties of rendering "virtute's" meaning for a modern audience. "The relation of certain words in the original to the practice of my translation may require gloze," he writes in his introduction to *Sonnets and Ballate*. Of these, he continues, "[*v*]*irtute*, 'virtue,' 'potency,' requires a separate treatise."[160] Since Pound made this statement in 1912, several such "treatises" have attempted to lay out the nuances of Cavalcanti's "virtù." In his recent study of Cavalcanti's lexicon, Roberto Rea summarizes the four principle semantic fields "virtù" encompasses

> In Cavalcanti's lyric poetry ["virtù"], with twenty-six occurrences, configures itself as a key term: it can express the perfection descending to the lady [*derivante alla donna*] from the full

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[157] Cavalcanti and Pound, 13. My italics.
[158] *OED Online,* s.v. "noble," accessed August 1, 2019
[159] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 14.
[160] Cavalcanti and Pound, 12.

> actualization of her internal qualities […]; the amorous power released [*emanato*] by the eyes of the same lady […]; the faculties and vital potencies of the heart […]; the operative potency of a sentiment.[161]

Reading Rea's own "gloze," one can't help but be amazed at the range of diverse, technical significations—meanings ranging from medicine and psychology to astrology to metaphysics—that "virtù" negotiates. Cavalcanti's meticulous command of the specifics of such denotations—with no "loose usage" and "no rhetoric"—held particular significance for Pound as he devised his own program for linguistic hygiene in the early teens: Imagism.[162] In the notes he appended to "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste" (1913) for *Pavannes and Divisions* (1918) Pound writes, "in the art of Daniel and Cavalcanti, I have seen that precision which I miss in the Victorians, that explicit rendering, be it of external nature, or of emotion. Their testimony is of the eyewitness, their symptoms are first hand."[163]

In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that Cavalcanti's "virtù" is for Pound a metonymy for everything historically remote *and* intellectually proximate about Cavalcanti's medievalism: its perceptive clarity, intellectual rigor and technical accuracy. In his reading of Cavalcanti, Pound insists that each occurrence of the term is perfectly tailored to its respective context. But, much as Flaubert's *mot juste* implies an entire literary doctrine, so too does virtù, in its very precision, disclose the salient features of Cavalcanti's worldview.[164] It is, as Eliot once said of Pound's translations generally, precisely "what *they* have that *we* want."[165] Indeed, to devote oneself to the laborious task of deciphering its "virtù's" exact signification is, for Pound, to already demonstrate one's dawning appreciation of its sense. A proper translation *of* "virtù" is necessarily a translation *with* virtù, a translation that, as Pound writes in 1928, has *not* "reduced all "energy" [or "all the noble powers"] to unbounded undistinguished abstraction."[166]

If communicating this specificity was important to Pound, however, the way he goes about doing so in his later translations is peculiar indeed. In fact, the translation of Sonnet VII he prepared in 1927 for an edition of *The Complete Works of Guido Cavalcanti* deliberately scrambles linguistic contexts, setting its reader adrift in a lexical landscape traversed by multiple languages and multiple historical periods. Here is the full translation of the sonnet Pound first published in 1929 in *The Dial* and then, when the planned complete works fell through, at his own expense in 1932's *Guido Cavalcanti Rime*:

> Who is she that comes, makyng turn every man's eye
> And makyng the air to tremble with a bright clearenesse
> That leadeth with her Love, in such nearness
> No man may proffer of speech more than a sigh?
>
> Ah God, what she is like when her owne eye turneth, is
> Fit for Amor to speake, for I can not at all;
> Such is her modesty, I would call
> Every woman else but an useless uneasiness

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[161] Rea, *Cavalcanti poeta*, 457. See also Mocan, *La trasparenza e il riflesso*, 28.
[162] On the relation between the early Cavalcanti translations and the evolution of Imagism, see Tiffany, *Radio Corpse*.
[163] See "A Retrospect," Pound, *Literary Essays*, 11.
[164] For the connection between Cavalcanti and Flaubert, see Pound, 373.
[165] Eliot, "A Note on Ezra Pound," 750.
[166] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 209.

No one could ever tell all of her pleasauntness
In that every high noble vertu leaneth to herward,
So Beauty sheweth her forth as her Godheade;

Never before was our mind so high led,
Nor have we so much of heal as will afford
That our thought may take her immediate in its embrace.[167]

In the essay that accompanied this translation in the July 1929 edition of *The Dial*, Pound explains his technique as an attempt to "giv[e] Guido" in the English of a period "when the writers were still intent on clarity and explicitness, still preferring them to magniloquence and the thundering phrase." His solution, a kind of improvised pre-Elizabethan English, is far more disorienting than the archaic affectations of his early translations. Indeed, when it comes to the decisive line and its exacting word, "In that every high noble vertu leaneth to herward," it is not even immediately clear into what language Pound is translating. He is, in a sense, no longer translating from one *language* into another *language* but rather from one *text* into another *text*.[168]

Like the majority of the other arcane words and spellings in Pound's translation, the word "vertu" dates from the late fourteenth to the mid seventeenth centuries, a period of English literary history stretching from Chaucer's *Parson's Tale* (circa 1385) to Hawes' *Example of Vertu* (1504) and ending around the time of Shakespeare's *Alls Well that ends Well* (published 1623). A reader of the translation equipped with a historical dictionary will see that during this period the range of meanings encompassed by "vertu" extends considerably further than the Modern English word "virtue." Specifically, to the current senses of "virtue" as strength and manliness (classical Latin's *virtus*), and "virtue" as charity and moral excellence (*virtutes theologicae*, from Corinthians) are added those "connotations alchemical astrological, metaphysical" which Pound describes as crucial for the interpretation of Cavalcanti's own usage. [169] For a reader of Pound's translation without such a dictionary (like a reader of the *Cantos* without a university library), "vertu" will likely seem opaque, affected, its orthographic strangeness a difficulty cultivated for its own sake, for aesthetic effect, and without any relationship to the original. Or one might simply mistake it for Italian. The linguistic ambiguity is far from accidental; Pound cultivates it in order to trouble the boundaries of his source and target languages. Spelled with an accent grave, "vertù" is a variant spelling of "virtù" and an alternate form of "virtute" itself. In his concordance to Cavalcanti's *Rime*, Letterio Cassata classes all these forms—"vertù," "virtù," as well as "vertute"—as a single lexical entry. Were one to produce a similar concordance of all Pound's published translations of Cavalcanti, the words "vertù," "virtù," "vertu," "virtu," "vertute," and "virtute" would likewise be grouped in a single entry, though one of indeterminate language, referring at times to an Italian text and at times to an English one.[170] Indeed, the entry "virtu" in the concordance to the *Cantos* does just this: it indexes occurrences irrespective of their language, for that language has, in any case, become too problematic to determine.

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[167] Cavalcanti and Pound, 46. My italics.
[168] For a discussion of Pound's use of archaisms like vertu, see Korn, *Ezra Pound, Purpose, Form, Meaning*, 49–50.
[169] "*OED Online,* s.v. "virtue," accessed August 1, 2019. Indeed, in English texts like William Caxton's *Myrrour of the Worlde* (1481), "vertu" is used precisely in this cosmological sense: "the sterres that ben on heuen whiche haue *vertues* on therthe."
[170] See the Italian sonnets I, II, IX, X, XI, XIII, XXIII, XXXI, and XXXIV as well as Pound's translations in Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti.*

It is, however, crucial to the "historical sense" of the late translation of Sonnet VII that "vertu" is not just any word but a *particular* word from a *particular* moment in the development of the English language. The Wardour Street English of Rossetti's translations and some of Pound's early versions is a lexical costume the poem wears for periodizing effect: in such a context, what the old words actually meant historically is far less important than how they signified "antiquity" for contemporary audiences. Pound's translation, by contrast, draws consistently from the same historical stratum: a Chaucerian English that, for having been inflected by the French turn of late middle English, maintains a relationship to the diction of the Gawain poet. This diction—"makyng," "clearenesse," "pleasauntness," "vertu," "herward," "heal," etc.—has historical denotations where the differences from contemporary usage bears directly on the sense of the translation.[171] Were it otherwise, the translation would doubtless revert to a "mere exercise in quaintness." Pound acknowledges the risk:

> The objections to such a method are: the doubt as to whether one has the right to take a serious poem and turn it into a mere exercise in quaintness; the "misrepresentation" not of the poem's antiquity, but of the proportionate feel of that antiquity, by which I mean that Guido's thirteenth-century language is to twentieth-century Italian sense much less archaic than any fourteenth-, fifteenth-, or early sixteenth-century English is for us. It is even doubtful whether my bungling version of twenty years back isn't more "faithful," in the sense at least that it tried to preserve the fervour of the original. And as this fervour simply does not occur in English poetry in those centuries there is no ready-made verbal pigment for its objectification.[172]

Unlike the early translations of Sonnet VII, where the verse's "lean[ing]," "inclin[ing]," and "bend[ing]" tried to indicate the "invigorating forces of life and beauty" magnetizing the poem, the English of Pound's later translation is likely too archaic for most readers to be compelled by the intensity of its poetic construction. In a very real sense, Pound's later translation goes slack. It doesn't scan. It accumulates unstressed positions (l. 9: "No one could ever tell all of her pleasauntness" [|˘´ |˘´| ˘´| ´ ˘ ˘|˘ ´| ˘ ??]), swelling from nine (l. 7) to fourteen syllables (l. 10) per line. Such formal features, which to modern ears sap all the "fervour" from the verse, are nonetheless precisely calculated: the ambition, as Pound explains, is not to render Cavalcanti's "robustezza" for a contemporary audience,[173] but rather to make English language contemporary with Cavalcanti's "virtù."

Hence Pound's choice of "vertu" as a translation for "virtute." The problem and the promise of such a project is twofold: on the one hand, the early Middle English chronologically contemporary to Cavalcanti's Italian is, from Pound's (rather skewed) perspective, unsuitable: "There is no question of giving Guido in an English contemporary to himself, the ultimate Britons were at that date unbreeched, painted in woad, and grunting in an idiom far more difficult for us to master than the Langue d'Oc of the Plantagenets or the Lingua di Si."[174] On the other hand, the

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[171] "Heal," for instance, is more than a Middle English form of "health"; it carries spiritual connotations close to Middle High German's "heile" and High German's "Heil" and "heilig." The speaker, in other words, is not merely lovesick, he lacks the purity of mind to encompass the image of the beloved. See *OED Online,* s.v. "Heal | Hele," accessed August 1, 2019.

[172] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 250.

[173] Cavalcanti and Pound, 243.

[174] Cavalcanti and Pound, 250.

English with the closest affinity to Cavalcanti's idiom did not produce a lyricism capable of accommodating Cavalcanti's "fervour." Though Arthur Golding may have translated Ovid into an English whose "clarity and explicitness" could handle Cavalcanti's "precise interpretive metaphor[s]," the sonneteers of Golding's age (particularly Surrey, Sydney, Spenser) were too occupied translating the *wrong* Italians (the Petrarchans) to develop a suitable "pigment" for a verse like Cavalcanti's.[175] English never developed a lyrical idiom to match Golding's narrative verse. With Shakespeare, the window of opportunity closes shut: the rhetoric of the Elizabethan stage gains a hold on English lyricism, squeezing the innate musicality of speech into the staid iambs of the pentameter, a poetic disaster whose consequences, in Pound's estimation, can still be felt in the rhythms of his contemporaries.

Technically "In that every high noble vertu leaneth to herward" is a "fourteener." It is the meter into which George Chapman translated Homer and Golding translated *The Metamorphoses*—for Pound, "the most beautiful book in the language."[176] Chapman, Golding, and others manipulated the fourteener with great skill in their longer poems, but the meter never established itself as a viable option for lyric. By Shakespeare's time, it was already outdated, useful only for satiric effect.[177] The historical window in which English lyric could have gone another direction had closed. When Pound chooses to "giv[e] Guido" in antiquarian verses like these, and then breaks such old-fashioned lines over enjambments unprecedented until the twentieth century—

> Ah God, what she is like when her owne eye turneth, is
> Fit for Amor to speake, for I can not at all;

—he is deliberately translating into a form that could have existed but did not in fact exist. What at first glance seems so "quaint" about the exercise is actually its point of historico-critical purchase, its subversive genealogy of English literary history.[178] By winding back the literary clock and injecting Cavalcantian "vertu" at the right moment, before the 'tee-Tum' tide of the iamb swept the possibility away, Pound offers us not only a glimpse of the road not taken, he liberates from the normative grip of post-Romantic lyricism an "untimely" poetic measure, a "pocket of temporality" in which an unfulfilled historical potential becomes newly possible, an old time pressing the poet to "make it new."[179]

In the twenty years in between his early and his late Cavalcanti translations Pound clarifies something to himself about the relationship between the practice of translation, the relevance of history, and the demands of the present. The difference in approach is legible in the evolution of how he translates Cavalcanti's virtù: over the course of this period, namely, "virtù" goes from being a *word* to be translated from one language to another, and from one historical epoch to another, to being the *occasion* for the articulation of a relationship linking one language, and one historical epoch, to another. In relation to a different (but, given Pound's careening interests, curiously related) archive, Haun Saussy has called this practice "translation by citation," by which he means

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[175] Pound, *ABC of Reading*, 124–33.
[176] Pound, 127.
[177] Cushman et al., "Rhyme," 124.
[178] On genealogy, see again Foucault, *Dits et écrits*.
[179] We will return to Emanuele Coccia's phrase "pocket of temporality" (*sacca di temporalità*) in the discussion of the *Cantos* in the next chapter. Cf. Coccia, *La Trasparenza Delle Immagini*.

> translations that do not so much *make* an expression in the target language as *find* it (thus reversing the sequence in which the original necessarily precedes the translation), as well as renderings that do not express the original content in words that already existed in the target language, but *import* words or constructions (via loan word, calques, transliterations) directly from the source to the target language.[180]

Pound's "virtù" does both of these things: it is at once an English word that Pound has *found* and an Italian word that he *imports*. Pound's translation of Cavalcanti into English calls forth a suppressed echo within the English language translation, a forgotten rhyme that resonates across linguistic history.

If the first translations of "virtù" remind us of the differences that accumulate with time, in the later translation "vertu" voices an unexpected continuity. More generally, Pound's pre-Elizabethan version of Sonnet VII reimagines translation as a space in which the unheard synchronicities and non-contemporaneous harmonies excluded from the chronological narratives of the various national literatures become audible. By translating "Ch'a lei s'inchina ogni gentil virtute" as "In that every high noble vertu leaneth to herward," Pound has not only wound back the clock of his English, he has provisionally undone the lexical boundary separating English from Italian: in nearly every way, Cavalcanti's "vertu" and Pound's "vertu" are more proximate to each other than either is to its modern English or Italian equivalent. Commensurately if not symmetrically "foreign" to contemporary readers of either language, these two historical instances of "vertu" effectively gloss one another. If only for the duration of two syllables, Pound's text does not "translate" Cavalcanti's Italian; instead it enters into a different sort of "intentional" relation with its precursor: a "subject rhyme."

The term "subject rhyme" is a phrase Pound uses in a 1927 letter to his father that explains the formal ligature of his massive poem including history, by that time well into its third "decad" of cantos. In a subject rhyme, at least two sets of historical materials (forms, usages, traditions, testimonies, memories, chronicles, inventories, etc.) enter into a dynamic, mutually glossing relation. Because the reciprocal relationship sustained by the rhyme offers itself as an alternative to both hermeneutic and historicist modes of understanding and explanation, subject rhymes, "by definition," are far easier to describe than to define. Formal definitions invariably efface the texture (the "richness") of the rhyme. In an analogy he would come to deeply regret,[181] for example, Pound was known to occasionally (and half-heatedly) compare the technique of subject rhyme to the structure of a fugue: "Have I ever given you outline [*sic*] of main scheme ::: or whatever it is?" he writes in the letter to his father, "Rather like, or unlike subject and response and counter subject in fugue."[182] Following Pound's own ambivalent suggestion, generations of commentators have understood *The Cantos'* subject rhymes as aesthetic operations *par excellence*, purely formal procedures by virtue of which Pound's 'poem including history'—*contra* the expressed intentions of its author—definitively stops having any meaningful relation to history at all.[183] In this sense, it is not uncommon

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[180] Saussy, *Translation as citation*, 2–3. See also Korn, *Ezra Pound, Purpose, Form, Meaning*, 23–24.
[181] Cf. Hall and Pound, "Ezra Pound: An Interview."
[182] Pound, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, 210.
[183] Consider, for instance, Davie's unsparing conclusion: "Whatever more-long term effect Pound's disastrous career may have on American and British poetry, it seems inevitable that it will rule out (has ruled out already, for serious writers) any idea that poetry can or should operate in the dimension of history, trying to make sense of the recorded past by redressing our historical perspectives." Davie, *Studies in Ezra Pound*, 203.

to see subject rhymes compared to inter-lingual puns,[184] or presented as a kind of supercharged practice of classical allusion,[185] both techniques seen in abundant evidence in the work of Pound's contemporaries. For all their richness and perversity, however, Joyce's puns and Eliot's allusions remain literary figures in a sense that subject rhymes aspire not to be. And it is not quite as simple as Pound confusing words with things. As we saw with the rhyme "vertù : vertu," the goal is not, as Eliot once wrote, to "connect/ Nothing with nothing," but rather to "rhyme" a very particular word (not a signifier) and its very specific set of historical occurrences (not definitions) with another word at an equally specific moment of its historical use. Pound roots the rhyme in archival materials—his is a "*historic* method"—precisely to circumvent the vicissitudes of the signifier in which one can even connect nothing with nothing.[186]

This is not, however, to say that Pound's subject rhymes successfully escape the illusion of substantive content that Eliot so mercilessly satirizes. And, in this regard, it is no coincidence that in the critical literature on the *Cantos* the practice of subject rhyme is linked above all to paranoia.

> Historical events recurred, as Pound saw them, and they "rhymed" with events in myth and literature. These subject-rhymes, as he called them, inform the structure of *The Cantos*, which juxtapose far-flung events from history, myth, and literature to emphasize their inner resemblances. Although the subject-rhyme proved to be a useful concept for a paratactic poem, it was more problematic in the 1930s, when Pound tended to view the world in terms of sameness, echo, and rhyme at the expense of difference. In its most amplified form, this mode of thinking gave way to his paranoid, insidious, anti-Semitic rants that characterized contemporary history as a conspiracy of Jewish bankers.[187]

Leah Flack is doubtless correct in making the link between subject rhymes and the anti-Semitism of Pound's warped political conclusions, but her diagnosis makes things a little too simple—which is to say, she subordinates the complex music of the subject rhyme to the facile and derivative logic of Pound's political opinions rather than exploring the grounds for Pound's own conflation of what are—at least on the surface—two seemingly different ways of reanimating the past. For, as we saw above, Pound was highly conscious of the danger of "quaintness": indeed, the whole trajectory of the Cavalcanti work documents an attempt to develop an "historic method" that would not simply impose a foreign measure and a fanciful rhyme scheme on heterogeneous historical content. This project fails on its *own* terms: the question is why?

In opposition to the principles of both historicism and hermeneutics, Pound's late translation of Sonnet VII provocatively constructs its measures—both literally and figuratively—out of the flux of historical material itself. The rhymes that ensue link languages, genres, and epochs in surprising and often provocative ways. For all their boldness, however, the transhistorical, inter-linguistic relationships that such rhymes articulate are more complex than Flack's attribution of naïve equations of one moment, one thought, and one discourse. "Sameness, echo, and rhyme" are in no way equivalents, nor can they be analogously opposed to "difference." If anything, the assumption that they might be identical derives from a "logocentrism" of which Pound's mature

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[184] Eastman, "The Epic of Voice: History and Orality in The Cantos," 66–67.
[185] Tomlinson, *Metamorphoses*, 161.
[186] On the "defiance" of the ideogramic method face à the immotivation of the sign, see Alfandary, *Le risque de la lettre*, 64–66.
[187] Flack, "'The News in the Odyssey Is Still News' Ezra Pound, W. H. D. Rouse, and a Modern Odyssey," 106.

translation practice is one of the most persistent refutations.[188] At the very minimum, Pound's critical distinction between melopœia, phanopœia, and logopœia scatters irreversibly the illusion of writing as a single, coherent system of inscription.

"Rhymes," for example, are for Pound not only affairs of *words*; they are constellations of *sounds*. As such, rhyme is at least as much a musical and as it is a poetic phenomenon; it produces tunes and not merely lexical equivalences. Indeed, Pound often describes the complex phonic patterns of Arnaut's poetry as a kind of proto-polyphony, as though the momentum of Arnaut's verse could gather dispersed pitches into harmonic accord—the exact opposite, in other words, of the monotony, the "sameness," of an "echo."[189] From both technical and philological points of view Pound's understanding of rhyme is nothing if not sophisticated. As a student of Romance philology, he studied rhyme's rapid development in various European literatures following its adoption by the troubadours, who are said to have learned the technique from Arabic poetry, and who used it to construct a vernacular alternative to the *meters* of unrhymed classical verse.[190] In the short-lined, rhymed stanzas of Arnaut Daniel, rhyme provides a means articulate a poem's rhythmic contour independently of the prosodic rules of Greek and Latin poetry.[191] It is one of many tools by which the poet might, as Pound says, "cut form into TIME."[192]

"The rhyme pattern," Pound writes in his 1928 commentary on Cavalcanti's "Donna mi prega," "is a matter of chiseling." The metaphor might strike readers as opaque. How do rhymes "chisel"? Indeed, Pound seems to have anticipated our incomprehension. Several years earlier he had written:

> The "age demanded" chiefly a mould in plaster,
> Made with no loss of time,
> A prose kinema, not, not assuredly, alabaster
> Or the "sculpture" of rhyme.[193]

It's easy to forget that a plaster mould is, essentially, a technology of reproduction: it's a matrix in which an impression can be stored and then reproduced. In its capacity to register fleeting impressions with "no loss of time," a mould has an obvious kinship with other technologies of the "instant": stream-of-consciousness prose, "kinema," even photography.[194] Rhyme, however, works quite differently. Rhyme does not record time in the form of an imprint or trace; instead, it sculpts

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[188] See Derrida's famous but somewhat misleading discussion of the "ideogrammic method" in Derrida, *De la Grammatologie*. For a more "sober" grammatological defense of Poundian decentering, see Cayley and Yang, "Hallucination and Coherence." See also, Morrison, *The Poetics of Fascism*, 16–59.

[189] "The term harmony is misapplied in poetry; it refers to simultaneous sounds of different pitch. There is, however, in the best verse a sort of residue of sound which remains in the ear of the hearer and acts more or less as an organ-base." Pound, *Literary Essays*, 7–8. On the difference between "mono-" and "polyphonic rhyme," see Pound, *Selected Prose, 1909-1965*, 26–27.

[190] Canto VIII recounts, in highly condensed fashion, the transfer of Arabic songs from Spain to France: "And Poictiers, you know, Guillaume Poictiers, / had brought the song up out of Spain/ with the singers and viels […]" (Canto VIII, 32). See also, Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, 22. And, Pound, *Literary Essays*, 109. For a review of current scholarship on the history of rhyme, see Cushman et al., "Rhyme," 1183–85.

[191] On rhythm and rhyme, see Schmitt, *Les rythmes au Moyen Âge*, 88–90. See also, Nicholls, "Modernism and the Limits of Lyric," 178–79.

[192] Pound, *ABC of Reading*, 198.

[193] Pound, *Personae*, 186.

[194] Certain forms of photography were in fact "photomechanical," that is, the used resin moulds in the printing process. Interestingly, several famous writers were photographed using this technique, including Charles Baudelaire, Victor Hugo, and George Sand.

time's passage by hewing "rhyme patterns" out of the flow of written or spoken language. The Italian text of "Donna mi Prega" that Pound printed alongside his 1928 *Dial* commentary seems designed to illustrate just this point. Precisely because rhyme is *not* what his "age demanded,'" because rhyme organizes time differently than "a mould in plaster," Pound chooses to underline its presence in "Donna mi prega." His visual presentation of Cavalcanti's Italian accentuates the canzone's rhyme scheme and basic rhythmic articulations, transposing the verse's complex sonic ligature into a kind of Mallarméan dance of white space and typeface. As Pound explains,

> I trust I have managed to print *Donna mi prega* in such a way that its articulations strike the eye without need of a rhyme table. […] The melodic structure is properly indicated—and for the first time—by my disposition of the Italian text, but even that firm indication of the rhyme and the articulation of the strophe does not stress *all* the properties of Guido's triumph of sheer musicality.[195]

With Pound's graph of its melopœic structure before them, readers of "Donna mi Prega" do not only hear the rhymes, they *see* the joints where Cavalcanti's "chisel" fell. The "rhythm units" Pound has blocked out are the idiosyncratic measures of Cavalcanti's music, which, bound together by rhyme, interact with one another in a manner analogous to the different parts of a polyphony.

If meter marks time, rhyme scores it. It carves out a domain—the poem—in which time has a contour, shape, or form: where time is felt as "measure" and where time might be "measured." From Pound's perspective, troubadour rhymes blocked out the basic shapes (hemistiches, lines, strophes) which were only later quantified according to strict rules of syllable count. His typographical "score" of "Donna mi prega" helps us see how the troubadour rhyme aesthetic migrated into Italian verse. According to Pound, however, Cavalcanti was one of the last poets to have a vital connection to troubadour melopœia. As metrical rules hardened, such "cantabile virtue" went into decline: "measure" became a matter of counting, and poets lost the musical forest for the metrical trees. Such stifling measures, however, could still be unlearned, the lyrical clocks reset, the forgotten "vertus" made new. "There aren't any RULES," Pound insists to Mary Barnard in 1934, "thing is to cut a shape in time."[196] Although it operates at a much grander scale, a subject rhyme aspires to do nothing else. Therefore, before we can pass judgment on the historical content of Pound's subject rhymes, we must delve further into his approach to "measure," deeper into the ways in which the rhythms of a poem or a piece of music cut shape into time.

IV. Absolute Rhythm

One of the most portentous and most fascinating comments Pound ever made about the way rhythm 'cuts form into time' is found in his preface to *The Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti*. "As for the verse itself," Pound writes, "I believe in an ultimate and absolute rhythm," Pound writes, "as I believe in an absolute symbol or metaphor. The perception of the intellect is given in the word, that of the emotions in the cadence." He continues:

> Rhythm is perhaps the most primal of all things known to us. It is basic in poetry and music mutually, their melodies depending on a variation of tone quality and of pitch respectively, as is commonly said, but if we look more closely we will see that music is, by further analysis,

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[195] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 216–21.
[196] See Pound's letter of February 2, 1934 to Mary Barnard in Barnard, *Assault on Mount Helicon*, 57–58.

> pure rhythm; rhythm and nothing else, for the variation of pitch is the variation in rhythms of the individual notes, and harmony the blending of these varied rhythms. When we know more of overtones we will see that the tempo of every masterpiece is absolute, and is exactly set by some further law of rhythmic accord. Whence it should be possible to show that any given rhythm implies about it a complete musical form—fugue, sonata, I cannot say what form, but a form, perfect, complete. Ergo, the rhythm set in a line of poetry connotes its symphony, which, had we but a little more skill, we could score for orchestra. *Sequitor*, or rather *inest*: the rhythm of any poetic line corresponds to an emotion.[197]

Since the Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer's critical edition of Pound's writings on music, *Ezra Pound and Music* (1977), scholars, musicians, and poets have been puzzling over what, if anything, to make of this passage, which, read in hindsight, seems to anticipate so many of Pound's future projects. His work in the 'teens on troubadour music, for example, like his operas of the twenties and thirties, seems to flow directly out of this early claim that "the rhythm set in a line of poetry connotes its symphony, which, had we but a little more skill, we could score for orchestra." These works, mostly song-settings, transcriptions, and incidental music, hunt the "complete musical form" corresponding to a given poem's absolute tempo, guided, in the process, not by conventional meters and scales, but rather by Pound's intimation of what he calls "some further law of rhythmic accord." Reviewing these highly unusual compositions, one may indeed question whether the requisite "skill" to score such absolute rhythms "for orchestra" was in his case ultimately ever forthcoming.

There is, however, little room to doubt that what Schafer identifies as Pound's "absolute rhythm theme" returns again and again in multiple variations across all parts of Pound's artistic and critical output for roughly a quarter century. Pound elaborated it practically in his various musical settings, violin arrangements, and original operas, and he revisited it theoretically in the pages of his music reviews, Kulchur guides, and even in a little-read treatise on musical harmony.[198] Of these, the most compelling variations on the theme are the practical rather than theoretical applications; the most remarkable of all is the 1923 opera *Le Testament*, Pound's high-modernist chef-d'œuvre which the musicologist and historian Richard Taruskin has called his "Slim Sound Claim to Musical Immortality."[199] As a theory, however, absolute rhythm fared less well. Conceptual coherence eluded Pound, who, drawn ever more adamantly to the idea of unheard rhythmic accords silently harmonizing superficially unrelated phenomena, waded further and further over the years into musical, acoustic, and mathematical domains well beyond his depth. As Daniel Albright notes in his study of Pound's music, it is no coincidence that Pound almost invariably introduces the topic of absolute rhythm with the phrase, "I believe": the idea acquires a thetic status for Pound that is strikingly out of proportion with its highly speculative nature. That said, the need for faith is to a certain degree implied by the structure of Pound's absolute. The proof, after all, that would be capable of either confirming or denying a belief in ultra-low diapasons churning below the range of human audition, lies tantalizingly—and perhaps strategically—outside of our hearing.[200]

My intention in this section is not to provide the theoretical grounding for "absolute rhythm" that Pound never could. Such a project would in any case well exceed my own musical

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[197] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 18–19.
[198] Pound and Schafer, *Ezra Pound and Music*, 467–80.
[199] See Taruskin, *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays*. See also, Schafer, Hughes, and Fisher, "'More than an Amateurism': R. Murray Schafer and Robert Hughes in Discussion with Margaret Fisher," 28–41.
[200] Albright, *Quantum Poetics*, 158–59.

knowledge.[201] I am interested, instead, in how the formal problem that the notion of an absolute rhythm tries to solve is addressed differently, and in more explicitly historical terms, in the subject-rhymes resonating across the *Cantos*. Absolute rhythm helps us understand how Pound's "endless poem, of no known category…all about everything"[202] might "include history," even elaborate it, without in the process assimilating or domesticating it to the ideological categories and normative timeliness of more conventional modes of historical understanding. To understand absolute rhythm's relevance for the *Cantos*, however, we must dispel a misconception: because the word "absolute" is an antonym for "contingent," it is quite easy to imagine that Pound's "absolute rhythm" necessarily means a rhythm "unaffected by the 'march of events.'" This, however, is incorrect. "Absolute rhythm," just like the use of the word "absolute," is *eminently* historical, a fact Pound implicitly acknowledges by stamping his coinage with a particular date. To be specific, the preface to the first edition of *Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti*, the text in which Pound introduces the term, commemorates the occasion with a by-line: "Ezra Pound / November 15, 1910." The date is an interesting choice on Pound's part. It does not, for example, coincide with the publication of *Sonnets and Ballate*, which only came out later, in April 1912. What's more, Pound appends it to a translation of the final stanza of "Donna mi prega." The placement self-consciously frames the preface as repetition of Cavalcanti's poem and, more importantly, of the historical disjunction the poem instantiates. 1910 acquires a kind of epochal significance for Pound. As we will see, in nearly all his discussions of absolute rhythm, Pound refers, either directly or indirectly, to this multi-layered and temporally complex moment—the beginning, as Hugh Kenner might say, of "The Pound Era."

The "invention" of absolute rhythm in 1910 inaugurates the beginning of an era for both Pound and modern English verse, but this does not mean that any one of the individual propositions that go into the idea's presentation in *Sonnets and Ballate* is entirely novel. Even in 1910, one had seen all this language before: the term "absolute symbol," for example, which Pound tosses out without further explanation, is a Parnassian commonplace, already in its third or fourth iteration by the time it is picked up by contemporaries like Yeats or Stevens. Nor, for that matter, would Pound's pairing of the absolute in poetry with the absolute in music impress anyone who had read Walter Pater, or Stéphane Mallarmé, or Richard Wagner.[203] As a term, "absolute music" (*die absolute Tonkunst*) goes back at least to the German Romantics and, since Eduard Hanslick's *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (1854), had become more-or-less synonymous with European art music as a whole. Hermann Helmholtz's *Die Lehre von den Tonempfindungen* (1863) had already described the mathematical commensurability Pound notes between pitch and rhythm, though the insight goes much further back, arguably to Pythagoras.[204] Pound is a little more original with his suggestion that rhythm be harmonized as the "lowest" note in the scale, a principle of composition he refers to by the homonym "great bass"/"great base."[205] But even here he is only a couple years ahead of his compatriot Henry Cowell, whose *New Musical Resources* (1919, published 1930) develops the concept

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[201] For an in-depth musicological engagement with Pound's idea of absolute rhythm see Margaret Fisher's two-volume study, Fisher, *The Echo of Villon in Ezra Pound's Music and Poetry (Toward a Theory of Duration Rhyme)*. And, Fisher, *The Transparency of Ezra Pound's Great Bass*.

[202] Pound and Joyce, *Pound/Joyce: The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce, with Pound's Essays on Joyce*, 102.

[203] See Bucknell, *Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics*, 11–50. Interestingly, it is with Mallarmé in particular that Celan associates "das absolute Gedicht," the poem that "certainly doesn't exist," the poem that "can't exist." We will return to this point.

[204] On the history of "absolute Tonkunst," see Hamilton, *Aesthetics and Music*, 66–94.

[205] On "great bass," see Pound and Schafer, *Ezra Pound and Music*, 303.

of such "rhythmic scales" with theoretical rigor unavailable to Pound.[206] Finally, the correspondence between rhythm and emotion, the point on which Pound insists most firmly, is perhaps the oldest—and most tenuous—thought of all. Already in the *Problemata* attributed to Aristotle we find, "Why do rhythms and melodies, which are composed of sound, resemble the feelings, while this is not the case for tastes, colours and smells? Can it be because they are motions, as actions are also motions? Energy itself belongs to feeling and creates feeling."[207]

That absolute rhythm should prove to have such an extensive pedigree, however, [208] does not negate its historical significance, for what is "new" about Pound's absolute is how it assembles a heterogeneous set of already existing propositions. Pound solders the formal autonomy that one associates with absolute music to the expressive, psychological understanding of rhythm laid down by Aristotle and revived by nineteenth-century natural science.[209] Of course, commentators had often enough analogized the forms of art with the patterns of the natural world, but such parallels were often proposed in order to insist on a difference (sublunary chaos vs. the music of the spheres, sensuous richness vs. cold schematism).[210] Rarely, until Pound, had an artist suggested that the more personal and particular an emotion was, the more absolute and law-bound its expression would be.

Pound lacked the scientific support to corroborate his identification of the rhythms of poetry with the rhythms of affect, which is why his monadology of rhythm exists principally as an article of faith. As he writes in 1918:

> CREDO
> *Rhythm.*—I believe in an 'absolute rhythm,' a rhythm, that is, in poetry which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed. A man's rhythm must be interpretive, it will be, therefore, in the end, his own, uncounterfeiting, uncounterfeitable.
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> […]
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> *Technique.*—I believe in technique as a test of a man's sincerity; in law when it is ascertainable; in the trampling down of every convention that impedes or obscures the determination of law, or the precise rendering of the impulse.[211]

This passage, like the description in *Sonnets and Ballate*, circles around a seeming contradiction, an inner tension which, at this point, Pound can only manage by recourse to the language of belief. On the one hand, Pound tells us that absolute rhythm "corresponds *exactly* to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed." Rhythm, in other words, particularizes. It captures a *particular* shade of emotion. It renders a *particular* impulse. At the limit, rhythm is a kind of emotional seismograph (or lie detector) plugged into the poet's sensorium: it is "uncounterfeiting, uncounterfeitable." On the

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[206] See, in particular, "Part 1: Tone Combinations" in Cowell, *New Musical Resources*, 3–34.
[207] Quoted in Hamilton, *Aesthetics and Music*, 83.
[208] For a further historicization of absolute rhythm—one focusing on Pound's relationship during this period to contemporary discourses on technology, race, and the unconscious—see Golston, *Rhythm and Race in Modernist Poetry and Science*.
[209] Schmitt, *Les rythmes au Moyen Âge*, 35–36.
[210] Think only of T. E. Hulme and William Wörringer's contemporaneous work, particularly "Modern Art and its Philosophy," in T. E Hulme, *T.E. Hulme: Selected Writings* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1998 and Worringer, *Abstraktion und Einfühlung*.
[211] Pound, *Literary Essays*, 9.

other hand, however, Pound contends that absolute rhythm is a *law*. It describes a normative structure of acoustic relationships so complete that it fully determines the tempos, durations, pulses, and pitches of a poem or a piece of music all the way down to the lowest "note," an "undertone" vibrating so slowly as to be virtually imperceptible.[212] Absolute rhythm is, as Pound says, a "law of rhythmic accord," and, because such accords extend beyond the empirically given music to encompass the structure of the full symphony implied by its tempo, absolute rhythm can't help but be abstract. Like the mathematical equation governing the geometric realizations of a certain curve, its formula governs all possible musical expressions of a certain "shade of emotion" and not simply those given by the piece at hand. The task of the artist, it follows, is to intuit this law and, by means of "technique," enforce its highly idiomatic strictures, "trampling down," in the process, any metrical convention, tonal expectation, or aesthetic predisposition that deviates from its absolute prescriptions.

These two facets of absolute rhythm—on one hand, particular emotion; on the other, abstract law—are not, in a strict sense, contradictory. And, in a dystopian future, where emotions were understood to behave like the moving bodies of classical mechanics and grammar school students were tested on their ability to precisely render the "impulse" as a function of the "law"—in such a world something like Pound's absolute rhythm would be second nature. Often Pound speaks of affect in this manner, as though it was already or could soon be the object of a mathematical science,[213] and clearly regards the poetry of a "psychologist of emotions" like Cavalcanti to be an early version of such a discipline.[214] That said, despite positivism's massive influence on Western European culture at the turn of the century, in 1910 few commentators besides Pound considered poets to be psychologists in anything but a metaphorical sense. Neither, for that matter, was one accustomed hear the word "absolute" invoked in connection with the irremediably particular.

In both literary and philosophical contexts, absolute rhythm inverts certain key denotations the word "Absolute" had acquired over the course of the nineteenth-century. Of course, Pound's absolute is still ultimate, still free of condition, still, as he writes in Canto XXXVI, "Himself his own effect unendingly." But, contrary to a philosophical tradition which understood the absolute as the negation of determinate experience,[215] and a literary tradition which associated it with irony,[216] the "absoluteness" of absolute rhythm refers to a given cadence's unconditional particularity, a rhythm-pattern whose technical elaboration Pound, without a trace of irony, doesn't hesitate to describe as

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212 For a more detailed discussion, see Cowell, *New Musical Resources*, 21–25.

213 Consider also Pound's early definition of poetry: "Poetry is a sort of inspired mathematics, which gives us equations, not for abstract figures, triangles, spheres, and the like, but equations for the human emotions." Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, 14.

214 Nor was Pound the only one to do so. While a figure like Ernst Mach might have hesitated to accept either Cavalcanti or Pound as a scientific peer, the perceived affinities between the accounts of human sensation emerging from the field experimental psychology and certain aspects of modern poetry certainly influenced the reception of European modernism, particularly the Viennese. See, for instance, Hermann Bahr's famous essay "Das ich ist unrettbar" in Wunberg and Braakenburg, *Die Wiener Moderne*, 147f.

215 One need only compare the description of absolute rhythm found in *Sonnets and Ballate* to the discussion of "immediate experience" T.S. Eliot included in his dissertation a couple years later to appreciate the radical difference in paradigm: "Immediate experience," Eliot writes around 1916, "is a timeless unity which is not as such present either any*where* or to any*one*. It is only in the world of objects that we have time and space and selves. By the failure of any experience to be merely immediate, by its lack of harmony and cohesion, we find ourselves as conscious souls in a world of objects. […] That Mr Bradley himself would accept this interpretation of his 'positive non-distinguished non-relational whole' is not to be presumed. But the ultimate nature of the Absolute does not come within the scope of the present paper." Eliot, *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley*, 31.

216 See, for example, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *L'absolu Littéraire*, 67.

"a test of a man's sincerity." Moreover, while both Idealism and Romanticism had accustomed readers to think of the Absolute as kind of freedom, the freedom communicated through Pound's doctrine of absolute rhythm has a very particular reference and context. It represents a freedom quite different from the nineteenth-century account of Hegel or even Whitman. In a 1916 article, Pound describes the situation quite pithily, as though it were self-evident:

> I said in the preface to my Guido Cavalcanti that I believed in an absolute rhythm. I believe that every emotion and every phase of emotion has some toneless phrase, some rhythm-phrase to express it.
> (This belief leads to vers libre and to experiments in quantitative verse.)[217]

Because *vers libre* admits so many different definitions by so many different people, it would be misleading to simply equate absolute rhythm with this watershed moment in modern poetry. Nonetheless, Pound's idea legitimates those transgressions of poetic convention by which modern verse acquired the name "free." Absolute rhythm justifies free verse absolutely: the proper measure of a poem, Pound's credo stipulates, is not an inherited metrical form but the particular, idiomatic cadence which "corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion expressed." From 1910 on, a poem which conspicuously broke every rule of traditional metrics could nonetheless be defended according to the laws of absolute rhythm.[218] For Pound certainly but also indirectly for those inspired by his example, absolute rhythm supplied *vers libre* with a necessary theoretical foundation, a "great base" upon which the dissonant experiments of Anglo-American modernism could rest themselves.

V. *Testament* and Translation

As a justification for *vers libre*, Pound's 1910 preface fits nicely into familiar narratives of the advent of Anglo-American modernism. As Pound himself writes years later: "To break the pentameter, that was the first heave" (Canto LXXXI, 518). Unlike the familiar narratives, however, Pound's "break" does not occasion a departure from tradition, but a deeper immersion into it. The pentameter must be broken in order to make room for the recovery of other and usually much older forms.[219] Absolute rhythms of free verse are not a "clean break" with the past. Indeed, Pound coins the term "absolute rhythm" in 1910 in the context of an exacting and quite scholarly effort to recover what is generally considered to be lost poetic tradition. In his *Treatise on Harmony* (1924), Pound provides the crucial reference, both literally and figuratively:

> I believe in an absolute rhythm. E. P. 1910 with explanations(*). In 1910 I was working with monolinear verbal rhythm but one had already an adumbration that the bits of rhythm used in verse were capable of being used in musical structure, even with other dimensions.
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> (*) Preface to translation of Guido Cavalcanti (Pound's note)[220]

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[217] Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska*, 84.
[218] In this respect, Pound's "absolute" approach to *vers libre* is quite different from Eliot's highly influential version. See "Reflections on Vers Libre" in Eliot, *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot*, 3: 511–18.
[219] For a parallel analysis, see Scanlon, "Modernism's Medieval Imperative."
[220] Pound and Schafer, *Ezra Pound and Music*, 298.

The "work[] with monolinear verbal rhythm" that Pound mentions here refers to his early study of *motz el son*, the troubadour art of melding words and music. Above all, he is referencing his work on the twelfth-century Provençal poet Arnaut Daniel. For Pound, Arnaut's verse is incontrovertible proof that rhythm in poetry can be more than the rocking back and forth to the beat of the pentameter. Musically, Arnaut achieves an incredible structural complexity without becoming stiff or formulaic. His extraordinary rhyme schemes, which frequently run the length of several strophes, function, as Pound says, as a "sort of horizontal instead of perpendicular chord."[221] Such "chords," Pound explains, do not sound all their notes (all their rhymes) simultaneously like the pitches stacked vertically on a musical staff; rather, the polyphony unfolds horizontally over a temporal interval that is laced together by "bits of rhythm."

Although he notes a similar use of such "polyrhythms" in non-Western music (Islamic and Indian traditions particularly), Pound contends that this kind of melopœia more-or-less vanished from Western poetry after 1290. In his 1928 essay "Medievalism," he explains how Arnaut's "cantabile virtue" resonated just long enough to reach Italy and earn its author special distinction ("il miglior fabbro") in *Purgatorio* before falling silent with the deaths of Dante and Cavalcanti.[222] It is the loss of such melopœia, the arcane music that he had fallen in love with in college and then graduate school, that Pound's early free verse aims to correct. In 1910 Pound compiled meticulous notes about the details of Arnaut's technique: observations about the "government of speed" through the "arrangement of quantity," "the question of vowel music as opposed to consonant music," and, closer still to the wording of the Cavalcanti preface, the effects of "overtones and undertones of rhythm" as well as the process of "fitting inarticulate sound [*sic*] of a passage to the mood or to the quality of voice which expresses that mood."[223] When in *Sonnets and Ballate* Pound mentions "absolute rhythm," it is this tradition of "monolinear verbal rhythm" that he is translating into more modern, more scientific, and more polemical idiom. It is also this music which informs the melopœia of Pound's early volumes of poetry. Starting with the untranslated "Romance" of their titles, volumes like *A Lume Spento*, *Provença*, and *Canzoni* imagine modernity as a renascent medievalism. Though deliberately drawing on forms more than seven hundred years old, these collections nonetheless feature some of the best English free verse of the early twentieth century. The stunning line from "Cino,"

Eyes, dreams, lips and the night goes[224]

—whose three consecutive stresses and final spondee constitute rogue "penta-meter" that knocks English metrics off its feet[225]—is only the most famous example of how free verse for Pound meant the freedom to realize metrical possibilities foreclosed from literary history. The poem was published in 1908, but Pound dates it "Italian Campagna 1309, the open road".[226]

But if the idea of rendering absolute rhythm through free verse was prompted by Pound's study of Arnaut's polyrhythms and the troubadour-inspired melopœia of Dante, Cavalcanti and Cino

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[221] Pound and Schafer, 224.
[222] *Pur.* XXVI, 117. Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 218–19. For a similar assessment of the Troubadours' legacy by another important twentieth-century poet, see Roubaud, *La fleur inverse: L'art des troubadours.*
[223] See Moody, *Ezra Pound*, 121.
[224] Pound, *Personæ*, 6.
[225] For more on "Cino's" rhythms, see McNaughton, "Ezra Pound's Meters and Rhythms," 136.
[226] For more on the medievalism of Pound's free verse, see Stark, *Ezra Pound's Early Verse and Lyric Tradition: A Jargoner's Apprenticeship*, 119–41.

da Pistoia, it was also clearly influenced by Pound's fascination with medieval music. Crucially for Pound, however, these two arts were by no means distinct. Indeed, in Pound's estimation, the historical significance of troubadour verse rests on the fact these poets were also accomplished musicians: Arnaut composed such beautiful melodies *because* he wrote his poetry with a musical accompaniment in his ear.[227] With absolute rhythm, Pound attempts to reground contemporary verse in twelfth century *motz el son*, reminding modern poets that "rhythm is basic to poetry and music mutually."[228] Pound returns to the troubadour insight perhaps most forcefully in "Vers Libre and Arnold Dolmetsch" (1917), a text which discusses the relevance of Dolmetsch's work on old music for contemporary art. The article begins, "poetry is a composition of words set to music. Most other definitions of it are indefensible, or metaphysical. The proportion or quality of the music may, and does, vary; but poetry withers and 'dries out' when it leaves music, or at least an imagined music, too far behind it."[229] It is important to note that what Pound here calls "metaphysical" is the hegemony of a metrical convention, an "imperium of poesy" which "obscure[s] the fact that the day's fashion is not the immutable."[230] Against such a metaphysics of poetic form Pound pits his absolute. Absolute rhythm breaks up the false universal of "the day's fashion." It militates for an understanding of rhythm conditioned only by the poet's ability to "imagine" a tune.

The definition of poetry which begins "Vers Libre and Arnold Dolmetsch"—namely, "poetry is a composition of words set to music"—draws on Pound's firsthand experience "imagining" tunes to accompany verse, both ancient and modern. This practical experience goes back to 1910, the time of the Cavalcanti preface, and Pound's artistic collaboration with his friend, the pianist and composer Alfred Morse Rummel.[231] Rummel arranged accompaniments for several of Pound's own early poems, (including "The Return" discussed in section one). Rummel also shared Pound's interest in troubadour poetry, and, around 1910, the two decided to join forces on the musical setting and English translation of nine troubadour songs, including two by Arnaut, for voice and piano.[232] In this effort, Pound and Rummel quickly encountered the principal aporia of all modern scholarship on troubadour verse: while scholars agree that the troubadours composed their poetry for performance with musical accompaniment, there exists very little information about what this music actually sounded like.[233] Even today, musicologists can only *imagine* the missing tunes.

The troubadours represent one of the major if not the major influences for Pound's understanding of poetry: what it meant to write it and what it meant to translate it. The fact that the music of this poetry remained shrouded in mystery, therefore, had far reaching consequences for his

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[227] "The Greeks and Romans used one set of devices, one set of techniques. The Provençals developed a different one […] The quantitative verse of the ancients was replaced by syllabic verse, as they say in the school books. It would be better to say that the theories applied by grammarians to Latin verse, as the descendent of Greek, were dropped; And that fitting, *motz el son*, of words to tune replaced the supposedly regular spondees, dactyls, etc." Pound, *ABC of Reading*, 56. On how Provençal song "stiffens" as it becomes more formalized, see Pound, 157.

[228] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 18.

[229] Pound, *Literary Essays*, 431.

[230] Pound, 440.

[231] Moody, *Ezra Pound*, 129.

[232] For background, see Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries*, chapter 4.

[233] "The rhythm of the melodies of the troubadours," the musicologist Elizabeth Aubrey writes in her seminal study of the genre, "is a conundrum that has intrigued and befuddled scholars and performers since the early twentieth century. Of the various theories so far proposed, none has been proven, none is universally convincing, and all have generated heated debate. No one argues that the melodies were sung with no rhythmic shape at all. The fact that the manuscripts do not indicate rhythm means merely that scribes were disinclined or unable to write the rhythms down" Aubrey, *The Music of the Troubadours*, 240.

approach to translation: if "poetry is a composition of words set to music," then a translation of a poem which does not heed the music is only "a photograph […] of one side of the statue."[234] When it comes to the troubadours, a large part of the original statue was (and still is) missing. In this context, the 'loss of the object,' which often is an immensely evocative topic, emerged as a concrete problem that Pound and Rummel hoped to *solve*. The specific problem crystalized around the issue of cadence and the method one might use to imaginatively reconstruct a historical rhythm. The illuminated manuscripts from which they worked at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and, later, the Biblioteca Ambroisiana in Milan were scored in square-block or "neume" notation, a convention which registered the pitch(es) corresponding to each word or syllable but left little to no indication of the intended duration or accents of the notes themselves.[235] Several years earlier, a solution to this impasse was proposed by the musicologists Pièrre Aubry and Jean Beck. Almost simultaneously, Aubry and Beck put forward the highly-influential thesis that the rhythms of troubadour verse could be inferred using the rhythmic modes of medieval motets as a guide. The details of modal theory are quite complex, but, in its application to troubadour song-setting, the theory's consequences are relatively simple, if not reductive. Basically, Aubry and Beck argue that the meters of troubadour lyric follow a finite set of predetermined musical measures (the "modes") which prescribe by rule the particular sequence of longs and shorts (or, in a different accounting, stressed and unstressed syllables) to be used in performance. Since such patterns belong to paradigms developed with no reference to the given poem at hand, it's easy to see how modal theory is essentially antithetical to the principles of absolute rhythm.

Today, most scholars reject modal theory out of hand; in 1910-1911, Pound and Rummel were similarly unconvinced.[236] Their method, by contrast, hoped to derive the lost rhythms of troubadour song by mapping the particular "tonal accents" of the verse onto "dynamic accents" in the accompaniment, a testing out of Pound's suggestion in *Sonnets and Ballate* "that any given rhythm implies about it a complete musical form." When the settings were published in 1913 as *Hesternæ Rosæ: Neuf Chansons de Troubadours des XIIième et XIIIième Siècles*, Rummel is listed on the cover as the sole author of the accompaniments. In the edition's preface, however, Rummel readily acknowledges Pound's influence on the final product:

> The writer with the help of Mr. Ezra Pound, an ardent proclaimer of the artistic side of mediæval poetry, has given these melodies the rhythm and the ligature, the character which, from an artistic point of view, seems the most descriptive of the mediæval spirit.[237]

For all Pound's ardent proclaiming, however, the arrangements Rummel published largely fail to escape the sort of metrical formulism that characterized Aubry and Beck's solution. Although Pound's English translations generally shine, and some of the vocal parts manage to impart a vaguely medieval "spirit," Rummel's piano accompaniments, replete with grace notes and un-poundian ornamental flourishes, remain within the conventions of the quaint medievalism then so popular within elite society.[238] Rather than adapting his arrangements to the melopœia of the verse itself—its "arrangement of quantity and accent," its "vowel and […] consonant music"—Rummel

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[234] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 5.
[235] For another example of neumatic notation, see the opening of Canto XCI.
[236] Hence the title of Hendrik van der Werf's classic article, "The 'Not-so-precisely Measured' Music of the Middle Ages" in Aubrey, *Poets and Singers: On Latin and Vernacular Monophonic Song*.
[237] Rummel, *Haesternae Rosae*, iv.
[238] See Moody, *Ezra Pound*, 155.

cleaves to abstract metrical schemas, effectively driving a wedge between *motz el son*. As Charles Mundye puts it, "such a melodic setting is the musical equivalent of reading out a poetic text according to its metrical pattern and ignoring the particular rhythmic movement of the words themselves."[239]

The rhythms of *Hesternæ Rosæ* are far from absolute, and Pound later acknowledged that something crucial had been lost in Rummel's and his transcription. In *Guide to Kulchur* (1938), he speculates that too much received wisdom and misleading scholarship intervened between their readings of the manuscripts, obstructing their view:

> I strongly suspect that Rummel and I in 1910, following other students who were supposed then to know more than we did, failed to recognize what might have been supposed. I suggest that the next digger try to interpret troubadour tune [*sic*] on the hypothesis that the line (of verse) is the bar and can be graphed to best advantage as a (that is one single) bar.[240]

Although this reflection dates from the mid nineteen-thirties, its basic thought can be easily traced back to the early 'teens, a fact which suggests that Pound may well have been aware of *Hesternæ Rosæ's* limitations from the very beginning. After all, one of the central prescriptions of a "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," published the same year as *Hesternæ Rosæ*, is Pound's "ardent proclamation,"

> Don't chop your stuff into separate *iambs*. Don't make each line stop dead at the end, and then begin every next line with a heave. Let the beginning of the next line catch the rise of the rhythm wave, unless you want a definite longish pause.
> In short, behave as a musician, a good musician, when dealing with that phase of your art which has exact parallels in music. The same laws govern, and you are bound by no others.[241]

Here, Pound implicitly returns to the "absolute" insight of 1910: that the "rhythm waves" of poetry and the bars of instrumental music are governed by the same sinusoidal equations and *only* by these equations. For the poet attuned to absolute rhythm, it follows, the traditional units of English prosody ("the iamb") necessary fall out of the equation since such abstract forms have no substantive base (no "bass") in the spontaneous sonority of the language itself.[242] Nevertheless, Pound is careful not to say that musicians are more likely to "have" absolute rhythm[243]. Unlike "absolute pitch," a sense for absolute rhythm is a gift of comparatively little value to the adept of Western art music.[244] And, in fact, although "A Few Don'ts" insists poets "behave as […] good musician[s]," it explicitly proscribes composing "in the sequence of the metronome."[245] Like the "iamb," the mechanical interval of the metronome lacks a basis in the real "quantities" of the

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[239] Mundye, "'Motz El Son,'" 58.
[240] Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, 199.
[241] Pound, *Literary Essays*, 6.
[242] See, for example, Hanson, "Meter."
[243] On "rhythm sense," see Pound and Schafer, *Ezra Pound and Music*, 270.
[244] Although one should be wary of sweeping generalizations, the incredible variety of free tempos, polyrhythms, and non-metrical cadences found outside in non-Western traditions and folk music makes role of rhythm in Western art music appear very slight indeed. Hamilton, like Pound, names Stravinsky and Bartók as two of the relatively small number of Western composers to appreciate the possibilities for rhythm which relied outside the bounds of conventional Western "meters." Also like Pound, Hamilton notes the importance of speech rhythms as a site of rhythmic innovation in both vocal and instrumental music. See Hamilton, *Aesthetics and Music*, 131–35.
[245] Pound, *Literary Essays*, 3.

language, a fact Pound loves to demonstrate by challenging musicians to listen to the actual durations of the words they use to count off beats ("one," "two," "*thre-ee*," "four").[246]

Indeed, with just a few exceptions (Antheil, Stravinsky, Bartók), the only group whose rhythm-sense Pound decries more frequently than contemporary poets is contemporary *musicians*. And, of all musicians, the setters of songs and poems provoke his special contempt. In the late 'teens, song-setters become one of Pound's favorite examples of how money can deform meter and measure. An alternate version of the Usura Canto might read: *With song setters the line grows thick/ with song setters is no clear demarcation.*[247] Its gloss can be found in the musical criticism Pound was writing in the late 'teens:

> English contemporary poetry is, I suppose, very dull there is very little rhythmic invention in it; but, even so, writers intent on melody would, if they were serious in their technical intention, make greater effort to combine with musicians, and musicians would attempt to learn something from authors about the meeting-points of the two arts. As it is, the musician's attitude toward the lyric is too apt to be "Get me something that I can end on a high note. Got to make some money." Players will not practice for trios and quartettes; there is no place or company where any number of writers and musicians meet to try new experiments of an unpractical nature. I recently met a poet who wanted a poem set to symbols and 'cello in order to develop or illustrate the tonality of his words. The man is "of course" a lunatic. No Chappel-Ballad-minded aggregation would tolerate such departure from suburban custom. A "song" is words set to py-ano music. It doesn't matter what words. It is not the business of the business-like song-setter to express anything, or to find poems worth further musical development, or poems in which the verbal rhythms contains the germ of larger musical structure. All of which is very lamentable.[248]

At moments like these, Pound seems to anticipate Adorno's concept of the culture industry and his critique of Stravinsky.[249] Of course, Pound did not share Adorno's hatred of Stravinsky, whom Pound extolled as "the only living musician from whom I can learn my own job."[250] Nor does Pound's style command Adorno's mandarin contempt for "suburban custom." It is not unimportant that in his music criticism the only tone Pound seems to command is the exuberant amateurism of a crank. Indeed, from 1910 until his discovery of George Antheil and the Parisian avant-garde in the 1920s, Pound's absolutism of rhythm put him in a difficult position, at odds with the major trends of English poetry and European music since the Renaissance. Reviewing his voluminous critical output over this period, one senses Pound's intellectual isolation. Having appointed himself prophet of absolute rhythm in 1910, Pound proceeded to lecture, insufferably, both poets and song-setters in the principles of their art. Few, if any, were persuaded.

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246 "What [musicians] don't know," Pound declaims in 1918, "is the FIRST page of the exercise book. Namely, that a whole note equals a whole note; or 2 halves or 4 quarters etc. not approx. but exactly. […] Then there is the effect of counting in the English language, where *three* is a longer word, I mean it takes longer to SAY than, *one* or *two*. Hence that god-awful drag on the third beat in a four beat bar which has castrated and sunk so much British performance," Pound and Schafer, *Ezra Pound and Music*, 437.

247 Pound, *The Cantos*, 229.

248 Pound and Schafer, *Ezra Pound and Music*, 168–69.

249 See the texts assembled in the volume edited by J.M. Bernstein, Adorno, *The Culture Industry*.

250 Pound and Schafer, *Ezra Pound and Music*, 372.

Nonetheless, what ultimately saves absolute rhythm from Pound's less-than-convincing presentations of its theory is that Pound not only preached his religion; beginning in the late 'teens he dared to put it in practice by composing his own arrangements. Pound's accomplishments as a composer are naïve and clumsy (for he had no formal musical training), but they also occasionally attain a rare brilliance. As the American composer Virgil Thomson famously said of *Le Testament*: it "was not quite a musician's music, though it may well be the finest poet's music since Thomas Campion."[251] Above all, Pound's settings reveal that absolute rhythm is not an empty, fin-de-siècle soap bubble, but an idea that, for all of its creator's efforts to the contrary, nonetheless "got hold of something."[252] To a degree unobtainable in his "original" verse (and which will only be approximated in his translations and in the *Cantos*), one hears in Pound's text settings the historical watershed of "1910" as it were "in stereo." The settings produce a double displacement, leveraging the text's verbal rhythms to disarticulate familiar musical syntax, while simultaneously making use of the musical accompaniment to underline the cadences of the verse where it departs from conventional scansion. Listening to Pound's settings of Catullus, Cavalcanti, and Villon, one hears the disarticulation and reconfiguration of poetic and musical measure as it unfolds in real time, as the two rhythmic conventions are broken down in parallel—syllable-by-syllable, note-by-note.[253] Thanks to the work of Robert Hughes and Margaret Fisher, who have carefully edited and published the music to all three of Pound's operas,[254] it is now quite clear that Pound's insistence that poets and musicians reground their work in Troubadour *motz el son* is not an idle suggestion. Contrary to the phrase's "pretty" ring, the "union of words and music" as practiced in Pound's arrangements is emphatically *not* a "harmonious" one—at least not in that term's current acceptation.

Like his later Cavalcanti translations' use of pre-Elizabethan English, Pound's song-settings deliberately rewind the musical clock to a period before the ascendency of Western polyphony so as to imagine melodies unburdened by the necessity of a tonal center, a form of composition that would be keyed instead to the exact intervals of "an absolute rhythm."[255] Remarkably for someone with no substantial training, the absolute cadences of Pound's setting of a poem like Villon's "Dame du ciel" manage to unspring meter and de-scale tonality with an ineluctable momentum reminiscent of advanced serial composition. Though his technique differs from Schoenberg's in almost every respect, at their best Pound's arrangements decenter their audiences in a similarly uncanny fashion, pulling listeners up short by persistently exposing the cadences they expect and resolutions they anticipate as the artifacts of culture they are rather than forces of nature they often seem to be.[256]

But if Pound's arrangements recall the modern emancipation of dissonance and contemporary experiments in polyrhythms, they do so because they fixate so intensely on the past.

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[251] Thomson, *The State of Music*, 81.

[252] An interesting parallel, these are the terms in which Pound describes the Leibnitz's monadology: "Leibnitz was the last philosopher who 'got hold of something' […] If you let go of [the monad], you are wafted out among mere nomenclatures" Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, 74.

[253] Hughes et al., *Ego scriptor cantilenae: The Music of Ezra Pound*.

[254] See Pound, *Le Testament*. Pound, *Cavalcanti*. Pound, *The Recovery of Ezra Pound's Third Opera Collis o Heliconii*.

[255] For additional context on the relationship between the ultramodern and the archaic in Pound's approach to music, see the contemporary work of his friend, the composer and pianist Katherine Ruth Heyman in Heyman, *The Relation of Ultramodern to Archaic Music*. See also Epstein, *Sublime Noise*, 100–149. On Pound's connection to the early-music revival and his friendship with the composer, scholar, and builder of antique instruments, Arnold Dolmetsch, see Merritt, *Early Music and the Aesthetics of Ezra Pound*.

[256] Fisher, "Absolute Rhythm and Great Bass," 12–13. See also, Bucknell, *Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics*, 89. For an Adornian reading of Pound and Schoenberg, see Cooper, "Music as Symbol and Structure in Pound's Pisan Cantos and Eliot's Four Quartets."

Pound only set poetry from historically remote periods, and he only set it in its original language. In 1933, for example, Pound's collaborator Agnes Bedford made the mistake of requesting Pound supply a translation of the Provençal poem "Tos Temps" that he had included in his Villon opera. Pound responded unequivocally: "I do NOT want Tos Temps sung in a translation. The HOLE point of my moosik bein that the moosik fits the WORDS and not some OTHER words…/ The meaning is just the usual. Point of Sordello being that he can get life into what any other troub[ador] wd. have made a flat cliché…/ It is first strophe, purely conventional meaning. AND NOT TO BE SUNG OR PRINTED IN ENGLISH."[257] Ironically given his insistence that none of his settings "BE SUNG OR PRINTED IN ENGLISH," Pound approaches his music much as he approaches his late Cavalcanti translations.[258] The settings too provide "translations of accompaniment": musical in this instance and not lexical, but likewise committed to driving the audience's "perception further into the original than it would without them have penetrated."[259] "Music, meaning definitely the setting of a poet's words," Pound claims, can also function as a form of criticism[260]: by carefully tracking the syllable-durations and tone-leadings of the verse itself, a trenchant accompaniment can define and clarify the patterns of historically remote and/or linguistically foreign poetry.[261] One need only guard against Rummel's error by meticulously disassociating the work's absolute rhythm from the "bass-less" intervals of conventional metrics. "It is only too easy to ruin fine words with a poor setting," Pound writes in 1918,

> but it is quite possible to preserve their beauty, and even possible to enhance them; to emphasize their speech-beauty by a very slight exaggeration of the sound-quality, *keeping* in each case the quality of each word-sound but, as it were, dwelling on it, holding it to the ear, as a good poet might conceivably do in composing it […].[262]

At their best, Pound's settings achieve just this. They represent a highly nuanced method for elaborating the historical particularities of poetic form: the settings not only pry verbal rhythms out of their meters and conventions, they defamiliarize them, dwelling on them or in them, becoming contemporaneous with them by holding them closely to the ear, without the aid of traditional props. Or, to put it differently, it is now the listener who is transposed, not the text.

Of all Pound's text-settings, the fourteen poems collected in *Le Testament* undoubtedly constitute the most searching application of the idea of absolute rhythm. And, of these, the setting of the opera's eighth number, "Dame du Ciel," stands out as a particularly radical attempt to transcribe verbal cadences into musical notation, a "poet's music" unlike anything heard before in the history of Western opera. Legend has it that Pound banged out the tune's measures bar-by-bar on a kitchen table while George Antheil dutifully transcribed them into time signatures.[263] The meters pounded out in this fashion look like something Stravinsky might have composed in a high

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[257] Pound, Gordon, and Laughlin, *Ezra Pound and James Laughlin Selected Letters*, 245.
[258] In a 2010 article, Kimberly Canton makes a similar connection between Pound's operas and his translations. Canton, however, frames the operas as "translations into the Esperanto of all languages: music." This seems mistaken. The awareness of the historicity of form that informs all Pound's translation work—the operas included—seems starkly opposed to such an Esperanto-model of translation. Canton, "Opera as Translation."
[259] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 221.
[260] Pound, *Literary Essays*, 74–75.
[261] The classicist and translator D.S. Carne-Ross makes this point eloquently apropos Greek and Latin lyric in Carne-Ross, "Jocasta's Divine Head," 127.
[262] Pound and Schafer, *Ezra Pound and Music*, 123.
[263] Pound, *Le Testament*.

fever. They are irrational, almost unplayable, varying capriciously from one bar to the next. Flipping through the score, one finds a soprano part of three bars written in 33/16, 21/8, and 36/32, with an underlying arrangement in 8/4, 8/4, and 5/4.[264] As Daniel Albright notes in his study of the work,

> such notation has nothing to do with prosody, if prosody implies regularity or recurrence; far from being sensitive to fixed eight- or ten-syllable count of Villon's lines, Pound has done everything to erase the stable boundaries of the line. […] Pound's rhythm is less rhythm (in the ordinary sense) than *departure* from rhythm. The concreteness of the text is made conspicuous through a species of music that overstresses the bumps and gnarls of speech. The music provides an icon of the deviance of text from pattern.[265]

Albright's point should not be mistaken: it is not that "Dame du Ciel" lacks rhythm *per se*; what it lacks is "pattern," meter, a steady periodicity, whether poetic or musical. On the contrary, Pound's cadences pull such structures apart. There is no pretense that Pound's setting reconstructs the old music "as it really was."[266] It would have been virtually impossible for Villon to anticipate the "complete musical form" that Pound five hundred years later would extrapolate from his verse. The critical value of "absolute rhythm" does not consist in this sort of historicization. Rather, the notes of the arrangement function as a kind of musical gloss, an accompaniment provided to drive the auditor's perception "further into the original than it would without them have penetrated."[267] Like a lexical gloss, which assists the reader by identifying among all possible senses of a particular word or phrase those meanings which are relevant for the text at hand, the accompaniment helps "re-define" the shapes of those rhythms whose edges have been blunted either through habit or convention.

Interestingly, the use of music as a gloss on a text is itself a quintessentially "medieval" practice. In twelfth and thirteenth century Paris, for example, ecclesiastics invented an early form of polyphony by superimposing new music, new texts, or both onto the "cantus firmus" of monophonic liturgical music. The new material, sung in the upper voice, served as an explicit commentary on the old chants, which continued to be sung in the lower voice (though often much more slowly).[268] It is uncertain whether or not Pound was familiar with such glosses, which were also called "tropes," though, given his interests and the range of his reading, it is difficult to imagine that he missed them. In any case, they would have certainly appealed to his taste. Pound was so hostile to Western polyphony because he felt that an over-attention to harmony tended to obscure rhythmic contour, efface difference, and reduce music to a kind of "tonal slush."[269] The polyphony of early sacred music, by contrast, understood itself as a form of clarification. Like the unusual time signatures in "Dame du Ciel," the upper voice of Notre Dame style polyphony functioned to elaborate and to explicate, in words and music, the inherited forms of tradition. It was a way to make it new. Such "newness" did not efface history. On the contrary, the new emerged as an intensification and incorporation of historical differences. Pound's setting of "Dame du Ciel," like polyphonic chant, is an assemblage of historical layers, a composite of the original melopœia of Villon's fifteenth century poem and the modern gloss of Pound's twentieth century accompaniment. As we shall see, the *Cantos'* own form of polyphony, subject rhyme, functions analogously. The only difference, perhaps, is one of scale: as the *Cantos* proceed, the music incorporates more and more

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[264] Fischer, "The Music of Ezra Pound."
[265] Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 147.
[266] Albright, 144.
[267] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 221.
[268] Planchart, "Trope (i)."
[269] Pound and Schafer, *Ezra Pound and Music*, 258.

voices. Pound's "poem including history" does not offer a single commenting voice: the glosses themselves are glossed, the accompaniments are also accompanied, and the translations too are translated. In this symphony of texts, it becomes less and less clear whether one can meaningfully distinguish between the original and its glosses, accompaniments, and translations. The translation, as Saussy suggests, is not made, it is found. And there is no "original" partner to the rhyme.

Chapter 2: Perpetual Effect

I. "It can't be all in one language"

From a technical point of view, the *Cantos* represents a creative synthesis of procedures developed in Pound's facing-page translations and in his song settings. Like the multiple voices of medieval polyphony, the multiple languages of Pound's epic accompany one another. The "cantabile values" of these languages contribute to the poem's melopœic organization; their significance for the composition is determined by the relationships of consonance and dissonance they enter into with the other "parts" sung by the poem. The foreign languages need not be repatriated to their countries of origin, re-inscribed within the proper dictionary, or cleared by a respectable philologist in order to be read. As Pound said of Cavalcanti's sonnets, "the music is easily available for anyone who will learn [the] pronunciation."[270] As for the sense: the *Cantos* in effect provides its own gloss. What allows the reader of the *Cantos* to penetrate the poem's unfamiliar languages are the accompanying resources supplied by the various cantos themselves. From this perspective, the *Cantos* is nothing less than a vast facing-page translation, though one where there is no translated text, just mutually informing—"rhyming"—glosses. Since one part of the poem effectively glosses another part which glosses another, Pound feels justified in making the seemingly wild statement that a knowledge of foreign languages is not a prerequisite for reading his epic. Approached with sufficient care and patience, the poem will teach its reader all he or she has to know.

In a famous letter to Sarah Perkins Cope from January 1934, Pound defiantly insists, "[a]ll tosh about *foreign languages* making it difficult. The quotes are all either explained at once by repeat or they are definitely *of* the things indicated. If reader [sic] don't know what an elefant IS, then the word is obscure."[271] There is no denying the polemic of this verdict. In fact, Pound himself goes on to grant that some—though not an exorbitant amount—of Greek might come in handy. The letter predates the Chinese Cantos, and, given the direction the epic would take, one might suspect that Pound would admit that a smattering of Chinese certainly wouldn't hurt—though even the *Cantos'* infamous ideograms are all glossed rather straightforwardly. And yet, as Pound insists in the table introducing Cantos LII-LXXI, formal training in Chinese is not necessary: "Other foreign words and ideograms both in these two decads and in early cantos enforce the text but seldom if ever add anything not stated in the english, though not always in lines immediately contiguous to these underlinings." The inclusion of bits of foreign texts indicates the contours of a musical scansion—not only because they implicitly ask to be read for their music, their phonic sequence (as opposed to their "sense"), but because as almost invariably bits of quoted material from other, historical texts (Homer, Eriugena, Dante, Adams, Confucius, etc.) they literally—by the letter—indicate a repetition: this here, has been written before and is returning now, at this moment in time, producing a "repeat in history."[272] The foreign words and phrases underline the musicality of the text (it is where the text most explicitly approaches "music"), and, as we read the text for its music (durations or, visually, ideograms) we will experience not only a local rhythm, but a more expansive historical rhythm—a historical or subject rhyme.[273]

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[270] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, xviii.
[271] E.P to Sarah Perkins Cope, 15 January 1934, in Letters of Ezra Pound, 251-252.
[272] E.P to Homer Pound, 11 April 1927 in Pound, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, 210.
[273] Today it is common to distinguish between rhythm and rhyme, but as Cushman et al. point out in their entry on rhyme in the Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, "Rhythm and rhyme are […] intimately related not only

For readers disposed to dismiss Pound as a careless thinker, the technical sophistication of the *Cantos'* subject rhymes can only come as a shock. In these moments, Pound compresses the larger rhythms of history into the local rhythms of language, so that the second becomes a cypher or index of the first. This, at least is how Pound explains his procedure in a 1939 letter to the American poet Hubert Creekmore.

> I believe that when finished, all foreign words in the Cantos, Gk., etc., will be underlinings, not necessary to the sense, in one way. I mean a complete sense will exist without them; it will be there in the American text, but the Greek, ideograms, etc., will indicate a duration from when or since when. If you can find any briefer means of getting this repeat or resonance, tell papa, and I will try to employ it.

A brief means of indicating a duration: two temporal values are being run into each other so that the one refers to the other and vice-versa. The brief rhythmic tag refers to the historical duration and the historical duration is rendered audible in the "brief rhythmic tag." As Pound says, the "underlinings" need not contribute to the "sense" of the poem, they do, however, contribute a certain temporal value: their local music provides a kind of short hand for the broader musical sweeps of the work. Pound is extraordinarily specific that the larger durations should be folded into the smaller, indeed into the intonations of the micro rhythms to which the reader, silently or out loud, will have to habituate him or herself through the reading of the poem.[274] As Pound tells Creekmore: "ALL typographic disposition, placings of words *on* the page, is intended to facilitate the reader's intonation, whether he be reading silently to self or aloud to friends. Given time and technique I might even put down the musical notation of passages or 'breaks into song.'"[275] Pound's letter to Creekmore is from 1939, which means that it anticipates by several years the moment in the Pisan sequence when the *Cantos* really does, abruptly, cut to a reproduction of the score of Gerhart Münch's transcription of Clement Janequin's *Chançon des oiseaux* for solo violin. Canto LXXV's sudden "break" into nearly two pages of Olga Rudge's handwritten score has become a familiar landmark for Pound criticism, and for good reason: here, surely, where the rhythms of Pound's free verse give way to the trills, turns and double stops of Münch's score, we have a remarkable literalization of the troubadour doctrine of *motz el son*, the pairing of words and music, and a seemingly privileged window into the musical structure of the *Cantos* as a whole. This argument has been put forward most recently by Roxana Preda, who sees in Canto LXXV's carefully orchestrated collage of words and music nothing less than "a miniature diagram of the *Cantos*."[276] Münch's transposition is monophonic: he scored Janequin's choral polyphony for a single violin. Nonetheless, Münch's violin part has retained a trace of the original's complexity, the sound "not of one bird but many" (a "formèd trace" that will repeat in the image of birds on the wire in Canto

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etymologically but conceptually." Not only does the English word "rhyme" derive from the Latin word "rithmus" and Greek word "rhythmos," but rhyme shares with other rhythmic phenomena the ability to segment sound. "As with the clausulae of late antique prose rhythm, rhyme marks the ends of runs of syllables in speech and thereby segments the sound stream into equal or perceived-equal units or sections: this segmentation, in turn, establishes equivalence, which is essential to repetition and the effects it is capable of. Lotman says that, if all equivalences in the poetic line are classed as either positional (rhythmic) or euphonic (sonal), then rhyme is created at the intersection of the two sets." Cushman et al., "Rhyme," 1185.

[274] For an extended discussion of this process of habituation, see Nicholls, "A Necessary Blindness."

[275] E.P to Hubert Creekmore, February 1939, in Pound, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, 322.

[276] Preda, "Of Birds, Composers, and Poets," 165.

LXXIX). Such technical virtuosity mirrors the *Cantos'* own ambition to incorporate historical materials without flattening them into a single narrative, to sustain history's own polyphony in the "monolinear verbal rhythms" of verse.

And yet, there is also something potentially misleading about reading Canto LXXV's dramatic "break[] into song" as a paradigm for the way melopœia functions in the poem more generally. The highly personal tone and meditative, elegiac rhythms of Pisan cantos like LXXV are far from representative of the *Cantos* as a whole, though their celebrated lyricism may come closest to what many of Pound's readers will likely recognize as poetic "music."[277] Indeed, lyrical readings of Canto LXXV may overplay their point. The notated birdsong of LXXV may have less to do with the fact that at the time Pound was himself behind the bars of his own cage at the US Army Detention Training Center in Pisa, than with his real desire to preserve *this particular* music, to include history not as allusion but as evidence.[278] The technology employed in Canto LXXV's reproduction of the score recalls nothing so much as Pound's attempts to secure microphotographs of rare manuscript editions of Cavalcanti's poetry so as to facilitate scholarly research.[279] Pound would be the last to deny the link between lyric and melos, but, as someone who once dreamed of "harmonizing" the buzzes and squeaks of factory equipment,[280] Pound was far from regarding lyric, even broadly understood, as capable of exhausting the melopœic possibilities of poetry. As we've noted, Pound's understanding of melopœia extends to the musicality of dialect, to uses of language usually considered opposed to the lyric genre. Indeed, when Pound tells Creekmore that "[t]he order of words and sounds [in the *Cantos*] ought to induce the proper reading; proper tone of voice, etc., but can *not* [*sic*] redeem fools from idiocy, etc. If the goddam violin string is not tense, no amount of bowing will help the player,"[281] the violin string he alludes to had yet to assume the specificity it would acquire, for example, in Canto LXXV's reproduction of Münch's score.

II: Preface to Subject Rhyme

The pushing of poetic rhythm beyond the bounds of lyric is necessary for the *Cantos'* practice of historical transmission. The law of rhythm is not the law of genre; it is the structure of determination that binds the history of genre itself in to a pattern. The "greatness" of the "bass," which in other contexts would make one think of the laws of transcendental philosophy, helps account for the apparent tunelessness of many of Pound's cantos. In fact, at the time of his letter to Creekmore, Pound was putting the final touches on what has generally been regarded as the *least musical* of all the *Cantos'* sections, the 20-canto diptych devoted to Chinese dynastic history and the life of John Adams. Not only does this section lack the sort of lyricism found in the Pisans, but its "documentary method" and accumulation of historical detail seem defiantly anti-lyrical. And,

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[277] Even Pound's most sensitive readers are not entirely exempt from the general tendency to associate his musicality with his lyricism. In a recent article on the "Limits of Lyric," for example, Peter Nicholls persuasively invokes Poundian melopœia to displace prevalent Romantic preconceptions about the lyric genre. But, as we will see, even the more expansive "aesthetic of sound" that Nicholls associates with troubadour melopœia cannot fully account for the musicality of the *Cantos*. Cf. Nicholls, "Modernism and the Limits of Lyric," 178–79.

[278] Cf. Coyle, *Ezra Pound, Popular Genres, and the Discourse of Culture*, 180.

[279] For an atypical analysis of Canto LXXV that rejects lyricizing readings, see Coyle, 168-181.

[280] Pound, "Machine Art," 72-73.

[281] E.P. to Hubert Creekmore, February 1939, in Pound, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, 323.

generally speaking, this is also largely how cantos LII-LXXI have been perceived.[282] The poet Randall Jarrell described the section as "the dullest and prosiest poetry [Pound] has ever written";[283] Davie famously dismissed it as "pathological and sterile."[284] What both Jarrell and Davie's responses register is the general absence from these cantos of the kind of sustained melodic development and finely-tuned rhythmic counterpoint that characterize many of the incantatory, lyrical stretches of the early sequences, and which provided relief from the poem's 'dull and prosy' parts. Cantos LII-LXXI, by contrast, have all the prose and none of the music.

Of course, the reader who opens the China or Adams Cantos expecting to hear the music of the first cantos will likely be disappointed, but the absence of that musicality does not mean that these middle cantos lack musical "virtù." It is rather that their music breaks definitively with the paradigm of expression which continues to inform the more recognizably tuneful stretches of the cantos that come before and after them. Most importantly, this music undercuts the unity of voice that many readers of the *Cantos* find so comfortingly familiar in the poem's lyrical stretches.[285] Impersonal, non-*subjective*, this music is radically opposed to versions of "personality" or Romantic interiority that persist in so much of our thinking about music generally, whether its production or reception. In its ambitions, however, the melopœia of these cantos aspires to be eminently historical. The case for this music's relevance for historical understanding—its claim to "include history"—has to do with the way its formal organization ("the order of words and sounds") renders explicit if not actually "induces" those mechanisms of historical transmission and linguistic-cultural translation which make up so much of these cantos ostensive "content."

This is particularly true of the China Cantos, which, besides offering a highly condensed chronicle of nearly 3000 years of dynastic history, are also the most sustained work of translation in the entire poem. Moreover, the China Cantos explicitly draw attention to their own status as translations, a built-in self-reflexivity whose function exceeds the usual modernist mandate to "show the process." Pound thematizes translation in the sense that he emphasizes the importance of certain scenes of translation—translations of Chinese dynastic histories into French, of Classical Chinese poetry into Manchu, of Manchu prefaces into Latin—in the historical, political, and cultural consolidation of "China." In this respect, the China Cantos take the method of layered mediation introduced in canto I beyond the usual Western coordinates, allowing the European reference points to be relativized by a different history of transmission. Historically, classical Chinese culture has been implicated in practices of translation that massively antedate the arrival of Europeans.[286] Most notably, the politics of textual transmission as instantiated in the teaching, exegesis, and citation of the early Chinese classics—when not in these texts' actual translation into languages of the "periphery" (Khitan, Jurchen, Mongol, Manchu, etc.)—has been a constant in the construction and maintenance of Chinese cultural continuity.[287] The China Cantos chronicle this process of

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[282] In a reading in a certain sense complementary to mine, Richard Seiburth argues that the poem is highly musical if you hear pound read it. The Chinese transliterations being a kind of nonsense tone poem. It is telling, however, that Sieburth derives this reading from a recording, one which represses the deliberate textuality (in the form of footnotes, etc.) by which Pound hoped to indicate "the duration from when to when." In this respect, Sieburth builds on a formalist reading practiced Perloff which disavows its troubling historical content.

[283] Erkkila, *Ezra Pound*, 268–69.

[284] Davie, *Studies in Ezra Pound*, 137.

[285] On the relationship between Pound's "documentary method" and the voices of the *Cantos* more generally, see Ten Eyck, "History and Anonymity in Ezra Pound's Documentary Method."

[286] The word "China," for instance, comes from "cīna," which was the Sanskrit name for a particular empire, the Qin. For more, see Liu, *The Clash of Empires*, 76–81.

[287] For an introduction to the debate about Chinese cultural continuity, see Bol, "Thinking about China in History."

transmission and translation. Unlike the Adams Cantos that follow them and with which they are understandably grouped,[288] the sequence is multiply determined by the problematic of translation. Pound consistently relates our experience of his translation to those other, historical scenes of translation and transmission whose cumulative effects have directly or indirectly generated the text before us. The "music" of these cantos, as we shall see, emerges in the complex patterns of consonance and dissonance that are produced when these two parallel operations, the local translation of a text and the historical constitution of a tradition, are drawn into a brief, rhythmic accord.[289]

Pound's principal source for the China Cantos is the 13 volume *Histoire générale de la Chine*, compiled by the French Jesuit Joseph-Anne-Marie de Moyraic de Mailla in the mid-eighteenth century and published in Paris between 1777 and 1783. Well before Pound got his hands on it, the *Histoire générale* was already an exceedingly complex genealogical and editorial assemblage. Most of de Mailla's French text, for instance, is a translation of a Qing Dynasty history textbook, which is itself a translation into Manchu of a 13th-century text by the Neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi, *Zizhi tongjian gangmu* (Outline and Details of the Comprehensive Mirror of Government). This older text is, in turn, a highly-edited and abridged version ("the outline and details") of Sima Guang's eleventh-century classic of Confucian historiography, *Zizhi tongjian* (Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government).[290] The *Histoire générale* follows these Confucian sources as far as they go (i.e. the end of the Yuang Dynasty in the mid fourteenth-century; Pound's Canto LVI), at which moment it shifts to histories of China published in the eighteenth century in both China and France. In the China Cantos, Pound condenses de Mailla's massive *Histoire* into roughly 80 pages, splicing this "translation" of de Mailla with materials gleaned from several other of his favorite sources (Homer, Robert Grosseteste, Cavalcanti) and interjecting, at a decisive moment, a long passage from Alexandre de Lacharme's *Confucii Chi-King*. The China Cantos, then, is a condensation of a condensation (of a condensation). Similarly, its assemblage of heterogeneous historical accounts mimics (though in accentuated fashion) editorial procedures already present both in de Mailla's text and in the sources on which de Mailla drew. The complexity of such mediating processes is hardly incidental to the understanding of history driving this portion of Pound's epic. The various historical moments of interpretation, editorial intervention, and reproduction which shape the recorded history that the China Cantos document, and which the reader watches accumulate as the sequence proceeds, give the lie to the idea that one might stand outside the chain of transmission in order to observe such a history "objectively."[291] Considered from this angle, the main charges critics level at

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[288] For example, David Ten Eyck criticizes the documentary method of the Adams Cantos for making a kind of fetish out of its source text, *The Works of John Adams*. This may be true, but as Eyck also points out, the China Cantos deploy their source materials differently. Here, Pound works not from an authoritative text like *The Works*, but from a highly mediated translation of a translation. As we will see, authority in the China Cantos develops not out of a single authoritative account but rather from the rhythms of transmission itself. Cf. Ten Eyck, *Ezra Pound's Adams Cantos*.

[289] In this respect, the version of tradition and translation operative in the China Cantos has strong affinities with Talal Asad's recent work on the topic, which attempts to develop a critical notion of tradition that would be opposed both to tradition understood as the rote reproduction of forms and tradition understood as an ideological tool in the service of contemporary constellations of power, an instrument of "critical purification." Tradition, for both Pound and Asad, specifies the rhythm by which "inherited language" and "embodied abilities" of the past may be practiced in the present while remaining open to the future. Cf. Asad, "Thinking About Tradition, Religion, and Politics in Egypt Today."

[290] Pound was certainly aware of this chain of transmission. He in fact includes the date of *Zizhi tongjian gangmu's* publication in Canto LV's chronicle of the Song Dynasty.

[291] In an article on Pound's Confucianism, Hong Sun observes on how processes of transmission immanent to history occupy a space in Confucian thought analogous to the position held by the god of Western monotheistic religions, who,

the China Cantos—that they are very poor historiography and very crude mythology—are in fact exactly the wrong criticisms to make, since they assume the very standards of historical judgment that the China Cantos actively contest. These cantos are indeed concerned with standards of judgment, but such standards are importantly immanent to the historical processes whose interrelations the cantos present. Rather than coming from above, the normative force of the standard emerges through the rhythms of historical flux which produce ever-evolving relationships of consonance and dissonance not only between one historical moment and another, but between one scene of transmission and another.

The paradoxical dependency of such "standards of tradition" on the seemingly revisionary energies of translation is best illustrated by way of an example. The China Cantos follow de Mailla's text more or less without significant interruption from Canto LIII to Canto LVIII, the canto in which Pound recounts the collapse of the Ming Dynasty in the mid-seventeenth century under the weight of entrenched corruption among the officialdom, ongoing civil war, and a military invasion from the North. In tones borrowed from Greek tragedy, the final verses of Canto LVIII document the general Wu San-kuei's defection to the Manchu side, his routing of the splintered imperial forces in 1644, and the subsequent purging of the imperial court (Pound's last words are Clytemnestra's "τἀδ᾽ὦδ᾽ἔχει"[292]). Following this chronicle, Pound very abruptly switches tacks, leaving the battlefield and making a provocative move to another struggle for order: the transmission of the Chinese poetic canon. Canto LIX begins with a translation of a 1655 prolegomena to the "Chi-King" (*Shijing* [The Book of Odes]), the anthology of ancient folk poetry purported to have been assembled by Confucius himself.[293] The 1655 text is a product of the freshly reconstituted empire: it was written by the third Qing emperor, "Chun Tchi" (*Shunzhi*) in the language of the new ruling dynasty, Manchu. Pound's immediate source is Lacharme *Confucii Chi-King,* an eighteenth-century Latin translation of the Manchu. His Canto LIX begins:

De libro CHI-KING sic censeo

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by contrast, transcends history. "Confucius never claimed divine revelation. He called himself 'a transmitter, and not a maker.' As a transmitter, he is said to have collected and edited four ancient Chinese classics: *Shi Jing* (The book of songs), *Shu Jing* (The book of history), *Li Ji* (The book of rites), and *Yi Jing* (The book of changes). These books and *Chun Qiu* (The spring and autumn annals), supposedly written by him, constitute the Five Confucian Canons." With *The Cantos*, Hong suggests, the work of collecting, editing, and transmitting the Confucian canon is carried beyond boundaries of Chinese culture in a way that not only reimagines the Chinese heritage but also transforms the common tropes Western culture, staring with figures like Prometheus: "Pound's role in modern literature is not that of a passive reflector of light from another culture. His concern is above that of conquistadors who shipped back from the Orient gems and gold to decorate their palaces. Pound's mission is that of Prometheus, an active agent simply carrying forward the light of Chinese philosophy, but rejuvenating Western poetry with its ideals. […] In this sense, Pound is more than a transmitter, he is, in T.S. Eliot's phrase, "the inventor of Chinese poetry for our time." Cf. Sun, "Pound's Quest for Confucian Ideals," 96–98.

[292] Pound favored a no "frills" translation of Clytemnestra's assumption of responsibility for the act of regicide. In 1919 he had toyed with the idea of translating the lines as "These, gentlemen, are the facts," only to later, in 1934, opt for the even blunter, "That's how it is." These translations are a part of larger polemic of salvaging our reading of the classics from "convoluted tushery" of Victorian translations, whose tremendous affectation, Pound argues, "put[] the masterwork further from us." τἀδ᾽ὦδ᾽ἔχει, from Pound's perspective, is among the *least "*rhetorical" statements in all literature. Contrary to appearances, its presence here serves not to derealize the civil war, but rather to bring the chronicled events as "close to us" as language can bring them. Pound, *Literary Essays*, 270.

[293] The legend of Confucius's massive editorial condensation of the materials that make up the *Shijing* is a recurring *point de repère* for *The Cantos*. Pound keeps, for example, the mythical event "And Kung cut 3000 odes to 300" as one of the few items in his abridged chronicle of the 5th century B.C.E. (see Canto LIII, 273). For an introduction to the complex history of the *Shijing's* reception and interpretation, see Riegel, "Shih-Ching Poetry and Didacticism in Ancient Chinese Literature," 97–109.

wrote the young MANCHU, CHUN TCHI,
less a work of the mind than of affects
brought forth from inner nature
here sung in these odes.
Urbanity in externals, virtu in internals
some in a high style for the rites
some in humble;
for Emperors; for the people
all things are here brought to precisions
that we shd/ learn our integrity
that we shd/ attain our integrity
Ut animum nostrum purget, Confucius ait, dirigatque
ad lumen rationis
perpetuale effecto/
That this book keep us in due bounds of office
the norm
Show what we shd/ take into action:
what follow within and persistently
CHI-KING ostendit incitatque. Vir autem rectus
et libidinis expers ita domine servat
with faith, never tricky, obsequatur parentis
nunquam deflectat
all order comes into such norm
igitur meis encomiis, therefor this preface
CHUN TCHI anno undecesimo
(a.d. 1655)

Even without an original with which to compare them, it is immediately clear that these 27 lines defy usual expectations about what a translation is and does. One commonly assumes, for example, that a translation should consistently translate one language into *one* other. This is a norm that canto LIX flaunts with striking effects. Its syntagms hang together more or less; the languages, on the other hand, don't. The text switches abruptly, often mid-line, between multiple "target" languages—English, Italian, *and* Latin. The canto includes its own bibliographical information—a bit of bait for those compelled to answer its provocation by consulting the "original." If one does so, one sees that the sequence, syntax, and verb forms of the Latin in Canto LIX do not correspond to the Latin text of Lacharme's *Confucii Chi-King*. Pound, one could say, has "translated" Latin *into* Latin. The fact that Latin falls on both sides of the translative register—as both a target and a source—contests the common view of translation as a kind of balancing of linguistic accounts, a reckoning in which various sorts of temporal processes (inflation or deflation, condensation or expansion) are quietly excluded from the equation.

Often dismissed as byproducts of Pound's careless citation practice,[294] such *intra*-linguistic displacements are in fact quite common in the *Cantos* and, understandably, have drawn the attention of the translators of Pound's own poetry who, while ostensibly translating an "English-language poet," nonetheless sometimes find themselves translating "Latin into Latin." Although there are to

[294] Taylor, "The Texts of the Cantos."

date no Latin translations of *The Cantos*, the issue has come up recently among Pound's Chinese readers. At the meeting of the Eighteenth International Ezra Pound Conference in Beijing in 1999, the Chinese poet Yang Lian suggested that with the publication of a complete Chinese edition of the *Cantos* Pound's immense project had finally been "completed" (*wancheng*),[295] restored at last to the language "he should have originally written in": Chinese.[296] For all its polemic, Yang's contention is, as the poet and critic John Cayley observes, quite nuanced, having everything to do with the situation of contemporary poetry in China. It nonetheless has drawn criticism from the very translator, Yunte Huang, whose version of the *Cantos* Yang considered to be conclusive. In a 2015 article for *Paideuma*, Yunte observes,

> The back-translation [into Chinese] by no means leads to what Yang Lian has called the "completion" of the Cantos in Chinese. If anything, it actually demonstrates more clearly the inherent translational structure of Pound's work, suggesting that the poetic home of the Cantos lies, not in English or Chinese, but in the relational space of translation.[297]

Such a "relational space of translation" is an apt description of the beginning of Canto LIX. The canto's toggling between English, Italian and Latin forges a rhythm out of linguistic dislocation, supplying a vivid demonstration of what Yunte, in reference to the poem's use of Chinese logograms, calls Pound's "poetic language of translationese, neither completely English nor exotically Chinese, not any one language in particular."[298] Pound's technique, in other words, forces the reader to understand the language of the translation not as a dutiful surrogate of an absent original—its faithful accounting or even retroactive completion—but instead as the expressive medium of a more expansive "poetics." As we will see, the rhythms produced through such a poetics dislocate the *Cantos'* narrative voice and complicate the historical reference of its many documentary materials. That said, for Pound it is above all these rhythms of translation which allow his poem to open a line of communication between the present and the past that neither effaces nor fetishizes the diverse historical moments it connects. The poem, in other words, does not simply evoke one specific moment in the past; rather its rhythms coordinate several different historical scenes of transmission.

Consider, for instance, the first two lines of Canto LIX, already quoted above:

> De libro CHI-KING sic censeo
> wrote the young MANCHU, CHUN TCHI,

Whose voice is this? If one follows the canto's own reporting and the signature Pound supplies in lines 26 and 27, one would be inclined to say Shunzhi, "the young MANCHU," to whom the 1655 prolegomena is attributed.[299] The verb tense of line two's "wrote," however, makes this rather

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[295] For an account of the meeting, see Cayley and Yang, "Hallucination and Coherence."
[296] Yang, "'In the Timeless Air,'" 105.
[297] Yunte, "Ezra Pound, Made in China," 43.
[298] Yunte, 40.
[299] The capitalization of "CHI-KING," "MANCHU," and "CHUN TCHI," is a systematic editorial intervention on Pound's part to highlight the chronicle's various emperors and dynasties. These markers naturally lend the text a rhythm of sorts, as well as further anchor in those traditions of Medieval practices of commentary and annotation Pound had been exposed to in the various stages of his work on Cavalcanti. On the presence of this tradition in *The Cantos*, see Byron, "Bathtub Philology."

straightforward reading uncompelling. The phrase "De libro Chi-king sic censeo" (Concerning the Chi-king my thought is the following)[300] is of course *not* what Shunzhi *wrote* in 1655.[301] Shunzhi wrote in Manchu. These Latin words are Lacharme's, who *wrote* them several generations after Shunzhi's death.[302] The verb "wrote" does not refer to Shunzhi's specific act of composing the preface. Neither does it, however, flag "De libro Chi-king sic censeo" as an instance of free direct speech. Such a reading would go some way towards explaining the change in verb tense and person between lines one and two: "censeo" (present tense, first person: "think," "deliberate"); "wrote" (preterit, third person). It would not, however, account for the presence of Latin, which is neither the language Shunzhi wrote, nor the language of the reporting verb—which in this case is English ("wrote the young MANCHU, CHUN TCHI"). And yet, were "De libro Chi-king sic censeo" either Manchu or English, the canto would be very different. It would, for example, be in the position to produce the illusion of one of two sorts of transparency: either a "philological" transparency, in which the reader is offered a glimpse of the "original" (what Shunzhi "wrote"), or an "hermeneutic" transparency, in which the foreign text is assimilated seamlessly into the context of its reception (what Shunzhi "meant").[303] One can easily imagine translation strategies derived from these two alternatives, practices by which, one way or another, the translator(s) would affect a certain "invisibility."[304] Pound, however, gives us neither. What we get instead is a snippet of Lacharme's Latin and with it a more or less explicit reference to the otherwise "invisible" history of the preface's transmission.[305]

Like Jean François Gerbillon, whose diplomatic ventures this particular canto goes on to relate, Lacharme belonged to the Jesuit mission in China. Translations like Lacharme's *Confuccii Chi-King,* together with other influential historical, geographical, and ethnographical accounts assembled throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by Jesuits in China for readers in Europe, constituted the first significant mode of cultural exchange between China and the West. But, as the China Cantos themselves amply demonstrate, in their role as intercultural mediators, the Jesuits were far from impartial observers, invisible translators, or passive transmitters of information: not only were their accounts of China colored by the languages, logics, and ontologies they brought with them from Europe,[306] the Jesuits were in many cases active participants in the political events of their time. Indeed, almost immediately after Canto LIX concludes the Shunzhi/Lacharme's preface, it moves on to another scene of translation brokered by Jesuits: this time of the 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk, the agreement written in Latin with copies in Manchu and Russian which officially set the borders between Tsarist Russia and the Qing Empire.[307] The canto's account of the treaty is bookended with references to the translators. The translators depart in a cascade of Ovidian metamorphoses:

and were demarked the borders of Russia

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[300] Or, alternately, "I consequently thought."
[301] For the full text of Lacharme's version of the prolegomena as well as an English translation of Lacharme's Latin, see Nolde, *Blossoms from the East*, 355–56.
[302] Mohl, *Confucii Chi-King, sive Liber Carminum*, xi.
[303] On the complementarity of philological and hermeneutic practices as techniques for erasing the history of textual transmission, see Rainey, *Ezra Pound and the Monument of Culture*, 140.
[304] For a reading of Pound that stresses this aspect of his work as a translator, see Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, venuti.
[305] In this respect, Pound's translation of the preface recalls canto I's thematization of transmission through the reference to Andreas Divus. Nealon, *The Matter of Capital*, 52.
[306] On the history of the Jesuit mission in China, see Gernet, *Chine et christianisme*.
[307] Nolde, *Blossoms from the East*, 369–71.

with a porta*goose* and a *frog* priest to interpret
to whom each a robe brocaded with *dragons*
[…]
Pereira and Gerbillon
made *mandarins* second order

And are celebrated upon their return:

So the envoys
embrace to the music of instruments
and the rhoosians (Orosians) served a sort of lunch
[…]
and this was due to the *frog* and the porta*goose*
Gerbillon and Pereira
to Gerbillon in the most critical moment
that he kept their tempers till they came to conclusion.[308]

The forging of the Treaty of Nerschinsk, however, is not the only historical scene of translation that Canto LIX chronicles. As we noted above, the Latin version of Shunzhi's preface that Pound chooses for the beginning of the canto is itself a condensation of at least two scenes of translation: from classical Chinese to Shunzhi's Manchu, and then from Manchu to Lacharme's Latin. The Manchu and Latin translations are themselves intimately linked to the historical flows of knowledge, wealth and power whose general movement this portion of the China sequence is in the process of charting. On the one hand, this is a history that chronicles massive changes in the distribution of political, economic cultural power. The Manchu *Shijing*, like many other such translations produced in the early Qing, is evidence of the incoming dynasty's concerted appropriation of the major texts of classical Chinese canon;[309] Lacharme's Latin *Shijing*, like the Sino-Russian border treaty that follows it in the poem, documents one of several fronts of "foreign" incursion into seventieth- and eighteenth-century China.[310] On the other hand, such challenges to the literal and figurative boundaries of China provided the avenues by which Chinese culture disseminated beyond long-standing linguistic and geographic limits—in however "compromised" a form. When it comes to the transmission of texts in particular, there is no difficulty finding evidence of both random and systematic distortion, elision and misreading among the various mediating figures—whether Shunzhi, Lacharme, or Pound.

But, while some forms of textual corruption and translative error are certainly more pernicious than others,[311] such processes represent nothing particularly new in the Chinese classics' three-thousand-year reception history. Not only did the set of texts designated as "classics" change over time, but their interpretation varied from scholar to scholar, school to school, dynasty to

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[308] Canto LIX, Pound, *The Cantos*, 326–27. My italics.
[309] On translations of Chinese texts into Manchu, see Huang, *Reorienting the Manchus*, 232–42. On Qing efforts at preserving and compiling the canon, see *The History of Chinese Civilization*, 4:31–32. On 17th century translations of the classics into Manchu, see pg. 299-300.
[310] On the development of this theme in the China Cantos generally, see Selby, *Poetics of Loss in the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 61–62.
[311] See, for example, Zhang, "Demystifying Qi: The Politics of Cultural Translation and the Interpretation in the Early Jesuit Mission to China."

dynasty. And yet, from the very "beginning" of their reception, the practice of reading, commenting, and annotating the classics seems to have formed the basis of cultural continuity. Such practices of transmission make a classic a classic. The texts that are today understood to be "classics," Haun Saussy explains, "are largely products of exegesis and commentary, *both* in the sense that scholarship was needed to establish or recover their wording *and* that much of their text as it stands is explanatory or accretive in nature."[312] Saussy here is principally concerned with the construction of the literary heritage shared by many centuries of Chinese scholars and officials, though his description of a text which is nothing but the incorporation of its own history of transmission might just as well be referring to the *Cantos*.[313]

With respect to the *Cantos*, the inseparability of tradition from the performance of its transmission is nowhere more manifest than in Canto LIX's handling of the *Shijing*. Given what we know about the historical genesis of the Chinese canon, the critical commonplace that from the 1930's onwards Pound champions an entirely idealized version Confucianism, and that his authoritarian politics emerge in suit from the Confucian social order whose patterns he sought to "make new," misrepresents both Pound and "Confucianism." Not that Pound's peculiar sort of Confucianism is not highly authoritarian—we will soon have occasion to document just how "fascist" it is. It is nonetheless incorrect to distinguish the virtues Pound singles out in Confucianism (sincerity, clarity, measure, etc.) from the process and practice of their transmission, re-contextualization and renewal—the *virtù*, in other words, of their translation.[314] It is one of the central points of Shunzhi's preface that the formal relationships contained in the measures of the odes' music themselves imply the ratios relevant to ethical behavior and social cohesion; the harmonies of the one reflect and reinforce the harmonies of the other.[315] This long-held reading of the *Shijing*, which Shunzhi's text traces back to Confucius himself, is often pointed to today as evidence of the historic complicity of classical Chinese scholarship generally and Confucian learning particularly in the ideological justification of the order of things. A version of this convergence of literary form and social ethos, appropriate style and appropriate behavior, can be found in the interpretation of the *Shijing* that Shunzhi himself propounds in the preface. Shunzhi emphasizes the perfect adequation of style and subject matter that can be found in the odes, and he correlates such judgment with the formation of a virtuous character that shows the loyalty owed to a master (*fidem debitam*) and demonstrates "piety towards parents" (*pietate in parentes* Although both of these precepts make their way into Canto LIX, Pound's unusual compositional practice—his less-than-pious translation of Latin into Latin,[316] to say nothing of the *Cantos'* general cut-and-paste relationship to

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312 Saussy, "Classical Exegesis," 910. My italics.

313 See Jullien, *La chaîne et la trame*, esp. 35-36.

314 Feng Lan, whose *Ezra Pound and Confucianism*, is doubtless the richest and most extensive account of Pound's evolving engagement with Chinese thought to date, nonetheless locates the authoritarian kernel of Pound's Confucianism in what Feng calls "Pound's contention that a shared pattern of thought exists for all human beings." Such, Lan continues, is the substantive content of Pound's faith in the "universality of the Word," an idea which, according to Feng, "presupposes the existence of absolute truth or quintessential meaning prior to the construction of language." As our reading of Canto LIX will show, however, there are different ways to understand Pound's attraction to such "shared patterns of thought," ways which trouble the distinction between before and after "the construction of language." Cf. Feng, *Ezra Pound and Confucianism: Remaking Humanism in the Face of Modernity*, 40–41.

315 On the association of musical and social harmony in interpretations of the *The Book of Odes*, see Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, 116–17.

316 Pound "translates" Lacharme's "Vir autem rectus et libedinis expers ita domina suo servit" as "Vir autem rectus/ et libidinis expers ita domine servat"; Lacharme's "parentibus suis ita obsequitur, ut a pietate in parentes nunquam deflectat" as "obsequatur parentis/ nunquam deflectat." See Mohl, *Confucii Chi-King, sive Liber Carminum*, xi.

its literary fathers—complicates traditional notions of filial piety and dutiful service.[317] From a psychoanalytic perspective, one could say that Pound subjects his father(s) to the law of rhythm—an absolute which, in contrast to the Lacanian law of the father, is musical and immanent rather than linguistic and transcendent.[318]

Indeed, one of the consistently disorienting aspects of the *Cantos'* structure is Pound's general refusal to position his epic's many heroes (Homer, Scotus Eriugena, Cavalcanti, John Adams, etc.) outside the textual traditions they are, in a certain sense, portrayed as inaugurating. Rather, these "founding fathers" are internal to the process of transmission, just like the rest of the *Cantos'* flotsam and jetsam. In Canto LIX, Confucius, rather than standing outside the chain of transmission and in this way anchoring its movement, appears instead uncannily inducted into its flux, attributed words he never said, in a language he never spoke.

> Ut animum nostrum purget, Confucius ait, dirigatque
> ad lumen rationis
> perpetuale effecto/

These three lines can be read as two grammatical Latin clauses (a main and subordinate clause)—a minor achievement on Pound's part since these words in this order do not appear in Lacharme's translation. Like many of his contemporaries, Pound is here working through the idea that authority lies not in the properties of the thing being transmitted; authority is conferred, rather, through the process of transmission itself.[319] This important difference is easily overlooked by those disposed to locate the roots of Pound's authoritarian sympathies to the sorts of proscriptive judgments enumerated in the China Cantos (i.e. "'A good governor is as wind over grass/ A good ruler keeps down taxes.'" [Canto LIII, 266-267]).[320] Borrowing a distinction from the anthropologist James Clifford, Paul Stasi has argued that Pound's project of cultural renewal was not, as one might expect from his extensive citations from "authorities" like Confucius, a matter of "roots" but of "routes": the contact between cultures and the circulation of objects being what in effect grounded his idiosyncratic version of "kulchur."[321]

Pound's privileging of "routes" over "roots" is manifest in the fluid discursive regime that is *The Cantos'* usual mode of operation. One experiences it, for example, in Pound's mildly perverse manipulation of deixis. The beginning of Canto LIX abounds with them: "*here* sung in *these* odes", "all things are *here* brought to precisions", "That *this* book keep us in due bounds of office", "therefor *this* preface" (Canto LIX, 324). All of these demonstrative pronouns and adverbial markers permit multiple referents. Depending on how one chooses to interpret their discursive context, their reference cycles variously through the *Shijing's* songs, Shunzhi's Manchu prolegomena, Lacharme's translation, or Pound's cantos themselves. Each deictic indicator refers us to a different historical scene of transmission. The uncertainty foregrounds the experience of reading: each instance prompts the reader to ask him or herself, which text?—a question that, once posed, effectively

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317 Think only of Canto I's irreverent interpellation of its source: "Lie quiet Divus."

318 Lacan, "La Signification du phallus." On Pound's relationship to the paternal prohibition, see Rabaté, *Language, Sexuality, and Ideology in Ezra Pound's Cantos*.

319 For an excellent study of the advances in cultural anthropology, philology and linguistics occurring more-or-less contemporaneously with the compositions of *The Cantos*, developments associated with figures like Jean Paulhan, Milman Parry, Marcel Jousse, and Roman Jakobson, see Saussy, *The Ethnography of Rhythm*.

320 Alec Marsh's recent reading of Canto LVIII as an orientalist projection of Pound's Jeffersonian fantasies, for example, is representative of a wider set of interpretations that ignore the dynamics of transmission and translation that the sequence thematizes. Marsh, *Money and Modernity*, 48–54.

321 Stasi, *Modernism, Imperialism, and the Historical Sense*, 69.

interpolates the reader into the dynamics of textual transmission. In a discussion of an analogous moment in the China Cantos, Nick Selby underscores the kind of critical sense that emerges through the sequence's continual staging of such scenes of transmission. Selby opposes this version of historical sense to those readings of the China Cantos which dismiss the sequence as little more than a naive and exoticizing celebration of a premodern social harmony uncontaminated by the conjoined diseases of monotheism, usury, and phonetic writing. The use of the demonstrative "this," Selby writes,

> draws us into the text […]. What this serves to emphasize is that the historical 'facts' re-presented in the poem do not, necessarily, have an objective autonomy but are being reconstructed through textual devices. History therefore is seen not to be held in the past; history is the process now going on, and which will always being going on, of interpretation.[322]

The point here is neither that historical difference dissolves into the aleatory freedom of Pound's "textual devices," nor that the *Cantos* various forms of documentation testify unproblematically to historically remote events. Rather, Pound's habit of "routing" historical materials through the "now" of "the process *now* going on" foregrounds how the authority of the "fact"—and the difference between one fact and an opposing, "alternative" fact—depends on the archival procedures, transmitting institutions, and reading practices that not only carry the fact to us but also sustain its historical reference.[323] From this interest in routes follows Pound's lasting preoccupation with the strength, accuracy and integrity of the communicative conditions that mediate our access to historical knowledge. From here also follow Pound's numerous practical proposals for facilitating the distribution and enhancing the reception of cultural objects, campaigns which responded to the cultural wasteland of the interwar period by intervening in the circuits of transmission at various nodal points, whether these were the archive, the classroom, the newspaper, or the language itself. 'All history,' Benedetto Croce is remembered saying, 'is the history of the present.' What prevents this saying from collapsing into simple tautology, Pound might interject, is close attention to the institutional practices, disciplinary assumptions and discursive regimes by which the present is produced and reproduced as such. An appreciation of the historical contingency of these structures implies the possibility of rerouting the channels of transmission to retell the history of the present and thus imagine a different future. Textual strategies like cutting deictic pronouns loose from their contextual mores and projecting them across multiple discursive sites of transmission—from "these odes" to "*these* odes," from "this book" to "*this* book"—offer a privileged example of such rerouting. The problem with such a practice, however, has already been alluded to: untethered from the conventional chronologies and definitive contexts which usually anchor their sense, how does one read such scraps of discourse? By what norm may one evaluate it? By what lexicon gloss it? Pound, as we've seen, was aware of the danger of pressing the past into the templates of the present, just as he was wary of the norms regulating the discipline of philology, in which the process of understanding was to be rigorously separated from "the process now going on."[324] Pound's solution to this problem was to derive the measure for his poem including history from the relationships that emerged between the historical materials themselves. There would be no single prosodic system in which to scan the entire poem, just like there would be no single language in which to translate all its languages. Instead, the reader would be confronted with an array of mutually informing glosses, a

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[322] Selby, *Poetics of Loss in the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 52.
[323] For a fuller discussion, see Rainey, *Ezra Pound and the Monument of Culture*, 144–45.
[324] For a subtle reading of Pound's navigation of these two extremes, see Smith, "The Energy of Language(s)."

vast "translation of accompaniment," where one subject "rhymed" with another, and one idiom "echoed" another, until, from the cacophony of punctual correspondences and punctuating counterpoints, a basic rhythmic hierarchy established itself as a norm.

It is no coincidence, then, that Shunzhi's 1655 prolegomena to the *Shijing* also happens to be Pound's "prolegomena" to Canto LIX: in both instances the prefatory material establishes the standard by which the songs that follow are asked to be judged. The difference between the two is that the standard of judgment in the canto's case resides less in Confucius/Shunzhi's authoritative statement about the correspondence of literary and social orders than in the "norm of spirit" (Canto LXXXIV, 540) that emerges through the syncopation of diverse historical materials. Musically, syncopation refers to the process by which an arrhythmia is transformed into rhythmic motion, where the nonmetrical resolves into the metrical. More broadly understood, to syncopate means to articulate a local abnormality within a larger normative structure. In the case of Canto LIX, this norm is generated by the syncopation.

> All order comes into such norm
> igitur meis encomiis, therefor this preface

The final line "translates" the sentence of Lacharme's "Cum igitur ex hoc libro tant utilitas exoriatur, eumdem volui encomiis exornare meis, et hanc prafationem scribere" [Since therefore from this book so much usefulness is born, I wanted to adorn [it] with my praises, and [I wanted] to write this preface].[325] Pound compresses Lacharme's syntactically complex prose into a single, haunting line of verse modulating from a Latin rhythm of uncertain origin (-˘˘ | - |-- | ˘- |) to a falling English meter (´˘˘ | ´˘ |). The distribution of the two languages on either side of the caesura, together with their parallel syntax (adverb, article, noun), produce precisely the syncopation just mentioned. The coordination of linguistic boundaries with metrical divisions transforms the line into more than a simple reproduction of the statement found in its source. Of course, Pound does render his source after a fashion, it is just that, through his manipulation of idiom and rhythm, he also doubles it and reflects it back on itself. This effect is enhanced by his choice of the Middle English "therefor" in the place of "therefore" as a translation of "igitur." Unlike "therefore," which *only* specifies consequence or result, "therefor" was used until the 20th century chiefly as a synonym for "for that." Translated into modern English, the second hemistich expresses less a relation of inference than of substitution: it's a question of *this* preface for *that* preface; this preface "therefor." The difference accentuates the temporal and linguistic repeat and doubles down on indexical ambiguity: where the 1655 "encomiis" were, there *this* preface is. The canto retains a trace of the Emperor's sanction, but in another sense it also has, by cropping the verb "scribere" out of the English, taken the pen out of his hand. We hear his praises remotely, musically, as a brief rhythmic tag sounded in the Latin, but his authorial intention ("et hanc prafationem scribere") does not survive the translation. Similarly, the "norm" into which, as the canto says, "all order comes," is not quite the "norma" of Lacharme's text, though it is also not entirely unrelated. The meaning and function of the norm are not immune from the decentering transformations of connotation and context produced by the process of translation and historical transmission.

III. Chinese Medievalism

[325] Nolde, *Blossoms from the East*, 356.

Pound's "All order comes into such norm" is surely one of the most complex and "ab-normal" translations of the entire canto. It is also, however, the most theoretically interesting because it demonstrates how, for Pound, the decentering, centrifugal forces of translation and dissemination which upset all historical instances of order—whether social, linguistic, poetic, etc.—can suddenly flip into their seeming opposite, transfigured into expressions of a different, transhistorical measure. To understand this process, which is perhaps Pound's most provocative claim for the historical significance of the *Cantos*, requires that we backtrack to the canto's source, returning again to Confucius, with whom the norm is, in however mediated a fashion, nonetheless still associated. Canto LIX's first reference to "the norm" is found in the group of lines translating Lacharme's translation of Shunzhi's interpretation of the myth of Confucius's selection and assembly of the *Shijing's* 300 odes. In the passages below, I've provided Lacharme's text, followed by my translation of Lacharme's Latin, and then the corresponding section of Canto LIX, part of which is already familiar to us. To better illustrate the changes that have taken place, I have underlined and labeled with line numbers those phrases in Lacharme's text that roughly correspond to Pound's version. Lacharme's passage reads,

> Liber Chi-king, ait Confucius, [13] in eo positus est ut animum nostrum purget dirigatque [13]; Ea brevi sententia Confucius complexus est trecentas libri hujus odas, quidquid argumenti tractent. Sic liber ille [16] illiusque lectio nos in finibus officii continet [16], nobisque agendi [18] normam [17] rectam demonstrat [18], nos ad lumen rationis [14] nobis inditum fixos habere jubet oculos; quo ferri debeamus, quid animo prosequi [19], ostendit, nosque ad id incitat [20].[326]

Which I translate as:

> The book *Shijing*, Confucius says, [13] has been laid out in such a way that it may purge and direct our mind [13]. In this short opinion, Confucius has brought together 300 odes of this book, whatever matters they treat. Thus that book and its reading keeps [*sic*] us in the bounds of our duty, [16] and shows [*sic*] us the correct norm [17] by which to act [18], and orders us to hold our eyes fixed upon the light of reason [14] which has been placed before [or: has been imposed on] us. Where we should be carried, what we should follow with our mind [19], [this] it shows and incites us to [20].[327]

And Pound translates as:

Ut animum nostrum purget, Confucius ait, dirigatque	[13]	
ad lumen rationis	[14]	
perpetuale effecto/	[15]	
That this book keep us in due bounds of office		[16]
the norm	[17]	
show what we shd/ take into action;	[18]	
what follow within and persistently	[19]	
CHI KING ostendit incitatque […]	[20]	

[326] Mohl, *Confucii Chi-King, sive Liber Carminum*, xi–xii.

[327] My translation of this last sentence differs significantly from the translation Nolde provides in *Blossoms from the East*, "Therefore let us endure whatever we are told and urged to do." Unlike Nolde, I translate the clauses beginning "quo" and "quid" as dependent clauses which take "ostendit" as their verb.

If we compare these texts, we notice that Pound's interventions target multiple and seemingly unrelated features of his source. Extensive portions of Lacharme have simply been excised. Others Pound has translated into a kind of telegraphic English. Still others he leaves in Latin, seemingly untouched. Yet even in these instances where the Latin is retained, it is easy to spot subtle and not so subtle transformations on the level of the lexeme and syntagm, as when Pound adds a copulative particle to a "incitat" (l. 20) or reshuffles the word order of the sentence attributed to Confucius (l. 13. Most dramatically, however, Pound rearranges the sequence of Lacharme's translation, "cross cutting" the phrase "ad lumen rationis," which occurs in the sixth sentence of the prolegomenon, into his version of its fifth sentence. The change in position accompanies a change in meaning: in Lacharme's text, "ad lumen rationis" ("at the light of reason") completes the predicate "to hold our eyes fixed" (*fixos habere…oculos*); in Canto LIX it complements the verb "direct" (*dirigat*). "Lumen" ("light"), in turn, is repositioned as the referent for the adjectival construction "perpetuale effecto" ("perpetual in/with its effect"). Try as one might, one will not find a precedent for "perpetuale effecto" anywhere in Lacharme's text, though the short Latin clause substantially recasts the prolegomena's central optical metaphor. In Lacharme's version it's our eyes (*oculos*), not our mind (*animum*), which the compound subject (the *Shijing* and its reading) "orders" (*jubet*) us to fix at reason's light. Furthermore, the past participle (*inditum*) suggests that this light has already been set before us or imparted to us, which makes its shining an object not only grammatically distinct from us but also temporally antecedent to our act of looking at it. It shines at us from the past, much as the ethical norms the *Shijing* communicates are said to issue from Confucius's mythical arrangement of the text, the definitive manner in which the *Shijing* is laid out, put or set down (*positus est*).

Pound's translations, however, typically pay little to no heed to the definitive arrangements of *any* predecessor, whether Lacharme, Shunzhi, Confucius, or anyone else, which is why it is hardly a surprise that the fixed placement of reason's light should dissolve into Canto LIX's "relational field of translation."[328] The fixed beacon is replaced by a luminosity on the move with its own momentum, streaming, inextinguishable ("perpetual with its effect"), sustained by own sparks ("perpetual in its effect").[329] The model of perception suggested by this description of light is not the model Shunzhi/Lacharme provides, where "lumen" is both the prepositional object on which eyes are fixed (ad lumen … *fixos habere…oculos*) and the direct object of an anterior act of placement or imposition (*inditum*). In the place of such rigid seer-seen distinctions, Pound inserts a theory of vision based on entirely different assumptions, an optical-gnoseological paradigm worked out in greatest detail in medieval commentaries on Aristotle's *De Anima*—above all those of Avicenna and Averroes. According to this doctrine, reason is defined precisely by the fact that it is *not* an object—that is, by its inability to passively undergo change or to be affected by anything other than itself. Never to be confused with the *object* of thought, therefore, reason for these Arab philosophers is in fact much closer to what we might call thought's *subject*, especially if we take the latter in its medieval sense: thought's *subiectum*, its "substrate." Understood as what they called *intellectus possibilis* (possible

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328 For a detailed discussion of Pound's own translation of the *Shijing*, see chapters 6 and 7 of Cheadle, *Ezra Pound's Confucian Translations*.

329 Continuity suggested here recalls Pound's 1957 neologism, "sagetrieb" (German: "drive of speech," "drive of sagas"), by means of which he distinguishes his own epos from the "COLD history" of philological reconstruction: "I refuse to accept ANY alphabetic display as final/ AND the sagetrieb/ different spellings used to indicate the stream where thru and whereby our legend came/ latin, portagoose, French. Epos is not COLD history. got to have emotion and that from fanatical kungismo." From an unpublished letter to Lewis Maverick (September 2, 1957). Quoted in Froula, *To Write Paradise*, 145–46.

intellect), reason is to thought as the transparent ether (the *diafan*) is to vision: it supplies the medium in and through which objects become perceptible or intelligible.[330] In his study of Averroes, Jean-Baptiste Brenet helpfully unspools the analogy between the possible or "material" intellect and the diaphanous in more detail. "The analogy with the diaphane," he writes,

> is remarkable if we remember what the diaphane is: namely, an intermediary, the *medium* necessary for the act of vision, which is to say, the condition of the visibility of the visible, the condition under which perceptions of this or that thing occur (*la condition de l'advenir des perceptions de tel ou tel*), and hence neither the perception nor the perceiver of this visibility itself. The diaphan does not see; it is not the one who sees; it gives to view (*donne à voir*), gives an individual, *via* its organ and power, the possibility of seeing (*donne […] de voir*). By the same logic, the separate, material intellect, receptor of the abstract universal of images (*récepteur de l'universel abstrait des images*), would be the condition of the thinkability of the thinkable (*la condition de la pensabilité du pensable*), the neutral, impersonal setting, the condition for the appearance of mental personalities, the common space for the appropriation of the intelligible: not the thing that thinks, but that which gives to thought (*donne à penser*), the thing whose possession gives to this or that thinker the possibility of thinking (*donne […]de penser*). [331]

The possible intellect "gives to thought" (*donne à penser*) in the same sense that a transparent medium "gives to view" (*donne à voir*). And, as Brenet clarifies, just as a perfect transparency specifies the substance through which forms are disclosed in their pure visibility, regardless of anyone's ability to actually *see* them, so too is the possible intellect that medium in which all forms offer themselves as eminently knowable, radiant with pure "knowability."

The paganism of this metaphysics, which renders god only as a latent and immanent formal possibility of its pristine order, would have certainly appealed to Pound. Pound's most extensive discussion of the medieval worldview, the 1928 essay "Medievalism," reads well as both an elegy for its loss and a vision of its imminent recovery:

> We appear to have lost the radiant world where one thought cuts through another with a clean edge, a world of moving energies […], magnetisms that take form, that are seen, or that border on the visible, the matter of Dante's *Paradiso*, the glass under water, the form that seems a form seen in a mirror […].
> A mediaeval "natural philosopher" would find this modern world full of enchantments, not only the light in the electric bulb, but the thought of the current hidden in air and in wire would give him a mind full of forms, "*Fuor di color*" [*beyond color*] or having their hypercolours.[332]

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330 See Benmakhlouf, *Pourquoi lire les philosophes arabes?*, 21; 36.

331 Brenet's French texxt reads: "L'analogie avec le diaphane est remarquable si l'on se rappelle ce qu'il est : un intermédiaire, le medium requis dans l'acte de vision, c'est-à-dire la condition de visibilité du visible, la condition de l'advenir des perceptions de tel ou tel, et non pas la perception, ou l'instance percevante de ce visible elle-même. Le diaphane ne voit pas; ce n'est pas lui qui voit; il donne à voir, donne à un individu, via son organe et sa puissance, de voir. De même, l'intellect matériel séparé, récepteur de l'universel abstrait des images, ne serait que la condition de pensabilité du pensable, le milieu neutre, impersonnel, condition de l'apparaître des personnalités mentales, l'espace commun d'appropriation de l'intelligible : non pas cela même qui pense, mais ce qui donne à penser, donne à tel ou tel, par acquisition, de penser." Brenet, *Averroès l'inquiétant,* 31. Brenet's italics.

332 Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 208. For a discussion of the special temporality of Pound's medievalism that emphasizes its difference from earlier "Romantic medievalisms", see Scanlon, "Modernism's Medieval Imperative."

"Fuor di color" is a bit of metaphysics that Pound borrows from the text of "Donna mi prega." Pound's interest in such "medieval natural philosophy" dates back to his graduate work in Romance philology in the first decade of the twentieth century. In all likelihood, Pound discovered Avicenna and Averroes in this context. By the late 1920s, however, he had developed a subtle understanding of their importance for the poets of *il dolce stilnovo*, whose poems spliced the tropes of courtly love gleaned from the troubadours with theories of the imagination entering the Latin West from the Arab world through medieval centers of learning like the University of Bologna's Faculty of the Arts. Pound was several decades ahead of his time in his conviction that the tension between Dante and Cavalcanti, which has been a contested subject of scholarly debate since the fourteenth century, could be traced to the clash of Dante's Thomist orthodoxy with the unrepentant Averroism of his "first friend."[333] The translations of "Donna mi Prega" which Pound published in *The Dial* in 1928 and then as Canto XXXVI in *Eleven New Cantos* of 1934 are strongly influenced by Pound's sense of canzone's "Arabian background," which he filters through the neoplatonic light philosophy of Robert Grosseteste.[334] The result is often surprisingly close in tone, image and diction to Pound's translation of Shunzhi/Lacharme. Here, for example, is the penultimate stanza from the 1928 translation for *The Dial*, already alluded to in the quote above:

> Who well proceedeth, form not seeth,
> following his own emanation.[335]
> There, *beyond colour*, essence set apart,
> In midst of darkness light light giveth forth
> Beyond all falsity, worthy of faith, alone
> That in him solely is compassion born.[336]

With a didacticism that anticipates the spirit of Canto LIX's similarly phrased directions, these lines describe the proper comportment vis-à-vis the ultimate object of courtly love lyric, wellspring not only of erotic longing, but of moral cultivation and perfect knowledge: the beloved.[337]

The "essence" (l. 67) of this instruction is that one must learn to "get over" the very "objectness" of the beloved object. The image of the beloved, source of illumination *par excellence*, is ultimately not a "form seen" but a form "that, understood/ taketh in latent intellect—" "place and abode" (ll. 20-23). As a resident of the "latent" or possible intellect, the abstracted image of the

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[333] For a nuanced and in its own way highly-Poundian discussion of the differences between Dante and Cavalcanti's metaphysics, see Mocan, *La trasparenza e il riflesso*. On Pound's understanding of Cavalcanti's Averroism and its relationship to developments in the larger field of Cavalcanti scholarship, see Henriksen, "Chiaroscuro."

[334] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 210–13. Pound's understanding of Cavalcanti's "Arab background" comes chiefly by way of Ernest Renan's classic study, *Averroès et L'Averroïsme* (1882) and Etienne Gilson's *Philosophie du Moyen Age* (1922). In the 1930s, Pound had a short-lived correspondence with Gilson, who reviewed Pound's *Guido Cavalcanti Rime* favorably though not uncritically for the October 1932-July 1933 issue of *The Criterion*. On the broader intellectual stakes of this correspondence as well as the implications their disagreement about Cavalcanti's Averroism had for the writing of Canto XXXVI, see Morrison, "Come Far Poteresti Un Sofismo?"

[335] The gender of the pronoun "his" in Pound's translation refers to the gender of the Italian noun it replaces and not necessarily to the lover. All Italian nouns have gender, no matter what they designate.

[336] Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 177. My italics.

[337] For an excellent discussion of the imaginative trajectory that allows the lover to ascend from the image of the beloved to a form of knowledge the exceeds the image, see Mira Mocan, *I pensieri del cuore: per la semantica del provenzale cossirar* (Roma: Bagatto libri, 2004), 167f.

beloved directs the lover to wisdom and virtue precisely to the extent that he *doesn't* see it, that he doesn't hold his eyes "fixed upon it" (*nos ad lumen rationis…fixos habere jubet oculos*). In a certain sense, the lover turns away from the beloved, as Dante does from Beatrice in the final stanzas of the *Paradiso*. But this turning away—a "troping" long associated with the act of literary creation itself—is also the means by which the lover demonstrates his perfect fidelity. By turning from (troping on) the beloved, he shows his awareness that the essence of his lady belongs not to the field of the visible nor even to the medium of language. All these are subject to change; she, on the other hand, is incorruptible. As such, her "place and abode" is the possible intellect, where she may be disclosed by the understanding as a being of pure intention (*esse intentionale)*, separate from her transient incarnations and residing in the eternal "now" of "the mind, indestructible" (Canto LXXIV, 442).[338] The form of the *Cantos* is designed to trace this indestructibility the only way possible: as "a law of rhythmic accord," Thus, the eternal "now" is the rhythmic interval at its most "absolute," and the "esse intentionale," the intentional correlate of such "sensible" perceptions.

As Giorgio Agamben has shown, this movement from sensible image to intentional being was always, and particularly among the *stilnovisti*, a textual affair.[339] It is also, we might add, the trajectory of translation. The text of Shunzhi's preface to the *Shijing*, for instance, explicitly incites (*incitat*) its reader to libidinal restraint (*expers libidinis*), dutiful service ("with faith, never tricky"), and a piety toward parents (*obsequatur parentis*) which "nunquam deflectat" ("never turns away"). And yet, Pound's translation, like a stubborn child or unfaithful lover, is nothing if not an apparently capricious and textually perverse turning away from its original, its "source," "master," "parent," and "beloved" all at once. Such glaring contradictions resolve themselves into a coherent poetics of translation, however, once one comes to recognize in the "traduttore traditore" ("the traitor translator") the figures of troubadour poet and the renegade "natural philosopher." Only such a figure, perhaps, would be able to perceive the order in "a world of moving energies," a state of flux in which the "fixity" of a form, image, or text would be nothing but the abstract intention corresponding to a potentially infinite series of iterations, reproductions, or translations. In the mind's eye of the natural philosopher Pound alludes to, all of these versions and even "the original" would differ "substantially" (in "substance") from that intentional being of potential intellect through which each of them is illuminated for the understanding. This intentional being, in turn, is not *a* being in the sense each of its instantiations is *a* being, but rather *the* being through which those beings have their being, or better: the light in which they are disclosed.

In "midst of darkness," Pound writes, the light is nothing else than the "light light giveth forth," nothing but its own "effect." This is equally true of the light of reason (*lumen rationis*) or the light of love, which, in Pound's eyes, are virtually indistinguishable. Love, as Pound puts it prosopopetically in Canto XXXVI,

> Cometh from a seen form which being understood
> Taketh locus and remaining in the intellect possible
> Wherein hath he neither weight nor still-standing,
> Descendeth not by quality but shineth out
> Himself his own effect unendingly

Approached from this angle, these lines from Pound's second published translation of "Donna mi prega" place the lover and the translator in parallel situations: both are readers for whom the proper

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338 For a helpful introduction to medieval theories of intentionality, see Perler, *Théories de l'intentionnalité au moyen âge*, esp. 19-25.

339 Agamben, *Stanze*, 150–51.

understanding of their object implies that object's necessary displacement. The lover learns to see the "fixity" of the image of his beloved in the light of the limitless possibility of her "effect." Transformed into a troubadour, he works to actualize this possibility through the writing of poetry. As Pound note in a late canto: "The production IS the beloved" (Canto CIV, 762). The task of the translator implies a similar transformation of perspective: what was a "seen form"—a text—must be dematerialized, it must shed its "weight" and cease its "still-standing" so that it too may become the luminous principle of its own "unending" iteration.

That this model of identity as self-differentiation and of originality as the possibility of translation—originality as *nothing but* the possibility of translation—should correspond so closely to the dynamic we earlier connected to the translation of *virtù*, is no surprise. The word "virtu" appears conspicuously in line five as a linguistically-slippery translation of Lacharme "virtutem," which manages to escape the Christian legacy of "virtue" while also evading what Pound elsewhere refers as the "pagan worship of strength" suggested by most English translations of "virtute" ("manliness," "bravery," "vigor," "strength," "courage").[340] The Italian word "virtù," as we noted earlier, is a word Pound learned from Cavalcanti and which, both with and without its accent, over time became a permanent fixture of his own poetic vocabulary. It is a perfect example of what Yunte Huang calls Pound's "poetic language of translationese,"[341] neither completely English nor exotically Italian. In fact, as Pound comes to use it, virtù seems to designate precisely that part of a text which is, as Yunte says, "not any one language in particular," the part that shines with the possibility of its own translation. It would seem to be such texts that are most worthy of the translator's attention. Coming from a "seen form" but not standing still, such a text

> Descendeth not by quality but shineth out
> Himself his own effect unendingly

"Himself his own effect unendingly" translate line 26 of "Donna mi Prega." In Cavalcanti's Italian it reads "Risplende in sé *perpetuale effecto*." The second hemistich of this verse, "perpetuale effecto," is a phrase that also appears in Canto LIX:

> Ut animum nostrum purget, Confucius ait, dirigatque
> ad lumen rationis
> perpetuale effecto/

Until this moment we have assumed "perpetuale effecto" continued the predication, in Latin, of the verb "dirigo." The situation, however, is far more complex. Pound's "perpetuale effecto" is not just a "perpetuation" of the Latin clause, it is also, crucially, a citation of an Italian poem. And it is both of these languages *at the same time*.

IV. Perpetuale effecto

Evidently, a poem committed to tracing such perpetual effects "can't be all in one language."[342] As Yunte would say, the "effect" "perpetuale effecto" perpetuates in Canto LIX is *necessarily* irreducible to "any one language in particular." Cantos LIX crystalizes the basic procedure of Pound's epic as a

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340 Cf. Cavalcanti and Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, 209.
341 Yunte, "Ezra Pound, Made in China," 40.
342 Canto LXXVI, Pound, *The Cantos*, 563.

whole. Transmission may not be continuous, it may bounce from Italian to Chinese to English and back, but it is hard as crystal, indeed indestructible. Here as elsewhere in the *Cantos*, the distinction between the original and the translation loses its meaning. The original can never be lost, because the "original" coincides with its transmission. It perpetuates itself as rhythm across diverse linguistic materials, "taking locus" in the medial ether in between.

and the news is a long time moving
a long time in arriving
thru the impenetrable
crystalline, indestructible
ignorance of locality[343]

As the light that refracts *between* idioms, Pound's "perpetuale effecto" is, in a certain sense, "untranslatable." But this is only because "perpetuale effecto" is—"in sé"—a rhythm of translation: "himself his own effect unendingly."[344]

Our earlier difficulty tracking down a precedent for the strongly offset line "perpetuale effecto/" from Canto LIX has a simple explanation: the phrase is not Lacharme's. In its first instance, it is not even Latin. It's half a verse from "Donna mi prega," the tail end of an Italian *endecasillabo a minore*. Pound has inserted it almost seamlessly into the flow of his translation of Shunzhi's preface, so deftly, in fact, that the Italian almost disappears into the syntax of the preceding Latin clause. Almost, but not quite: Pound indicates the presence of the seam typographically by annotating "effecto" with a forward slash ("/"). This sign has been used elsewhere in the *Cantos* generally and Canto LIX particularly to indicate an abbreviation, as when he adds it to "shd" ("should") in the lines "that we shd/ learn our integrity" (l. 11), "that we shd/ attain our integrity" (l. 12), and "show what we shd/ bring into action" (l. 18). In these instances, "/" marks a lexical contraction. Particularly where it is accompanied by anaphora (ll. 11 &12), the slash gives a sense of the canto's momentum. It's a rhythmic "syncopater," no doubt one of those typographic markers devised, as we've seen Pound explain to Creekmore, "to facilitate the reader's intonation."

When appended to "perpetuale effecto/", however, the syncopation that "/" visually scores expands immensely in scope and significance. Where in the other instances the forward slash "includes" the letters O-U-L by marking their removal, the "/" of "perpetuale effecto" refers to an entire poem, if not an entire literary tradition and philosophical heritage,[345] which has been contracted into seven-syllable melody that floats between Latin and Italian.

Ut animum nostrum purget, Confucius ait, dirigatque
ad lumen rationis
perpetuale effecto/
That this book keep us in due bounds of office

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[343] Canto LXXXII, Pound, 525.

[344] In this sense, Pound's use of "perpetuale effecto" recalls the title of Jacques Derrida's talk, *Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction "relevante,"* whose final word moves between English and French. As Derrida explains, "Why would my title remain forever untranslatable? In the first place, because one can't decide the source language to which it is answerable (relève); nor, therefore, in what sense it travails, *travels*, between *hôte* and *hôte*, *guest* and host." Derrida, "What Is a 'Relevant' Translation?," 425.

[345] On the way "Donna mi Prega" functions for Pound as a metonym for an entire literary-philosophic tradition—what she calls "the other middle ages"—see Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti*, 2002.

the norm
Show what we shd/ take into action:
what follow within and persistently

"Perpetuale effecto/" is a privileged example of how the brief rhythmic tags that Pound distributes throughout the *Cantos* fold larger patterns of historical repetition into the local rhythms of the poem. It is both an instance of this procedure and, with its citation of a "mediaeval natural philosopher," as close as Pound gets to a *theory* of the historical transmission produced by the form of his epic. On the one hand, the forward slash scores our reading of the canto for its performance, providing a kind of bar-line. On the other hand, the slash seems to embody a violent transgression of the limits ("the due bounds") of text, period, and language. After such a jolt, the signification of the subjunctive clause that follows ("that this book keep us in due bounds of office") becomes extremely problematic. Illuminated by the Tuscan light of "perpetuale effecto/", "*this* book" plainly cannot refer to the published text of either Shunzhi's 1655 Manchu prolegomena or Lacharme's Latin translation. Both of those texts lacked Canto LIX's supplementary "effecto." And yet, the difference introduced by this effect is, we read, a modality of a more fundamental perpetuation. By means of its extraordinarily self-reflexive "effect," "perpetuale effecto/" challenges us to consider the possibility that the truly unhistorical thinking lies not in the use of anachronism but rather in the assumption that that *this* book *here* can ever be made to seamlessly coincide with *that* book *then*. Whether the difference is marked or not, a historical supplement always intervenes. Of course, the Italian phrase is an addition, but what it adds is a reference to continuity—a process of transfer, transmission, or translation: the perpetuation of something "by" or "in" effects. What's remarkable is that "perpetuale effecto" manages to "say" continuity not only in the seemingly "discontinuous" medium of a foreign language, but that it also and simultaneously says continuity in the "original's" own language, indeed as a "continuation" of the original's own speech.

Expressed in more musical terms, one could say that the forward slash of "perpetuale effecto/", like the bar lines used to delineate the measures of musical scores, marks a kind of return or repetition. In Western music, such notations are frequently used to indicate the return of the beat. Whether voiced or merely intimated, the beat is the compositional device *par excellence* that establishes continuity in the midst of melodic development or tonal modulation. In Canto LIX, "perpetuale effecto/" functions analogously: material from the poem's past resurfaces in its present, producing an "effecto" much like the return of the beat. On one hand, the reader hears the return of the poem's own language and themes—material, for example, which he or she encountered twenty-six pages earlier in Canto LV's description of the Song dynasty philosopher Tcheou Tun-y's (*Zhou Dunyi*) Neo-Confucian reinterpretation of another Chinese classic, the *I Ching* [Book of Changes]:

Lux enim per se omnem in partem
Reason from heaven, said Tcheou. Tun-y
enlighteneth all things
seipsum seipsum diffundit, *risplende*
Is the beginning of all things, et *effectu*[346]

On the other hand, the bar line brings back the lost light of thirteenth-century Tuscany, a medievalism which illuminates—both in the sense of "revealing" and "explaining"—the

[346] My italics.

anachronistic relationships between the canto's various seventeenth-, eighteenth- and twentieth-century materials.

For Pound, "Risplende in sé perpetuale effecto" is perhaps the most "medieval" line in an extraordinarily "medieval" poem, in the rather precise sense that it refutes the meaningfulness of time's arrow, and, particularly, the significance of chronological differences (differences like the distinction medieval/modern) for philosophical understanding.[347] The "possible intellect" was the term medieval commentators on Aristotle's *De Anima* used to address this fundamental contemporaneity of thought, an underlying synchronic domain which could only be actualized partially, rhythmically, in time.[348] Dino del Garbo, the doctor and scholar whose early commentary on "Donna me prega" Pound studied intensively and considered unsurpassed, explicitly links Cavalcanti's "perpetual effect" to the doctrine of the possible intellect. As printed in Enrico Fenzi's recent edition, the del Garbo passage reads,

> […] [I]ntellectus est quedam forma a particularitate et corruptibilitate <seiuneta>, que corruptibilitas procedit a qualitatibus elementalibus; et ideo in tali forma que est intellectus possibilis primo et proprie recipitur id quod est universal et incorruptibile.
> Et hoc est quod iste vult dicere cum subdit *Risplende in sé perpetuale effecto*, idest operatio, que est sicut effectus anime respectu alicuius quod est perpetuum et incorruptibile, sicut et iste intellectus est incorruptibilis.[349]

Which in the English version the medievalist Otto Bird's 1939 dissertation—a translation and commentary on which Bird and Pound corresponded[350]—reads,

> The intellect is a certain form removed from particularity and corruptibility, since corruptibility proceeds from the elemental qualities. Therefore the possible intellect first and properly receives what is universal and incorruptible. And this is what Guido would say in *Risplende in sé perpetuale effecto*, that is, the operation of the intellect is as the effect of the soul in respect of something that is perpetual and incorruptible.[351]

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[347] In effect, Pound's "medievalism "recalls the Latin etymon of the Middle Ages ("medium aevum") and the "mediating" role this middle or "medium" played in the transmission of classical learning and Christian culture. In this regard, Pound's interest in the Middle Ages rhymes with several of his contemporaries and notably with the Romance Philologist Ernst Robert Curtius. In an appendix to European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, Curtius writes, "The bases of Western thought are classical antiquity and Christianity. The function of the Middle Ages was to receive that deposit, to transmit it, and to adapt it. Its most precious legacy, to my mind, *is the spirit which it created while performing this task*." Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 596–97. My italics.

[348] For a highly relevant discussion of such epochal distinctions in the work of T.E. Hulme, who Pound claims to have introduced to Cavalcanti, see Blanton, "The Politics of Epochality."

[349] del Garbo, "Dino Del Garbo: Commento," 102–3.

[350] Cf. Pound, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, 304–5; 332.

[351] Bird, "Mediaeval Philosophic Thought as Reflected in the Canzone d'Amore of Cavalcanti," 135. With an irony that is rather revelatory of the close relationship between vicissitudes of textual transmission and the epistemological structure of "the possible intellect," Fenzi's edition of the Garbo's commentary identifies an instance of textual "corruption" in the sentence "imo intellectus est quedam forma a particularitate et corruptibilitate." To resolve the contradiction between an intellect that is both "particular and corruptible" and "universal and incorruptible," Fenzi inserts the word <seiuneta> to mark the difference between a (creaturely) intellect mediated by phantasms and a pure, "separate" intellect, 'resplendent in its perpetual effect.' Bird's translation reflects this change, though the Latin version of the commentary he prints with it does not register this intervention.

As the existence of Bird's dissertation attests, del Garbo's commentary has itself become an object of philological inquiry. Indeed, the manuscript tradition which Bird collates in his edition of the commentary has proven itself hardly immune to the sort of "corruption" del Garbo discusses.

And for Pound this is precisely the point: any textual tradition—any history of textual transmission—rests on a certain split internal to the concept of original. On the one hand, the original of such a tradition is a 'particular and corruptible' textual artifact like any other. On the other hand, however, the original introduces a 'universal and incorruptible' possibility of understanding which is irreducible to any particular text. A tradition unfolds in the space between these two versions of the original. For Pound, the importance of a concept like "possible intellect" lies in the fact that it sustains the difference which grounds a tradition. It is easy, for example, to imagine a classically trained philologist getting mired in the syntax of a sentence like "idest operatio, que est sicut effectus anime respectu alicuius quod est perpetuum et incorruptibile, sicut et iste intellectus est incorruptibilis." Such a philologist might pay very close attention to this sentence's "seen form" without ever pausing to reflect on the "operation" (*operatio*) it describes. Were the philologist to do so, he or she would see that this operation concerns the movement by which the soul is directed away from the "particular and corruptible" form of the text and toward the "universal and incorruptible" intention residing in the possible intellect. The possible intellect belongs to no specific epoch and no language in particular. Indeed, as the intentional structure that refers any given instance of knowledge to the possibility of its being known by somebody else, at a different time, and in a different language, the possible intellect defies chronology. The operation that directs us to its light is always, therefore, in profoundly anachronistic:

> Ut animum nostrum purget, Confucius ait, dirigatque
> ad lumen rationis
> perpetuale effecto/

According to the medievalist Emmanuele Coccia, the Middle Ages developed a particular genre of writing especially suited to purging of the soul and directing it towards reason's light: the commentary. In contrast to philological endeavors that labor to return a text to its original discursive context if not to its author's original intention, the task of the commentary is to render "the original" transparent to the light of its "perpetual effect." Coccia's study, *La Trasparenza delle imagini,* focuses above all on the figure Dante immortalized as the greatest practitioner of commentary of his time, Averroes.[352] Over the course of its exposition of Averroes and his school, however, one comes across occasional allusions to more contemporary variations on the genre. Among these, Walter Benjamin's *Passagenwerk* looms large, as does Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. In his introduction to Coccia's study, Giorgio Agamben proposes the *Cantos*.[353] Although Coccia does not pursue the parallel Agamben suggests between the form of the *Cantos* and the form of medieval commentary, it is nonetheless striking how his discussions of the philosophical perspective informing the textual practices of medieval commentary frequently read as uncannily apt descriptions of Pound's half-century long attempt "to make a paradiso/ terrestre" (Notes for CXVII et seq, 802), a project which, read in this light, reveals itself to be—if there were really any doubt—essentially *theological*.

Ronald Bush has noted the importance of Arab commentaries on Aristotle—particularly Avicenna and Averroes—for the "form" of the Pisan sequence.[354] I would like to double down on

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[352] Cf. *Inferno* IV, 144.
[353] Agamben, "Introduzione," x.
[354] Bush, "La Filosofica Famiglia."

that claim and argue that the commentators working in this tradition make explicit the theory of transmission that holds implicitly for the *Cantos*. There is, for example, no finer analysis of the historical wager of the textual practices we have been tracing in the China Cantos than Coccia's description of the *time* proper to philosophical commentary—a relevance which I hope justifies this passage's lengthy citation. "The commentary," Coccia writes,

> emancipates itself definitively from whatever interpretive or merely exegetical activity and ceases definitively to be a discourse that defers to other discourses. If every exegesis allows the text to individualize itself with a significance (*significante*), the commentary is the movement by which the idea coincides with its own exposition and its use. In the commentary, on the other hand, philosophy found the exposition most appropriate to the peculiar time proper to thought. Each gesture of thought (*gesto di pensiero*)—like each critical operation—aims to create a thickness in which it can be contemporary to that which is commented. For it is only in a relation of contemporaneity that there can be understanding (*comprensione*), and vice versa what we call understanding is less a gnoseological phenomenon than a movement that concerns the time in which, for a brief moment, that which understands and that which is understood should be able to persist (*insistere*). To be able to know (*conoscere*) something, in effect, it is necessary to be—at the exact moment of understanding—perfectly contemporaneous with that which is understood. For this [reason] one can never know something as simply past: in the moment of comprehension (*conoscenza*) each thing disposes of its own chronological order (*dismette il proprio rango cronologico*)—ceases to be past, present or future—in order to make itself simply contemporaneous with the knower. Something is understood when that subtle time is produced—able to infiltrate itself (*infiltrarsi*) in between times—in which it occurs contemporaneously to its being known: this time of absolute contemporaneity is the time proper to historical cognition (*conoscenza storica*). The act of historical cognition is nothing but a peculiar time, the time in which two times come together and hold themselves in a relationship of reciprocal knowability (*conoscibilità*). This instant without place—that plainly persists (*insiste*) neither in the present nor in the past—is the untimely epoch (*l'epoca inattuale*) of historical endeavor (*esercizio storico*). To think, therefore,—and to think historically—always means to produce a time interior to time itself, in which one manages to be contemporaneous with what one thinks: to suspend the order in which things situate themselves in it [*esso*: 'time itself'], to produce a space of contemporaneity, an epoch. There is in language—and in thought—a supplementary, ulterior time with respect to that of experience that allows one to constitute oneself in a relationship of contemporaneity not only with what is not chronologically proximate, but also with what never was, or with what is not. This pocket of temporality (*sacca di temporalità*) that language and thought guard (*custodiscono*) breaks (*frange*) in each occurrence the course of time and appears to produce in it an interruption (*arresto*) in which all things can become contemporaneous. […] And it is only in the medium of the commentary that this time seems to be possible. The commentary makes it so that the person who writes (the thinker) manages to be for a brief moment contemporaneous with his or her own object (the thought), to coincide with the latter in the ephemeral and absolutely untimely (*inattuale*) instant that the non-place (*non-luogo*) of the page liberates and unfolds: the absolute epoch where, in the catastrophe of each history (*nella catastrofe di ogni storia*), the past coincides with the future and memory seems to merge itself (*fondersi*) with the apocalypse. And it is perhaps

> only in the peculiar space-time, of which commentary is the reality (*di cui il commento è realità*), that each epoch truly manages to have an immediate relationship with God.[355]

What is remarkable about Coccia's reading of the form of the commentary is the way that it subtly reframes the theological question about the possibility of an "immediate relationship with God" as a question about the nature and limits of literary production and historical understanding. What one notices with this turn toward the dynamics of textual transmission is that the figure of God as a transcendent *agency* outside of history falls out of the frame. Or rather, God falls into the frame, into its *medium*, where, refigured as the possible intellect, He becomes a kind of intentional structure immanent to the chain of textual transmission, though also transcendent of every historical consciousness along in the chain. At the limit, Coccia's discussion entirely displaces the question about whether or not there is a God to the seemingly different question of whether or not there can be such a thing as a tradition, whether or not texts have "perpetual effects." Pound, of course, would argue in the affirmative. His faith in the possibility of a "live tradition" is what is at stake in the claim that Canto LIX's "perpetuale effecto" can be reduced neither to the lexical object studied in philology nor the intentional structure examined by hermeneutics. There is, for Pound, always a remainder, a luminosity that belongs to texts by virtue of the fact that they can be transmitted. This remainder is not a form but a possibility conferred by the medium into which the text is inducted and through which it circulates, an "ability" texts acquire once they become properly historical, an "–ibility" which Coccia, translating Benjamin, calls their "transmissibility" (*tradibilità*).[356]

If one agrees that there is such thing as "transmissibility," then those passages in the *Cantos* which strike one as obvious "symptoms" of Pound's idiosyncratic or, as Davie puts it, "pathological" interpretation of world history—moments like Canto LIX's collage of a seventeenth-century Chinese emperor, an eighteenth-century Jesuit translator, and a thirteenth-century "natural philosopher"—become more difficult to dismiss *prima facie*. Which is alarming. It is far easier to read Pound as a crank whose great epic is driven by his misguided faith in a handful of bogus theories: *usura*, the international Jewish conspiracy, Social Credit, the Chinese character, etc. It is much more difficult, but also more instructive, to see these theoretical constructions as desperate, often paranoid, eventually catastrophic attempts to supply the missing transcendental perspective capable of accounting for the transmissibility he dealt with habitually and as a practical manner in his work as a translator and in the composition of the *Cantos*. It is common in studies of the *Cantos* to point out that none of Pound's grand theories can adequately account for what a poem does line to line and page to page—an argument that has been used to great effect by both Pound's defenders and his critics. This observation is of course accurate, but we should not stop here. The *reason* why Pound's poetry is more compelling than his politics is that even when a canto alludes to the *lumen rationis* of Neo-Confucian orthodoxy, the *ratio* that it *intends* is always immanent to the structure of historical transmission that the *Cantos* instantiates. This *ratio* refers less to the relationship between the poem and its theorization than to the dynamic and evolving proportions that regulate the order of its elements. Even when they are "Confucian," the poem's "standards" are, in a sense, always *musical*. As we've seen, a norm as simple as "obsequatur parentis" ("he obeys his parents") comes to us by way of a complex history of translation and transmission whose rhythms the China Cantos try to incorporate by syncopating them with the beats of its own measure. The word "norm" in this

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[355] Coccia, *La Trasparenza Delle Immagini*, 9–10.
[356] Coccia, 11–12; 41–42. For Benjamin's use of "Tradierbarkeit," see his famous 1938 letter to Scholem in Benjamin and Scholem, *Briefwechsel 1933-1940*, 272.

context suggests less an explicit or implicit prescription or valuation whose history has been either consciously or unconsciously disavowed, than the tensions between actuality and potentiality, experience and anticipation, retention and protention that characterize many phenomenological descriptions of musical or poetic rhythm, when not the lived experience (*Erlebnis*) of time consciousness itself.[357] Though no phenomenologist, Pound would not hesitate to equate "the lived experience of time consciousness" with his use of the word "tradition," a term which for Pound, as we've seen, has much more to do with "virtù" than any particular "virtue" or "virtute." The memorable line in the *Pisans*, "to have gathered from the air a live tradition," seems to imply as much. The wonderful polysemy of "air," which points both to the 305 odes ("airs") of the *Shijing* ("so full of virtue," Pound reports[358]) *and* to Aristotle's diaphanous transmitter of images, suggests that the "liveness" of a tradition refers not only to its contemporaneity but to its repetition in performance.

This point, that the tradition the poem gathers "lives" in the temporal intervals of its music, sounds like a rehashing of the formalist and particularly the New Critical readings that dominated the first decades of the *Cantos'* critical reception. There is, however, an important difference, a difference which formalist readings can only include by effacing. This difference is introduced most clearly by the poem's use of translation, a practice which constantly points to the historicity of language and the material effects of transmission, contingencies which prevent the poem from producing the kind of formal closure that New Critical interpretive techniques draw on as a hermeneutic principle. Removed from the chain of textual transmission whose perpetual effect they instantiate and comment on, the concluding lines of Canto LIX's "preface" read like a formalist article of faith, if not an unsettling totalitarian dogma:

> all order comes into such norm
> igitur meis encomiis, therefor this preface

What these lines *are*, however, is first and foremost a *translation*. A bizarre one, to be sure, but one which nonetheless establishes a "relational field" that effectively dislodges any one idiom, any one speaker, any one historical discourse from the poem's normative center. Lacharme's sentence reads, "ex his duobus verus rerum omnium ordo et recta agendi norma exsurgit"[359] ["From these two the true order of all things and the right measure for acting springs forth"]. In Lacharme, "his duobus" plainly refers to the two precepts mentioned in the preceding clauses: faith owed to a master (*fidem debitam*) and "piety towards parents" (*pietate in parentes*). It is from *these two* precepts that true order *and* right measure spring forth. In Canto LIX, not only are order and norm dissociated and refigured as the two poles of a process or movement, so that "comes into" mimics the trajectory of line 10's "all things are here brought to precisions," but all this formal reflexivity is keyed to the historical dynamics of textual transmission. Lacharme's "his duobus," along with its two, historically specific antecedents, falls away, or rather are folded into the article "such," which in this context refers more to the section's own rhetorical operation than to any particular standard or model. Most dramatically, however, the word "norm" translates the Latin word "normam." In Latin, "normam" literally refers to a tool masons use to bring intersecting materials "to precisions" ("a carpenter's square"). As the word's rich history in Latin manuals of rhetoric and music shows, "normam" is in certain contexts a synonym for poetic meter or musical measure. Although the English word "norm" does a poor job communicating these nuances, this is not the reason why Pound's

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[357] See, for example, Abraham, *Rythmes*. Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins*.
[358] Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, 249.
[359] Mohl, *Confucii Chi-King, sive Liber Carminum*, x.

translation is interesting. On the contrary, what is fascinating about the Canto LIX translation is that it compels the reader to recognize that there is no authoritative "norm" regulating the translation of "normam" into "norm." There is only the diverse set of contingent, historical practices. In fact, the closest one can get to any sort of transhistorical standard is arguably the practice of translation as it is developed by the *Cantos,* in the rhythms of Pound's "poetic language of translationese," whose norm belongs to no language or epoch, residing instead in the relations established between languages and epochs.

Translated back into Coccia's language, the "norm" the *Cantos* abide, the "measure," "standard," "rule," or "pattern" that regulates their various orders of discourse, *exists* in no particular discourse and at no particular point in time. Rather, the norm *persists* (*insistere*) in and as that virtual structure of intentional convergence which medieval philosophy referred to as the "possible intellect," which Coccia links to the "non-place" (*non-luogo*) liberated and unfolded in the pages of the commentary and which I, drawing on a polysemy common to both Italian and English, argue *insists* (*insistere*) in and as the rhythms of Pound's epic poem. Coccia concludes the passage cited above with an allusion to the apocalyptic temporality that insists through the pages of medieval commentary, the momentum of a final and definitive revelation whose drive one would expect to find in the *Cantos* as well. And, indeed, many commentators have identified just such an apocalypse in the converging temporal intervals of Pound's epic.[360] The problem with such analyses, however, is that they either consciously or unconsciously impose a Judeo-Christian paradigm of revelation on a poem whose understanding of history is deeply, even polemically, pagan. There are many inconsistencies in Pound's understanding of history, but one thing remains consistent: the dream of Europe might be over, but history, for Pound, does not *end*. In contrast to Stephen Dedalus, history is not a nightmare from which Pound can imagine one day awaking. This means, among other things, that what Pound calls the "magic moment" of historical illumination is not messianic.[361]

Nor do the periods of darkness into which such enlightenment often lapses intimate—by a kind of dialectical reversal common to certain varieties of mysticism—a blinding revelation in the offing. There is nothing "meaningful" in the act of waiting; nor is there anything definitive about the moment of "redemption." The "great men" chronicled in Pound's epic, those figures of moral enlightenment and political liberation—Confucius, Shunzhi, Adams, Jefferson—are in no way the prefigurations of a final, ultimate, and absent redeemer, a messiah. On the contrary, the Judeo-Christian messiah is a figure for *them*.[362] For example, at the end of his version Shunzhi's preface to the *Shijing*, in the line that translates the document's date, Lacharme references a Christian calendar which he, a Jesuit priest, no doubt considers universal:

> Imperatoris Chun-tchi anno 11
> (sive post Chr anno 1655)

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[360] In her introductory essay to the collection *Ezra Pound: dans le vortex de la traduction,* Hélène Aji writes of Pound's translations: "Pound posits himself at the end of times (as opposed to out of time) when all texts from all cultures can be summoned to be assessed and redeemed in translation. Accuracy is then not only unnecessary but in contradiction with the fundamental objectives of this activity: translation is to be understood as a general activity including linguistic transfer but also encompassing any type of transmission and integrating the intrinsic and discreet ambiguities of mediation Aji, "Introduction," 10. See also Richard Sieburth's discussion of a "total translation" in Sieburth, "Channelling Guido: Ezra Pound's Cavalcanti Translations," 289f.

[361] For a version of philological labor similarly shorn of the Christian redemption narrative, see Reuss, Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst das Rettende auch (...), 35f.

[362] On Pound's rejection of a discourse of history in its most transcendent or theological deployments that would abstract form particular historical cases, see Blanton, "Untimely Histories," 404f.

This last line translates the Chinese date—which references a particular political regime, Shunzhi's—into a timeline measured by an entirely different standard, and whose dates reference an another kingdom entirely:

> And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.[363]

It is to *this* kingdom that Coccia refers when he speaks of "the absolute epoch where, in the catastrophe of each history, the past coincides with the future and memory seems to merge itself with the apocalypse." In the version of Shunzhi's preface printed in Canto LIX, Pound retains Lacharme's date, but he does so in a manner that makes it clear that this date, and the allusion to the Kingdom of God it contains, differs in no fundamental way from any other bit of historical discourse one might find in the *Cantos*. The translation reads,

CHUN TCHI anno undecesimo
(a.d. 1655)

"Anno undecesimo" is not Lacharme's Latin; it's Italian. If it references the eleventh year of Shunzhi's reign, it also references another political regime. 1922 was the year of Mussolini's "March on Rome," the beginning of Fascist rule in Italy, and year I of the Fascist Calendar. By the time he published the China Cantos in A.D. 1940, Pound had long since switched over to the Fascist timeline in his personal correspondence and in the *Cantos* themselves. Translated into Italian, Lacharme's "anno 11" becomes a kind of subject rhyme: on the one hand, year 11 of Shunzhi's reign, on the other, *anno XI dell'era fascista* (A.D. 1933). It is, in other words, to the martial rhythms of Mussolini's rise to power, and by the timeline of *his* very profane dominion, that Pound synchronizes his epic. And, as Pound will learn, the political catastrophe that awaits at the end of this string of dates is an apocalypse far more ambivalent than the Day of Judgment. Unlike the Christian apocalypse, for instance, the disasters of World War II and the genocide perpetrated against the Jews of Europe mark an end of history that certain people—and not necessarily the most "righteous"—will nonetheless survive. Pound too will survive this end and continue writing. Though far less culpable figures than he will struggle to date this unredeemed afterlife and its endless, irremediable disgrace.

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[363] *Daniel* 7:14.

Chapter 3: Über Wuchern: Usury in Translation

I. Pound Notes in the German Market

Asked in 1960 what sort of "handwork" the writing of poems represented, Paul Celan answered categorically: "Only true (*wahre*) hands," he replied, "write true (*wahre*) poems."[364] This was most certainly not a reply that Celan's interlocutor, the poet and publisher Hans Bender, had anticipated. Bender was preparing the second edition of his anthology, *My Poem is my Knife*, a collection of short prose texts by young poets on the craft of writing poems. The anthology's framing conceit was the notion of poetry as a "Handwerk," where the poet's "hand" and the poet's "work" merged in the learned motions of technique, honed through apprenticeship, and exhibited as expertise.[365] This was the image of the poet that the early modernists had cultivated: impersonal, unsentimental, their language hard and sharp like a surgeon's scalpel or a butcher's knife. But it was an image that Celan was eager to disarm. If Celan's reply to Bender insists on breaking the meaning of "Handwerk" into a more basic question about "true" hands and "true" works, it is because, for him, the truth of a poem is not a function of its technical accomplishment. On the contrary, such truth resides in the intimacy of an encounter, the imprint a hand leaves on the surface of the page. "I can see no principle difference," he told Bender, "between a handshake and a poem."[366]

Celan's refusal to disassociate poems from the bodies that write them, or discriminate between reaching for the pen and reaching out to the other, is neither coquetry nor intellectual provocation. It is rather a carefully reasoned rejection of a whole tradition of thinking about the poem, its maker, and its relationship to history. Among Celan's contemporaries, the image of poetry as handwork was promoted most influentially by Gottfried Benn, whose 1951 account of the modern poet as a technician, "objektiv" and "formal," serves as an epigraph for Bender's anthology.[367] But, as Bender shows in his foreword, Benn's famous pronouncement, "Very rarely does a poem arise spontaneously – a poem is made" (*Ein Gedicht entsteht überhaupt sehr selten – ein Gedicht wird gemacht*), is essentially a post-war translation of an earlier era's injunction to "make it new"—a literary program which, by the time Benn rehabilitated it, was already several decades *old*.[368] In fact, were one to look for a poetological statement with which to oppose Celan's equation of a poem and a handshake, one could do no better than the "credo" Ezra Pound printed in the February 1912 issue of *Poetry Review*: "I believe in technique as a test of a man's sincerity."[369]

It is precisely from the fetish the modernists like Pound and Benn made out of poetic technique that Celan distances himself by insisting on the hands that do the work. That said, this shift in emphasis from the craft of writing to the body of the poet should not be confused with any sort of Romantic cult of genius or Symbolist fascination with charismatic transmission. On the contrary, it is a plea for a highly acute form of historical awareness. It is a reminder that the hand that works is attached to a handworker, that "unique and mortal spiritual being, who," as Celan says, "searches a path with its voice and its muteness" (*das mit seiner Stimme und seiner Stummheit einen Weg sucht*).[370] For Celan, a German-speaking poet born to a Jewish family in a former province of the

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[364] Celan, "Brief an Hans Bender," 177.
[365] Bender, *Mein Gedicht ist mein Messer*, 9–12.
[366] Celan, "Brief an Hans Bender," 177.
[367] Bender, *Mein Gedicht ist mein Messer*, 7.
[368] Bender, 9.
[369] Pound, *Literary Essays*, 9. Enzenseberger places both Benn and Pound in the same geneology leading back to poe, the first great "literary engineer." Also see Enzensberger, "Die Entstehung eines Gedichts," esp. 59f.
[370] Celan, "Brief an Hans Bender," 177.

Austro-Hungarian Empire, this path was an eminently historical one. It wound through the forty-eight years of European history separating the "credo" on technique that Pound published in 1912 from 18 May, 1960—the date Celan signed his reply to Bender. Above all, however, Celan's was a path that traversed the incalculable losses and the irreparable displacements of war and genocide, events which, having targeted his person, Celan transcribed into his body of work. What alarmed Celan about the vogue for poetry of Benn and Pound's "make" (*Mache*) among his contemporaries was not just the anti-Semitic views and fascist sympathies that sullied many of these early modernists' biographies, it was the fact that such a vision of poetic craft, which elevated "das Handwerkliche" to a supreme virtue, systematically overlooked if not expressly disavowed the full reality and lasting consequences of the Nazi program. This program was not content to keep pens out of certain poets' hands, but was bent on destroying, anonymously and in mass, when not the body of the poet then, as in Celan's case, nearly everyone whose hands held that body dear.

Celan, who lost his family, his friends, and his community in the Shoah, held their disappearance in the white spaces of his poems. *His* handwork is shaped by *their* absence as a palm is shaped by the various cravasses, folds, and hollows traversing its surface, a texture at once "singular" (*einmalig*) and "perishable" (*sterblich*). Knowing what he made of Bender's "Handwerk," one more easily understands why Celan similarly recognized "no principle difference" (*keinen principiellen Unterschied*) between printing his name next to the name of a former Nazi and agreeing to shake his or her hand. For reasons as poetological as they were ethical and political, Celan deliberately withheld himself from such "company."[371] Like the absences inscribed upon his hands, the name with which Celan signed his poems incorporates the names of all those who could no longer sign. "Celan" not only designates the man born "Paul Antschel";[372] through a series of displacements more complex than an anagram, it encrypts the memory of millions of unnamed victims whose deaths defy any other form of commemoration.[373] Like a handshake, a proper name attests to a "truth" of an order that neither Benn's nor Pound's techniques can "test."[374]

For his part, Pound sometimes joked that his own name specified an "enclosure for stray animals."[375] Although there is no evidence that Celan was an attentive reader of Pound's poetry and poetics,[376] posthumously published journals and notebooks show that for a time Pound's name served Celan as just such a literary device that gathered together a host of "unclean" creatures. In these notes, "Pound" is neither "proper" nor, really, a "name."[377]"Pound" is rather a signifier over-determined in the Freudian sense: a cipher implicated in multiple and at times contradictory

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371 Celan refers to such "unsauberer" company in a letter to Ingeborg Bachmann dated September 7, 1959. See *Herzzeit*, 121.

372 On the specific history of persecution, displacement and statelessness as well as the drama of legal recognition encrypted in the name "Celan," see Corbea-Hoisie, "Dans les arcanes," esp. 110.

373 Celan names this "crypt" most directly in a letter to Bachmann dated November 12, 1959. "Die Todesfuge," Celan writes, "[ist] auch dies für mich [ ]: eine Grabschrift und ein Grab. […] Auch meine Mutter hat nur dieses Grab," *Herzzeit*, 127.

374 For more on Celan's critical appraisal of Benn's notion of "Artistik," particularly as he expresses them in *The Meridien*, see Reuss, *Im Zeithof*, 166f.

375 Pound and Cummings, *Pound/Cummings*, 278.

376 Celan filed Pound's works in the section of his library containing English and American literature. The volumes feature none of the underlinings and marginalia that characterize many of the other books in Celan's possession, though they are often dated by Celan himself, which suggests that they were his own acquisitions and not gifts. In an interview with the co-director of the Unité de recherche Paul-Celan, Bertrand Badiou, Celan's son, Eric Celan, speculates that it is quite possible that Pound's volumes belonged to that subset of Celan's library stored with their spines turned facing the wall, which was Celan's way of signaling the infamy of their authors. Celan, interview.

377 Cf. Glazova, "Paul Celan's Improper Names."

signifying chains, a word weighed down with more than it can say by abundance of significations displaced onto it. Celan's references to Pound all date from the late 1950s and the early 1960s, the years in which Pound's work began to be received in earnest in the German-speaking world. This was also a highly productive period of Celan's own career, spanning the publication of *Sprachgitter* (1958) and the writing of the poems of *Die Niemandsrose* (1963), the composition of Celan's two most important poetological statements—"Die Bremen Rede" (1958) and *Der Meridian* (1960)—as well as some of Celan's most important translations (those of Mandelstam, Valéry, Rimbaud, Shakespeare, among others).[378] For Celan, however, this particular period was also marked by a new and extraordinarily damaging phase of the so-called "Goll Affaire," a defamation campaign carried out principally through the West German press which centered on the entirely spurious charge that in his early work Celan had plagiarized the Alsatian poet Yvan Goll.[379] Celan's notes on Pound implicate each of these seemingly disparate domains of his life and writing, linking the formation of the modernist canon with the persistence of anti-Semitism, the practice of translation with mechanisms of historical disavowal, and the idea of world literature with a totalizing discourse of value grounded in the money-form. In what is in effect a diagnosis of the German literary field, Celan interprets Pound's "currency" as evidence of a more general continuity between the culture of the Third Reich and the literary establishment of the young Federal Republic.

The following chapter is divided into two interlocking parts. The first part (sections II-VI) analyzes the place Pound occupies in Celan's own poetological reflections. Here I show how German poets and literary critics of the post-war period revived the poetics of pre-war modernists like Pound and how this restoration influenced their reception of Celan. Pound helps us see the degree to which this reception was racially coded, and I examine how Pound's denunciation of usury in poetry as in finance translates into a specifically German discourse about "Wuchern," an anti-Semitic *topos* at once traditional and alarmingly contemporary. That Celan's verse itself amounted to a kind of 'Wuchern der Worte' was a commonplace from which Celan's critics drew an early and lasting profit. The second part of this chapter (sections VII-X) treats Celan's response to this charge of "Wucherei." Through a close reading of a poem that addresses Celan's critics, these sections show that the various terms Celan uses to describe his own poetry—terms like "date" (*Date*), "conversation" (*Gespräch*), and "breath-turn" (*Atemwende*)—name poetic features by which Celan resists the figurative abuse of language without capitulating to a version of Pound's ideogrammic fantasy.

But the larger stakes of the chapter are perhaps more visible when told the other way around and from Pound's perspective—namely as the afterlife of the ideogram. Pound's ideogrammic fantasy received its most provocative formulation in Pound's claim that his friend the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska could understand ancient Chinese ideographs simply by intently studying their figures. Gaudier was, as Pound remembers, "very much disgusted with the lexicographers who 'hadn't sense enough to see that *that* was a horse,' or a cow or a tree or whatever it might be, 'what the … else could it be! The … fools!'" Boasts like these provided Pound with what, as a theoretician of imagism, he desperately sought: a *phenomenological* ground for poetic signs. Unlike semiotic accounts in which the meaning is understood as being produced by the translation of one sign into another *sign* (so that the meaning of a first sign is a second sign),[380] Pound's "theory" maintains that

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[378] Bertrand Badiou, ed., "Chronologie," in *Correspondance 1954-1968: Suivie de la Correspondance René Char-Gisèele Celan-Lestrange (1969-1977)*, vol. II. (Paris: Gallimard, 2015), 459–605.

[379] The definitive account of the affaire and its terrible consequences for Celan's life and work is Barbara Wiedemann's monumental study, *Die Goll-Affäre*.

[380] See, for instance, Eco, *Trattato di Semiotica Generale*, 101f.

the ideogram made *visible*—Gaudier *saw* it—the very concept to which it referred. This, of course, is anathema to structuralist linguistics and to deconstruction, the nice words *On Grammatology* reserves for Pound's ideogram notwithstanding.[381] To be fair, however, structuralism itself and deconstruction even more, Pound would claim, are part of the problem. Pound would not hesitate to argue the "linguistic turn" is a historical event tied to the triumph of an unjust economic order in which use value had been eclipsed by exchange value and dislocated by usury. For Pound, only a society in which the market had penetrated all domains of life would be persuaded by Saussure's claim that, as a sign whose meaning is another sign, a word was like a five-franc coin: only worth what one could exchange it for.[382] As a rejection of the market, Pound's medievalism may be crankish, but it is consequent.

Told from this perspective, what follows is a story about the life Pound's fantasy lives in German translation. As I will show, Pound is taken up by post-War Germans to ground the very literary marketplace that Pound loathed, where, precisely because of his "medievalism," his craft, his renown as "il miglior fabbro," he comes to embody an autonomous standard of value unsullied by the market. Meanwhile, some of the same people who vaunt Poundian modernism level at Celan the old Poundian cry of usury, insinuating that Celan turns the genocide into a literary brand, that his poetry is all "Wucher" with "keine Wirklichkeitsbezug" (*connection to reality*), that it has no ground (*Grund*) nor basis (*Grundlage*) in "realia."

What is crucial to note is that, in response to the charge of "Wucherei," Celan does not, as a crude version of deconstruction might have it, embrace usury and celebrate groundlessness of linguistic signs. Paradoxically, Celan holds on to the distinction between ground and groundlessness, and even onto phenomenology, albeit in the historic absence of a ground. Groundlessness, in other words, is not the sempiternal way of the world. It is the enforced condition of a language racked by catastrophe. The things that one would like most to signify—and for Celan, this is above all, his mother—have been vaporized and are only "visible" in the most ambiguous forms. These remnants—white spaces, chalk, empty tombs—cannot perform the sort of grounding work that Pound claims for the ideogram.

Celan's poetry thus challenges Pound's legacy in two senses. On one hand Celan refutes the version of world literature in which Pound's name has been enlisted. On the other hand, he attacks Pound on Pound's own turf, making a historical point about how the ground Pound seeks has been destroyed by the compounding effects of war, genocide, and markets. At the highest plane of abstraction, then, Pound and Celan are talking about the same "thing"—the thing which grounds poetic speech. Only Pound refuses to accept the loss that Celan's poetry forces us to acknowledge.

II. "Mit diesem Pfunde…"

Ezra Pound occupied a special position in the literary field of post-war Germany. Unlike other major Anglo-American modernists—Joyce, Hemingway, and Eliot, for example—who were extensively and enthusiastically read as soon as hostilities ended, if not before, Pound's reception came late. The delay was in part political: charged for treason in 1945 for collaborating with Mussolini's regime, Pound was certainly not one of the cultural imports on display in the U.S.-run Amerika-Häuser, nevermind the libraries of the Soviet-controlled zones.[383] In light of the public

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[381] Derrida, *De la Grammatologie*, 139.
[382] Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, 60.
[383] Oels, "Handbuch Nachkriegskultur," 509–23.

recrimination against fascist ideology taking place all over Germany, Pound was, with very few exceptions, essentially untouchable, even on the far right of the political spectrum.[384] Of course, the treason trial, the Bollingen Prize controversy, and Pound's subsequent institutionalization made news across Europe, but it was not until 1956, with the publication of a mass-market edition of Pound's poetry and prose,[385] that a general interest in Pound's poetry and poetics began to meaningfully emerge in the German-speaking world. By 1957, Pound was part of the conversation, so much so that a review of Hesse's translation of the *Pisan Cantos* in Alfred Andersch's influential journal, *Texte und Zeichen*, could observe, albeit ruefully, the "it has been fashionable for some time in conversations about literature to refer to the American lyric poet Ezra Pound as the initiator of avant-garde currents in modern lyric."[386] As a major figure in the literary avant-garde from the teens and the twenties, Pound was naturally part of the international modernist canon which, after being outlawed during the Third Reich, post-war writers and critics on both the left and the right eagerly sought to reinstitute.[387] In his cultural history of post-war German poetry, Fabian Lampart has referred to this desire for a "continuation of modernism" (*Fortschreibung der Moderne*) through the appropriation of foreign writers like Pound and the resurrection of forgotten German ones like Benn as one of the definitive features of the literary landscape in the young Federal Republic.[388] A striking example of this phenomenon is Walter Höllerer's influential anthology of "mid-century German poetry," *Transit: Lyrikbuch der Jahrhundertmitte*. Instantly notorious for its experimental design, Höllerer's 1954 book literally frames contemporary German poems—including those of Celan—with citations gleaned from an older generation of modernists, above all Rimbaud, Lorca and Pound.[389]

For all the polemics published on the legacy of pre-war modernism, however, there was little or no discussion in the West German literary establishment about the relationship of literary modernism to the rhetoric of anti-Semitism—a truly stunning omission, particularly in the case of Pound.[390] Living in Paris and reading English-language publications where Pound's anti-Semitism

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384 The important exception is the poet and critic Rainer Maria Gerhardt, who corresponded with Charles Olson and Robert Creeley, and who, before his untimely death, promoted Pound in his literary journal, *fragmente*. See, Bischoff, "Rainer Maria Gerhardt und die amerikanische Lyrik."

385 Pound and Eliot, *Dichtung Und Prosa: Mit Einem Geleitwort von T. S. Eliot*.

386 Donath, "Zwei Entmythologisierungen," 318. On *Texte und Zeichen's* status as a primier representative of the post-war avant-garde, see Schütz, "Handbuch Nachkriegskultur," 581–83.

387 For the conservative perspective, see Gunter Blöcker's essay "Ezra Pound" in *Die neuen Wirklichkeiten: Linien und Profile der modernen Literatur* (Berlin: Argon, 1957), esp. 354, for the avant-garde angle, see Walter Höllerer's programmatic "Nach der Menschheitsdämmerung: Notizen zur zeitgenössischen Lyrik," 423–27.

388 Lampart, *Nachkriegsmoderne*, 28.

389 As Lothar Jordan has observed, Höllerer's *Transit* is a perfect incarnation of the desire to restore legitimacy to post-war German poetry by presenting contemporary poetry as a continuation of pre-war, international modernism. In his preface, Höllerer acknowledges the suspicion modern poetry awakens in the "reading public," and explains editorial interventions as attempts to bridge the "chasm" (*Kluft*) separating the reader and the poem. Among these interventions is Höllerer's decision not to print the name of the poet or the date of publication next to the individual poems. In fact, the only names to appear in the main text of the anthology are those of writers responsible for the poetological statements crowding its margins, very of which were originally written in German and almost all of which were published before the war. See Walter Höllerer, ed., *Transit: Lyrikbuch der Jahrhundertmitte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1956), xvi, and Jordan, *Europäische und nordamerikanische Gegenwartslyrik im deutschen Sprachraum 1920-1970*, 79.

390 In this regard, *Der Spiegel's* 1958 cover-story on Pound's release from St. Elizabeth's is symptomatic: Pound's tirades against the banks are presented as a version of Don Quixote's battle against the windmills, his war-time collaboration takes a backseat to the trauma of his Pisan internment and the cruelty of the U.S. Justice Department, and nowhere is there mention of his belligerent anti-Semitism. "Verse Im Käfig." See also Peter Demetz's charming account in the *Merkur* of his visit with Pound at St. Elizabeth's, "Ezra Pounds Pisaner Gesänge."

was discussed more openly, Celan was in a position to appreciate such silences in Pound's reception within the German literary field. In Celan's view, Pound's case demonstrated how the international modernism promoted on the left and the right did not represent the break with Nazism that its proponents claimed, but rather a subtle form of its survival. This, in essence, is the basic argument of Celan's densest and most far-reaching comment on Ezra Pound, an unpublished aphorism written in the early nineteen sixties. Celan's Pound aphorism is number thirty-two in a sequence of forty-seven that Celan assembled either during or shortly after the writing of the text of *The Meridian* speech. The aphorisms are disposed in blocks of text arrayed across a dozen notebook pages, with each aphorism separated from the next by an "x" positioned in the center of the page. The sequence mixes dense, poetological statements with a diary-like commentary on current events.[391] Over the course of the sequence, Celan alludes to the space race and the Eichmann trial, to the prejudices of his critics and the hypocrisy of other writers, and, of course, to Ezra Pound:

x

> Wenn sie Pound lesen, verstehen sie sogar Chinesisch. Mit diesem Pfunde wuchern sie gerne – nicht zuletzt auch deshalb, weil sie Shylock als Klischee am Leben erhalten wollen

x

Challenging enough in German, this aphorism poses special difficulties for anyone who dares translate it, particularly into English. Even in the "original," the short text already transacts several different kinds of inter-linguistic exchanges, substitutions, and conversions. These operations are not figurative flourishes. They belong to the aphorism's very subject: the world literary market in which American modernism, classical Chinese, and Early Modern dramas are traded one against the other. Celan's translingual puns mock the pretense of cross-cultural understanding and dramatize world literature as an explicitly economic transaction. Like a currency speculator with pound notes to exchange, Celan "invests" in the circulation of signs between languages.[392] Between the first and the second sentence, the name "Pound," a proper noun, is quietly swapped for the common noun, Pound ("sterling"), and then converted into the German "Pfund," from which the idiom "mit diesem Pfunde wuchern" wittily draws its special form of literary "profit." This passage from "Pound" to "£" to "Pfund" generates a kind of surplus value, which, when translated once more back into English "Pounds," asks to be accounted for, if only formulaically (for instance: P - £ - Pf – P´). Hence:

x

> When they read Pound, they even understand Chinese. With this "Pound" they enjoy profiteering – and not the least for the reason that they want to keep Shylock alive as a cliché

x

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[391] The difference between these two is not always clear, nor is the difference between Celan's poetry, on the one hand, and his poetological statements on the other. The text of the *Meridian* developed in part out of a draft presentation Celan prepared for a meeting of the *Bund* in Wuppertal that never took place. That presentation had the title "On the Darkness of the Poetic," which suggests that Celan was trying to develop a way to address poetic language in a discourse that was not—or not principally—poetic. Of course, the distinction is not tight, and much of Celan's theoretical prose can be read as prose poems or drafts of poems, and his poetry often includes a pointed reflection on what it means to write poems after Auschwitz. See Böschenstein, "Der Meridian."

[392] For a discussion of punning as a kind of "investment" in the signifying structures of language(s), see Attridge, "Language as History/History as Language: Saussure and the Romance of Etymology," 108.

The scare quotes surrounding Pound are a crutch. The particular significance that Pound accrues in German translation—the "value-added" that I've tried to mark with the addition of the quotations—is a sense that belongs neither to the English nor to the German language, but only to the interval that relates the one to the other. Like many translingual puns, Celan's aphorism capitalizes on the unregulated space that separates languages, converting linguistic difference into rhetorical advantage.[393]

Unlike most translingual puns, however, Celan's translation of Pound reflects critically on its own practice of conversion. Nonetheless, the aphorism's irony makes it hard to tell whether Celan's rancor is reserved exclusively for traders in Pound, or whether his criticism extends to any writer who launders the sense of a word or a phrase through one or more foreign tongues. While evidently quite capable of trading one linguistic denomination for another when he has to, Celan is elsewhere quite open about his profound reservations concerning such interlingual transactions. Asked once his opinion about the "problem of bilingualism" Celan did not hide his misgivings. The short text dismisses "Zweisprachigkeit" in poetry as shallow and "two-faced" (*zweizüngig,* lit. "two-tongued"): a cheap thrill typical of modern consumer culture and essentially incompatible with the "singularity" (*Einmaligkeit*) of poetic speech.[394] This remark from 1961 does not name Pound explicitly. Its temporal and thematic proximity to the Pound aphorism, however, suggests that it too may be responding to the reception of the babel, the *Cantos'* many tongues.

But even if it is Pound's own "Vielzüngigkeit" that is indirectly under attack, there is nonetheless a strangely poundian ring to Celan's various references to two-timing "word-artists" (*Wortkünst[ler]*) and polyglot "usurers" (*Wucherer*). Indeed, were the Pound aphorism simply a denunciation of the linguistic usury current in contemporary poetry, one would have some trouble distinguishing it from several of Pound's own wartime rants against modern literature's sophists and the double-dealing 'Shylocks' of British and American press.[395] Nonetheless, unlike Pound, Celan did not allow his indignation at the hypocrisies of public discourse and duplicities of literary form harden into blanket indictment of something called *usura*, Pound's "core of evil."[396] Most importantly, however, unlike Pound's naïve investment in anti-Semitic clichés, Celan's own allusion to Shylock is bitterly ironic.[397] And, in fact, a little irony is all that's required to expose the central contradiction of Pound's "theory" of *usura*. As many readers have correctly noted, the semitic villain that Pound conjures in his discourses on usury is, as a vulgar fiction and crude abstraction, an abuse of language's denotative powers. Shylock is above all a hateful figure of speech. The cliché of the usurer is itself an instance of usury.[398]

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393 On the long history of interlingual puns, see Redfern, *Calembours, ou les puns et les autres*, 108f.
394 See "Antwort auf eine Umfrage der Librairie Flinker," 175.
395 See, for instance, Pound, "Lyric Tenors (April 4, 1943)," 268–70.
396 *Cantos*; Addendum for C, 798.
397 The Shylock cliché was particularly current during the Third Reich. In the 1937 preface to *Shylock: Die Geschichte einer Figur*, a text written shortly before his own flight from Germany, Hermann Sinsheimer summarizes the contemporary relevance of his cultural history eloquently: "When I was working on this book, I was often asked if I planned to write a "current" [*"aktuelles"*] book. The answer is: I do not know whether today, for instance, Danish statesmen and nobility are still held for [*gelten*] long-winded Poloniuses or whether Moors jealous Othellos. But the Jews, even when they are neither greedy nor cruel, are still counted as [*gelten*] Shylocks. More exactly: Shylock counts [*gilt*] for them. This book is current [*aktuell*] in this sense. "Shylock: Die Geschichte einer Figur," 275. See also, Schwanitz, *Das Shylock-Syndrom, oder, Die Dramaturgie der Barbarei*, esp. 301.
398 Paul Morrison develops this criticism compellingly in his *The Poetics of Fascism*, esp. 54.

As a critique of Pound's "theory," Celan's aphorism is certainly trenchant, but it would be inaccurate to claim that Pound is Celan's principal concern. Although tempting, such an argument would give Pound's idiosyncratic synthesis of racist prejudice, populist economics, and Confucian ideals far too much credit. We know from his journal that by Fall 1959 Celan was aware of the anti-Semitic nature of Pound's Radio Rome broadcasts,[399] but there is no evidence that Celan ever looked into the substance of Pound's ideology, and nothing to suggest he was familiar with Pound's convoluted theory of money or the manner in which Pound related it to the history of the Chinese script.[400] In fact, a close look at the text of the aphorism shows that, in this instance at least, Celan is not interested in what Pound said, only in how Pound is used. To be exact, the aphorism takes up Pound's "currency"—which is to say, Pound's timeliness, his circulation, his acceptance, and, above all, his valuation—in the post-war literary field in which Celan's own work moved and with which Celan maintained the most ambivalent of relationships. In certain respects, Celan was even more foreign to this field than Pound was. Whereas Celan's *German* verse was widely dismissed as incomprehensible and hermetic, when the same readers read Pound, they managed to understand "even Chinese."

Celan's principal target, therefore, is not Pound himself but Pound's readers: "Wenn *sie* Pound lesen, verstehen *sie* sogar Chinesisch" The precise referent of Celan's "sie" is not immediately clear. The ambiguity is typical of the aphoristic sequence as a whole. Although one can decipher rather specific allusions—to Claire Goll's accomplices (no. 33), to the "écrivains éngagés" of the Gruppe 47 (no. 30), to the co-founders of Cologne's *Germania Judaica* (no. 39)—Celan leaves the letter of his text strategically vague, deliberately blurring what others might consider to be important distinctions—say, between literary avant-garde and the cultural conservatives, or between philo-Semitism and anti-Semitism.[401] "They" ("sie") are simply those who trade in Pound: the various writers, publishers and translators, who, managing the conversion of what Pierre Bourdieu would call the "symbolic capital" associated with Pound's name into the currency of the local literary field (the German "Pfund," so to speak), are able to turn this literary transaction to their own advantage.[402] This particular "profit" has little to do with what Pound said or wrote, and everything to do with the sense Pound acquires once linguistically translated and ideologically transcribed into a German context.[403] It is not Poundian *usura*, but a different—though equally anti-Semitic—kind of "Wuchern."

III. "…wuchern sie gerne."

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[399] In a journal entry from October 23, 1959 Celan notes having read about Pound in that day's *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Only the *TLS* mentions the anti-semitism of Pound's Radio Rome broadcasts. See George Sutherland Fraser, "Morality of a Neo-Pagan," *Times Literary Supplement*, October 23, 1959, 610, and "Kulturelle Nachtrichten," 18.

[400] As a slight to Pound's poetry and poetics, for instance, Celan's *argnominatio* is self-defeating. Far from being a clever rebuke of Pound's œuvre, the pun "Pound/£" is in fact one of this œuvre's master tropes. As early as "To Hulme (T. E.) and Fitzgerald (A Certain)," published in *Ripostes* in 1912, one sees "the guinea stamp" assume a self-consciously poetological signifcance. For an extensive discussion, see Rabaté, *Language, Sexuality, and Ideology in Ezra Pound's Cantos*, 183–94.

[401] See Dogà, *"Port Bou--deutsch?*, 44–45.

[402] Tellingly, in her study of world literature, Pascale Casanova offers Pound as a prime example of the literary capital an author's name disposes of in the form of "credit." See *Le republique mondiale des lettres*, 37–38.

[403] Casanova has analysed this type of "translation-accumulation" in her 2015 study, *La langue mondiale: Traduction et domination* (Paris: Seuil, 2015), 75f, which builds off her earlier "Consécration et accumulation de capital littéraire: La traduction comme échange inégal."

"Wuchern" is the word Celan uses to describe that act of profiting off this trade in Pound. In German, "wuchern" is a semantically polyvalent, idiomatically robust, and philologically complex term. With respect to its range of significations, "wuchern" is a far "richer" word than the English noun "usury," of which it is nonetheless a possible translation. These differences make "wuchern" a perfect example of the kind of value added through translation that Celan thematizes in his punning exchange of "Pound" for "Pfund." On a more general level, however, you could say that the "richness" ("Reichtum") that accrues in the passage from English to German is the contribution of a specifically "German" tradition of anti-Semitism and the memory of the role such words ("wuchern," "Shylock") played in the discourse that legitimized the genocide.[404] These historical resonances were painfully apparent to Celan, who, particularly in the context of the Goll-Affaire, experienced the German-language press describe him and his work with just such odious clichés. Of these, one of the most persistent was the charge that his poetry was nothing but a kind of *Wuchern von Worten*.

Historically, the verb "wuchern" (noun: "der Wucherer") refers to the act of charging excessive interest on a loan. "Wuchern" is the word Luther uses to name the practice of lending at interest, which is prohibited in *Exodus*, the activity which the King James Version translates as "usury." More germane still, "Wucherer" is the insult that Antonio levels against Shylock in August Wilhelm Schlegel's translation of *The Merchant of Venice*.[405] These and similar senses of the term are in an important respect "historical" usages. They are relics of a time in European history when those contractual relationships we now conceive of as belonging to "the economy" had not yet "dis-embedded" themselves from other, ostensibly non-economic domains of social life. [406] Throughout the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period, usury, in particular, was a perennial object not only of popular reproach, but of civic and religious sanction.[407] As the character Shylock recognized and Shakespeare's audiences understood, the label "usurer" ("Wucherer") is essentially pejorative, which is perhaps one of the reasons why the historical easing of the stigmas associated with finance capital has been accompanied by the gradual replacement of both "usury" and "Wuchern" with the more neutral terms "interest" and "Zins."[408]

And yet, while the word "wuchern" in the sense Schlegel/Shakespeare used it does not belong to the modern vocabulary of mainstream economics, the term has not fallen out of circulation entirely. Indeed, in the aftermath of the 2007-2008 financial crisis, one could even say that the word has enjoyed a popular resurgence.[409] In addition, there are discourses where "wuchern" has *never* faded from the lexicon. The term was and is part of the rhetoric of populist

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[404] Celan puns on the way the genocide has "enriched" the German language in "Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der freien Hansestadt Bremen." The verb "anreichern" ("to enrich") contains the word "Reich": the "enrichment" of German after the war is an encryption of the Third Reich. On the Jewish usurer in Nazi ideology, see, for instance, Friedländer, *The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939*, 197.

[405] On "Wucher" and "Wucherzins" as translations of "usury," see Schneider, "'Which is the merchant here? and which the Jew?': Shakespeares *Merchant of Venice* und die 'Judenfrage' der Neuzeit," 182–83.

[406] See David Hawkes' excellent discussion in *The Culture of Usury in Renaissance England*. Also: Kurz, *Schwarzbuch Kapitalismus*, 293f.

[407] For a history of usury's treatment during this period by both civil and canon law, see Geisst, *Beggar Thy Neighbor*, 58–96. See also Jacques Le Goff's classic study, *La bourse et la vie*.

[408] For this history of "Wucher," see *Das Deutsche Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm*, s.v. "Wucher," accessed August 1, 2019..

[409] See, for example, Nadine Oberhuber and Marlies Uken, "Dispo-Zinsen: Das Ist Wucher," *Die Zeit*, June 2013, or Graeber, *Schulden: Die ersten 5000 Jahre*, 7–26.

anti-capitalism, a *topos* common to the Left and Right, and in neither case entirely shorn of its anti-Semitic resonances.[410] Otherwise, in a sense of which many German speakers may not even be consciously aware, this meaning of "wuchern" survives in certain idioms, like the one Celan employs in his pun on Pound. Celan's "[m]it diesem Pfunde wuchern sie gerne" is a variation of the fixed expression "mit seinem Pfund(e) wuchern."[411] In contrast to the kind of "Wucherei" that Shylock practices, "mit seinem Pfund(e) wuchern" names a perfectly acceptable, even laudable activity. According to the lexicon of German idioms that the philologist Lutz Röhrich's assembled in the early nineteen seventies, the expression means "seine Begabung, [sein] Mittel klug anwenden" [to apply one's gifts, one's resources cleverly][412]—an essentially happy affair which Röhrich explains by tracing the expression back to the parable of the talents, or, as Luther has it, "das Gleichnis von den anvertrauten Pfunden" ("the parable of the pounds").

As *exempla* of normative behavior, the Gospel of Luke's faithful servants and *The Merchant of Venice's* villain couldn't be more different. If the parable's "Wucherer" are rewarded for the initiative they take with their master's "Pfund," Shakespeare's notorious usurer is stripped of everything he has. A shrewd analyst of how literature 'keeps bigotry alive,' Celan was certainly aware that the business for which the Jew Shylock is cursed and spat upon is presented as good news in the Christian gospels. Although Celan couldn't help but notice how the ambiguity of "wuchern" correlates with popular prejudice, Celan is far from the only poet to put the conflicted heritage of "mit seinem Pfund wuchern" to great effect. A poem of Brecht's from the 1930s, for instance, uses the idiom's contradictory connotations as a point of departure to improvise a kind of "dialectical Wucherei." The dramatic irony Brecht coaxes out of the ambivalences of "wuchern" is exemplary of the word's tangled social history. As Brecht writes,

> Wer nicht nützt, was er hat, ist ein dämlicher Hund
> Sprach »der Chef« und da hat er's geschafft
> Und er ging und wucherte mit seinem Pfund
> Schlau und gewissenhaft
> Und das Pfund, mit dem er wucherte
> War unsere Arbeitskraft. [413]
>
> [He who doesn't use what he's got is a brainless dog
> Said "the Boss" and that's how he got his
> And he went and lent out his pound
> wisely and with care
> And the pound that he lent out
> Was our labor power.]

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[410] Lange, *Antisemitic Elements in the Critique of Capitalism in German Culture, 1850-1933*, esp. 28-29. Also Maier, *Juden als Sündenböcke: Geschichte des Antijudaismus*, 121.

[411] Celan read widely, and he had the habit of compiling lists of words and expressions that struck him during his readings. "Mit seinem Pfund wuchern" is one of three expressions that Celan carefully notated on the inside the back cover of his copy of Albert Vigoleis Thelen's 1953 novel, *Die Insel des zweiten Gesichts*—one of the rare works of contemporary German literature which Celan esteemed highly. In Thelen's text, "mit seinem Pfund wuchern" describes a young woman's use of her body ("[ihres] vollendeten Körperbau") as a social and economic asset. The date of Celan's note is unknown, but Celan mentions reading Thelen's novel to his wife in a letter from March 1954. See Barnot Barnert, "Die Insel des zweiten Gesichts von Albert Vigoleis Thelen, gelesen von Paul Celan," 67–68.

[412] Röhrich, "Pfund."

[413] "Das Lied von eurem Pfund und userm Pfund," in Brecht, *Werke*, 14: 373–74.

Brecht fittingly calls this poem "Das Lied von eurem Pfund und unserem Pfund." Published in 1937, it is, in multiple respects, a "poundian" text, a kind of progressive rejoinder to Pound's own litany against Wuchern, the famous "Usura Canto," published for the first time in 1936. For all the differences separating their authors, these two poems work from a similar assumption about the complicity of linguistic manipulation, ideological mystification, and economic exploitation, all three being forms of abstraction to which both poets oppose the literal, concrete, and communal virtues embodied in some form of unalienated labor, be it Marxian "Arbeitskraft" (Brecht) or Proudhonian "craft" (Pound).[414]

In both cases, the metaphors and images selected to figure this tension keep, as Celan would say, the anti-Semitic fantasy of Shylock "alive as a cliché." The final strophe of Brecht's poem, for example, runs,

> Unsere Fäuste, die wiegen auch ein Pfund
> Das steht billig zum Verkauf
> Doch vielleicht wuchern wir auch mal mit unserm Pfund
> Dann ändert sich mal der Verlauf
> Und wenn wir mit diesem Pfund wuchern
> Dann hört eure Wucherei auf.
>
> [Our fists, they also weigh a pound
> That's on sale for cheap
> But perhaps we'll also try lending out our pound
> Then the process will change at last
> And when we lend out this pound
> Then your usury will come to an end.]

More than the subtle allusion to the scales that Shylock brings to court, what unites the revolt of Brecht's proletarian fists with the redemption of Antonio's mortgaged flesh is the fact that both are figured as analogously bound to a law of exchange in which qualitative differences are systematically converted into quantitative ones. In the drama of poem and play alike, such alienation is overcome by a re-appropriation of the reifying logic of equivalence by means of a re-literalization of figurative language. Brecht's workers poise themselves to regain the "Pfund, mit dem [der Anderer] wuchert" by realizing that the real source of the other's wealth—that is, "*euer* Pfund"—was nothing but their *own* flesh and blood—that is, "*unser* Pfund." Similarly, in *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia expropriates the pound owed Shylock by bringing to light a contradiction internal to structure of exchange: since it is impossible to cut "just a pound" of Antonio's flesh, Shylock will never be able to take possession of the "just pound" due him by the letter of the law. Although the dark irony of the reversal is much more cutting in Shakespeare's example,[415] both texts demonstrate how, with a bit of

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[414] For instance, on the relationship between the "Usura Canto" and the Ruskinian currents within the English labour movement, see Reuss, *Fors*, 211–19.

[415] David Nirenberg, for one, reads Portia's courtroom ploy as a classic example of "out-jewing the Jew." For Nirenberg's reading, see *Anti-Judaism*, 269–99. The question of Brecht's irony is more complex. While there is no doubt Brecht makes frequent use of irony as a rhetorical trope, there are—at least at first blush—several reasons for distinguishing it from the kind of "radical irony" explored in many contemporary readings of *The Merchant*. See Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, 20–21.

interpretive cunning backed by a non-trivial threat of violence, one can convert the bad sort of "Wucherei"—denigrated variously as chrematistic, parasitical, vampiristic, cannibalistic—into a commendable instance of everyone's biblically-sanctioned prerogative "mit seinem Pfund [zu] wuchern."[416]

My point in introducing "Das Lied vom eurem Pfund und von usurem Pfund" is not to accuse Brecht of anti-Semitism, nor is it to make a case for the poem's deep affinity with either *The Merchant of Venice* or the "Usura Canto." Instead, I hope that in tracing the ambivalence of the word "wuchern" in this relatively simple poem I can begin to illuminate the nature of the historical and linguistic reflection nested in Celan's translation of Pound's name into the idiom "[m]it diesem Pfunde wuchern sie gerne." If the seamlessness of Pound's "Verdeutschung" is an allegory for how readily the American's work lent itself to German polemics, it also, and perhaps more importantly, draws attention to the "literal" ("wörtlich") presence of anti-Semitism in the forms of the German language itself. In Celan's aphorism, "they" are not simply taking advantage of a Poundian anti-Semitism imported from *abroad*, "they" are also recirculating the *local* variety in the form of the expression "mit seinem Pfund wuchern." By citing *this* idiom in *this* context, Celan draws attention to the degree to which the language in which he works has been compromised by a history of persecution, exclusion, and violence directed against Jews. More specifically, by rhyming "mit diesem Pfund wuchern sie gerne" with Shylock's sadistic insistence on the pound of Antonio's flesh, Celan makes the German idiom tremble with the weight of *recent* history: it is not just the stage violence of Shakespeare's "comedy" that echoes in "Pfund," but also the brute objectification and factory-style killing perpetrated in the camps.

Bertolt Brecht was not an anti-Semite, but "Das Lied von eurem Pfund und von unsrem Pfund" nonetheless writes itself into the lexicon of German anti-Semitism by profiting off this tradition's basic tropes and binaries. Whether or not Brecht was aware of ambivalent history of the "Pfund mit dem er wuchert" is ultimately irrelevant.[417] The fact that one such use may well pass for benign, while another does not, is precisely the point. To insist, as Brecht's poem does, on the difference between a "good" and a "bad" sort of "Wucherei" *is* what it means "to keep Shylock alive as a cliché." "Das Lied von eurem Pfund und von unsrem Pfund" does not need to explicitly name Shylock to conjure his presence. Brecht's succession of modern villains—the pastor, the boss, the doctor, the bureaucrat—all speak the language of their mythical, pre-capitalist ancestor; they all practice a variation of what Simon Critchley and Tom McCarthy call "universal shylockery."[418] And, as the incarnations of all that is evil in modern capitalism, it is these others who have been marked rhetorically for destruction once "we" reclaim the full weight of our fists.[419]

IV. Invasive Species

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[416] That it is Portia dressed as a man who discloses this conversion is, of course, no coincidence. The object of the play's central marriage plot, she has special insight into the possibilities of exchange as well as the barriers to convertibility. See, for example, Weigel, "Zur Differenz von Gabe, Tausch und Konversion: Shakespeares The Merchant of Venice als Schauplatz von Verhandlungen über die Gesetze der Zirkulation," 81–82.

[417] Of course, even if Brecht were not the avid reader of Shakespeare that we know him to be, given The Bard's extraordinary currency within German culture, there would be no reason to doubt his familiarity with Shylock's "Pfund Fleisch." On the German reception of the plays, see Dehrmann, "Urgermaisch oder eingebürgert? Wie Shakespeare im 19. Jahrhundert zum 'Deutschen' wird."

[418] See, Critchley and McCarthy, "Universal Shylockery."

[419] For a parallel discussion of the centuries-old anti-Semitic clichés circulating in and around Celan's work (in this instance, Christopher Marlowe's Barabas), see Barbara Wiedemann's reading of the poem "Levkojen" in "'ausgerechnet jetzt': Der Mai 68 und die Jüdische Katastrophe," 19–22.

When one considers the events that were already in the process of unfolding at the time of its publication, it is hard not to shudder at the "happy" ending Brecht gives his ballad. The poem's final two lines suggest that the semantic ambivalences of the idiom "mit seinem Pfund wuchern" have political solutions. Once we're in power, the poem implies, 'good wuchern' will triumph over 'bad wuchern,' "unser Pfund" will replace "euer Pfund," and a truly just measure, solemnly proclaimed in chorus, will put an end to usury once and for all. Reflecting on the same semantic ambivalence in his aphorism a quarter century later, Celan is extremely suspicious of the supposed difference between a good and a bad *wuchern*. The Pound aphorism refuses to disassociate the two; on the contrary, it presents use and abuse as strictly co-productive. The aphorism shows how the legitimacy of one form of usage can only make sense in relation to a possible perversion. There is no just use without the specter of usury—hence the extraordinary vitality of Shylock. For each "Christian" wholesomely profiting off his "Pfund," there is a mythical "Jew" to absorb the various kinds of misappropriation, misrepresentation, falsification, and exploitation that haunt such practices.

Celan was painfully familiar with the processes of semantic splitting and metaphorical displacement by means of which the just profit accrued "mit *unsrem* Pfund" contested the illegitimate gains of "*euere* Wucherei." At a time when Pound's legacy was increasingly appropriated as a literary "Pfund" with which German writers and critics could safely "wuchern," Celan's own poetry came under attack as an example of the "bad" sort of *Wucherei*. Indeed, one of the recurring motifs in the critical discussion of Celan's work during the nineteen fifties and sixties is precisely Celan's alleged "wild wuchernde" abuse of the German language. In these contexts, the verbal construction "wild wuchernd" certainly recalls the boundlessness of Shylock's avarice and the "savegry" of his lending practices.[420] But an expression like "wild wuchernd" also employs a sense of the word "wuchern" that is not present in the English word "usury." In addition to denoting the practice of lending at an excessive rate of interest, "wuchern" means "üppig wachsen" ["to grow excessively"]. "Wuchern" is the verb that describes what weeds do in an untended lawn. In figurative uses, it can name any variety of profligate, excessive, or untamed growth—from urban sprawl to overheated reveries to prolix prose. Of course, "wuchern's" immoderate, usually transgressive and typically unwanted form of proliferation is not unrelated to the cultural history of usury,[421] which, from Aristotle onward, has often been described as just such an illegitimate or unnatural reproduction.[422] In fact, as Pound himself insists, "unnatural reproduction" is precisely Shylock's offense:

> [G]old chemistry is studied by students of INorganic chemistry, it is not rams and ewes, it is not amoebas, as Shakespeare definitively indicates. He points out that gold is NOT fecund, it

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[420] As in Solanio's description of Shylock's rage when the latter learns of Jessica's abduction:
Nie hoert ich so verwirrte Leidenschaft,
So seltsam *wild* und durcheinander, als
Der Hund von Juden in den Strassen ausliess:
"Mein' Tochter–mein' Dukaten–o mein' Tochter! […]"

[421] Indeed, Grimm suggests an original meaning of "Frucht, (pflanzlicher und animalischer) Nachwuchs," which was only at a second moment extended to the cycles of reproduction found in the financial domain. See *Das Deutsche Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm*, s.v. "wucher," accessed August 1, 2019.

[422] The literature on this topic is exceptionally vast. A foundational treatment can be found in Aristotle's discussion of interest ["tokos"] in *The Politics, and the Constitution of Athens*, I.10, 1258b1-7. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock himself describes the business of moneylending with an example of animal husbandry. On the Aristotelianism of Shakespeare's play, see Marc Shell's chapter on *The Merchant* in *Money, Language, and Thought: Literary and Philosophical Economies from the Medieval to the Modern Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 47–83; and Spencer, "Taking Excess, Exceeding Account: Aristotle Meets *The Merchant of Venice*," 148–49.

> does not increase and multiply as the sheep and goats of a heard. Plant it, and it does not come up in the spring, yielding 20 fold, or 30 fold or one hundred.[423]

Pound's reasoning here is typical of a kind of anti-usury discourse found in almost all European languages, though it is channeled in this instance through his obsession with Siena's Monte dei Paschi. Pound approved of the Monte because its rates were rooted in the soil, literally. Depositors received a fixed return underwritten by pasture land outside the city and loans were made at an interest rate half a percent higher than the depositors' return, the profit going to cover the bank's overhead.[424]

Such pastoral and botanical connotations are amplified in the German word "wuchern" but they are also reinflected. In the English tradition running from Chaucer to Shakespeare to Pound, usury, although specifying the breeding of money, is nonetheless haunted by figures of sterility, exhaustion, and death. Usury is almost always a kind of "using up."[425] So too in French, where "usure," besides naming the return on capital lent at interest, denotes a process of deterioration, diminishment or depletion through wear.[426] As a matter of fact, it is because "usure" signifies a (physical) wearing away that is simultaneously a (financial) compounding, an erasure that leaves a trace, that the word proved so useful in Jacques Derrida's early work on the iterability of the sign.[427] And yet, if the lexical and literary ambivalences associated with the words "usure" and "usury" seem tailor-made for a theory of supplementarity, the same cannot be said for "wuchern." This is because the negation that haunts the family usura does not accompany the German term in the same way. Simply put: "wuchern" lacks the lack. It is "all" excess and positivity, the rampant accretion of unchained "Naturwuchsigkeit." It is not that "wuchern" is opposed to usury; it is that "wuchern's" form of transgression emerges within field of "natural reproduction." The expression "wild wuchernd," in particular, captures the "*über*-natürliche"—the "super-natural"—vitality proper to nature itself, its inmost tendency to unchecked, aleatory, even monstrous proliferation. In a word: nature run amok. Next to the weed, the archetypical instance of such aberrant growth in modern German is probably the "wild wuchernde Teilung" of a cancer cell.[428] Pound seems to have intuited this connotation without the help of the German language. "Usury is the cancer of the world," he wrote in 1939, "which only the surgeon's knife of Fascism can cut out of the life of nations."[429]

The troubling semantic and historical resonances between the kind of "wuchern" for which Shylock was persecuted and the kind of "wuchern" gardeners and surgeons route with knives, poisons, and radiation are difficult to ignore. Celan, in any case, had no choice but take them seriously, as these were the terms in which his poetry was received and discussed within the German-language press. As we already noted, the "wild wuchern" of Celan's language is among the most pervasive critical commonplaces of the first decade of his reception. The most notorious

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423 "The Fallen Gentleman (Il Signor Decaduto) [June 19, 1942]," 176.
424 Blanton, "Ezra Pound's Effective Demand: Keynes, Causality, and *The Cantos*."
425 Hawkes, *Shakespeare and Economic Theory*, 143–60.
426 See Peter de Graeve's discussion of the differences between the Latin/French "usura"/"usure" and the German/Dutch "wucher"/"woeker," around which he structures his fascinating essay, "De l'usurisme" in "De l'usurisme - faces/phases de l'usure," 63–73.
427 Derrida, "La Mythologie Blanche," esp. 250.
428 Fittingly, "wild wuchern[d]" is how Gabriele Ricke and Ronald Voullié translate the movement of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome. Joyce's diction, for example, is described as a "Wuchern," a sort of tumorous growth in the etymological tree. Deleuze and Guattari, *Tausend Plateaus*, 15; 93. Proudhon too, in *Qu'est-ce que la proprieté*, calls usury "un chancre."
429 Pound, *Selected Prose, 1909-1965*, 300.

variation on the trope is Günter Blöcker's 1959 review of *Sprachgitter*, a text in which Blöcker not only describes Celan's poetry as less constrained (*hemmt*, *belastert*) by the demands of communication, but also attributes Celan's seeming "liberty" (*Freiheit*) with the German language to his foreign "origin" (*Herkunft*)—evidently not a 'native species.'[430]

As damaging as the review proved to be to Celan's life and work, Blöcker's criticism was by no means "new." In an influential 1955 article with the programmatic title "Vollkommen Sinnliche Rede" ("*Fully sensible speech"*) the German writer and critic Hans Egon Holthusen uses excerpts of Celan's poetry as examples of a wayward "metaphorical impulse" by which any word might be coupled to any other "in a spirit of absolute arbitrariness" (*von der Laune einer bloßen X-beliebigkeit*). Such verse, Holthusen suggests, is a kind of bastard German. Its inventiveness is neither "desired by the language" (*von der Sprache gewollt*) nor do its creations count as "legitimate" offspring of the mother tongue.[431] According to one of Holthusen's own "felicitious" (*geglückten*) metaphors, Celan's poetry is a "Wechselbalg"—an imposter, a monster, a changeling. It is a poetry less written than, as Holthusen puts it, "incubated in a test-tube" (*in der Retorte gezücktet*).[432] Though Holthusen does not explicitly link such test-tube synthesis with the rumor that Celan had plagiarized his poetry, he certainly does not make an effort to dispel the libelous charge. Nor, indeed, did it help Celan's case that the verse Holthusen cited as examples of artificiality and derivativeness in contemporary poetry were lines that Claire Goll had earlier accused Celan of stealing from her late husband.[433]

Holthusen's judgment of Celan's poetry as well as the language he used to describe it found immediate and enduring resonance in the German-language press. The characterization of Celan's verse as a "wild wuchernde Katachrese" (a "wildly rampant" or "savagely usurious" abuse of words), for instance, occurs in a review by Günter Steinbrinker published shortly after Holthusen's "Vollkommen Sinnliche Rede."[434] The review, which is structured entirely around the "wuchern" trope, makes no secret of its debt to Holthusen. As Steinbrinker puts it,

> [Celan] quite masters sensible (*sinnliche*) but not "fully sensible speech" (*"vollkommen sinnliche Rede"*). Typical of this deficiency [are] his rhetorical twists and turns. Everywhere anaphora, parallelisms, paronomasia and oxymorons. Questionable certainly when the wildly rampant [or "usurious"] catachresis (*die wild wuchernde Katachrese*) becomes a decisive stylistic trait. At times there even blossom some of those *flores rhetoricales* (*erblühen sogar einige jener* flores rhetoricales) that so hopelessly resemble stale puns. […] More than not the poems lack

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[430] In this sense, Blöcker's article is an example of a particular modality of modern anti-semtic discourse, "the figure of the third" who is neither German nor not German, but a figure with no fixed identity. See Holz, 45-49. See Blöcker, "Gedichte als graphische Gebilde," 39. For a discussion of Blöcker's review and Celan's reaction, see Celan and Celan-Lestrange, *Correspondance*, 2001, II: 133–35.

[431] Holthusen's remark echoes the racialized theory of language propounded by the Nazis, where the way in which metaphor supposedly undermined the organic link between language and action correlated with the way the Jewish foreign body [*Fremdkörper*] compromised the health of the German Volk. See, in particular, Neumann, "Nazi Antisemitism and the 'Decline of Language,'" 61. The objection to "Beliebigkeit," also, traces back to Hegel's lectures on aesthetics, where the philosopher objects to the "Macht des Beliebens" radiating from certain strains of Romanticism. According to Hegel, the protagonist of this literature, "knowing himself to be free from all bonds" [von allem sich los und ledig weiß], chooses not to form attachments and cheerfully proclaims the "nullity of the objective" ["Nichtigkeit des Objektiven"]. Quoted in Petersdorff, "Woher hat Adorno den Zaubertrank?," 71.

[432] Holthusen, "Vollkommen Sinnliche Rede," 350. Holthusen's use of Celan's verse without naming its author enraged the latter, particularly after Holthusen's text was printed alongside one of Celan's own in Hans Bender's anthology, *Mein Gedicht ist mein Messer.*

[433] Cf. Goll, "Unbekanntes über Paul Celan."

[434] I will comment in greater detail on Steinbrinker's use of the rhetorical term "catechresis" in the following section.

> "expressive, properly propagating words" (*"expressiven, richtig fortpflanzenden Worten"*) (Novalis). This is above all true of the metaphors. These are prone to incest […].[435]

Although the description of Celan's metaphors as linguistic "incest" (*Inzucht*) is Steinbrinker's own "happy" find, almost all of this passage's assessments—the empty world play, the overheated rhetoric, the perverse mannerism—are recycled from Holthusen. If, for critics like Steinbrinker, Celan's poetry counted as "wild wuchernd," the literary values Holthusen espoused were a 'Pfund, mit dem man gerne wuchern könnte.' This was no coincidence. In the newly reconstructed literary establishment, Holthusen actively styled himself as one of the few "creditable" authorities on matters of contemporary German poetry.

Since Holthusen's reading of Celan is characteristic of a larger culture of disavowal, and since personal complicity will figure importantly in a poem I will discuss, it is well worth pausing to consider what Holthusen stood for culturally, politically, and artistically. A poet, critic, and co-editor of an important anthology of post-war poetry, Holthusen was a chief representative of the conservative pole of the German literary field throughout the nineteen fifties and sixties. In his critical texts, Holthusen qualified this period as "post-revolutionary." In his view, the formal experimentation of literary modernism had run its course. The post-war avant-garde was fundamentally off-base: it was time not for innovation, but for securing the advances of the earlier generation of poets.[436] For Holthusen, these earlier writers were Rilke, Trakl and Brecht, but also the Anglo-Americans: Pound, Auden and, above all, Eliot.[437] French Surrealism, to which Holthusen dismissively assimilated Celan's poetry, was in his opinion a dead end.[438] Tellingly, the few positive remarks Holthusen reserves for Celan's work concern those moments when Celan abandons his modish, French "tricks" and begins to sound a little like the Eliot of the *Quartets* (!).[439] This odd comparison of the author of "The Idea of Christian Society" with the poet of "Todesfuge" is highly indicative of Holthusen's conservativism. The Christian symbolism of "Burnt Norton's" rose garden *was* infinitely more familiar to Holthusen than the Jewish motifs of "Todesfuge." With regard to contemporary German-language poetry, Holthusen's own sensibilities tended towards a "christlicher Existentialismus" and a homegrown tradition of pastoral lyric, currents which had no place for the German-Jewish hybridity of Celan's verse.[440] In fact, in an important essay from 1953, Holthusen

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435 Steinbrinker, "Kritsche Zwischenbilanz," 4–5.

436 See Holthusen and Kemp, "Nachwort," 347.

437 Unsurprisingly for a writer so enthusiastic about Eliot's Anglican turn, Holthusen had an ambivalent relationship to Pound. He acknowledged Pound's importance within the modernist canon, but faulted what he called Pound's "synkretistische Beliebigkeit" (a code word for polytheism) as well as his ties to fascism (the latter not without irony). Holthusen's discussions of Pound are generally rather boiler plate, rarely deviating from a script that Eliot had written decades prior [see "Der Dichter Im Eisernen Käfig: Rezension Zu Ezra Pound: Dichtung Und Prosa," *Merkur* 9, no. 1 (1955)]. The only exception is a 1959 article, "Mißvergnügungen an Ezra Pound," in which Holthusen bristles comically with nationalist ire. The "displeasure" of the article's title refers simply to its author's outrage at Pound's outrageous ignorance of German literary history. According to Holthusen, Pound could have saved himself some trouble had he only realized that Anglo-American modernism was just a belated translation of the Deutsche Klassik (See "Mißvergnügungen an Ezra Pound," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, December 7, 1959, sec. Feuilleton). Reservations notwithstanding, Hanna Klessinger notes that Holthusen 1955 *Merkur* review of Eva Hesse's *Dichtung und Prosa* was an important early moment in Pound's German reception. See *Bekenntnis zur Lyrik*, 41–42.

438 On political and poetological stakes of Celan's frequent assimilation to French surrealism by his German readers, see Clement Fradin's highly-informative discussion in "Paul Celan ou les affres de la modernité."

439 Holthusen, "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954. Reprinted as "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954, 154–55; 160.

440 On Holthusen's treatment of the "Jewishness" of Celan's German, see Weigel, "Face à la Critique littéraire allemande d'après-guerre," 141f. In this respect as well, Holthusen's extraordinary deafness to Jewish history is highly

summarily reduced the entire field of contemporary German poetry to two literary forms: "die neue Naturlyrik" practiced by Karl Krolow and the "metaphysical" narrative poem of eliotic stripe of which he was the premier practitioner.[441] Celan, of course, fit neither paradigm.

This did not stop Holthusen from writing about Celan. Reading Holthusen's various published discussions of Celan's poetry, one is above all struck by the extraordinary difficulty he has talking about Celan's images. He quite clearly does not know what to do with them—he dismisses them alternately as shards of a private mythology and the distillations of automatic writing. If one moment they are empty plays on words, the next they count as hermetic ciphers. Whatever explanation he provided for their presence, Holthusen did not or chose not to recognize in the "Unheimlichkeit" of Celan's images the history he shared with the "other." All he saw was a "*wildly blooming chaos of metaphors*" ("*wild blühende Chaos der Metaphern*").[442]

One such "Stilbüte" was, in Holthusen's opinion, the syntagm "Mühlen des Todes" ("mills of death") from "Spät und Tief," the penultimate poem of the first cycle of *Mohn und Gedächtnis*. This particular "metaphor" occasions a short discussion in a 1954 article Holthusen published about a group of younger poets, one of which was Celan. The full strophe (uncited by Holthusen) reads,

> Wir wissen es längst.
> Wir wissen es längst, doch was tuts?
> Ihr mahlt in den Mühlen des Todes das weiße Mehl der Verheißung
> ihr setzet es vor unsern Brüdern und Schwestern –[443]
>
> [We've known it a longwhile
> We've known it a longwhile, but what's the use?
> You grind in the mills of death the white meal of promise
> you set it before our brothers and sisters –]

Holthusen classes the constructions "Mühlen des Todes" and "das weiße Mehl der Verheißung" here as rhetorical devices. They are what Steinbrinker, picking up Holthusen's baton the following year, will call *flores rhetoricales*.[444] More specifically, they are that special species of "flower" called a

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representative of a dominant tendency of German elite culture. See Scholem's important 1964 intervention, "Wider den Mythos vom deutsch-jüdischen 'Gespräch.'"

[441] Holthusen, "Naturlyrik Und Surrealismus: Die Lyrischen Errungenschaften Karl Krolows." See also, Klessinger, *Bekenntnis zur Lyrik*, 98f.

[442] Holthusen, "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 162 (my italics). The construction "wild blühende Chaos der Metaphern" is, in Holthusen's case, more than a variation on the "wild wuchern" trope. When Holthusen and Kemp's volume *Ergriffenes Dasein* was published in 1953, a younger, more "engaged" generation of poets unflatteringly compared the style of the poems anthologized therein to the sort of floral poetry cultivated by the "Sprachgesellschaften" of the seventeenth century: *Ergriffenes Dasein* was a kind of modern "Lustwald"; the model poet, a kind of gardener-gentilhomme , who, as the baroque poets before him, took it on himself "die 'Bäume,' 'Pflanzen,' und 'Blumen' der deutschen Sprache [zu] kultivier[en] und 'veredel[en].'" In an important essay, the poet Peter Rühmkorf famously dismissed *Ergriffenes Dasein* as a literary "greenhouse" [*Treibhaus*], tended by "lyrische Naturisten" who had retreated from the "widerwärtig Gegenwärtigem" into the "ästhetische Provinz." See Rühmkorf, "Das lyrische Weltbild des Nachkriegsdeutschen," 14–15. Hans Magnus Enzensberger makes a similar judgment in "In Search of the Lost Language," 333–34. *Ergriffenes Dasein* and Naturlyrik, see Lampart, *Nachkriegsmoderne*, 69f. A discussion of seventeenth-century "Lustwälder" can be found in Kemper, *Deutsche Lyrik der frühen Neuzeit*, 4.1:82.

[443] Celan, *KG*, 38.

[444] On the relationship between Celan's use of flowers and the tradition of *flores rhetoricales*, see Herrmann, "Die Herkunft des poetischen Wortes: Paul Celans Gedicht Blume im Spiegel der Textgenese," esp. 78f.

"Genetiv-Metapher," a figure produced when one uses the genitive case to cross a concrete noun ("Mühlen," "das weiße Mehl") with an abstract one ("Tod," "Verheißung"). Such cross-breeds, according to Holthusen, might be "pretty" ("schön") or "fitting" ("richtig"), or they might not. In any case, such "wild blossoms" merit no more reflection from their reader than they purportedly demanded of their author—which is to say, none at all:

> [The reader] may find the "mills of death" trivial and explain the "white meal of the promise" to be ground in them as an artificial (*künstliche*) and therefore entirely dead (*gänzlich tote*) metaphor. The question, "what does he want to say with that?" can be dispensed with from the beginning: between the unconditional arbitrariness of the poetic fantasy (*der unbedingten Willkür der dichtenden Phantasie*) and the corresponding arbitrariness of the understanding (*verstehenden*) fantasy the meaning content (*Sinngehalt*) of a poem can only be intuited (*erahnt*) as something hovering undetermined (*etwas unbestimmt Schwebendes*). [445]

The sheer quantity of contradictions, slips, and disavowals that Holthusen manages to pack into these two sentences is itself quite sufficient to demonstrate the incoherence of his rhetorical question, "Was will er damit sagen?" Evidently, *Holthusen* doesn't know what he's saying. I will not linger on the fact that the genitive construction "Mühlen des Todes" used in "Spät und Tief" is *not* the fanciful outgrowth of the poet's 'wild wuchernde' *Phantasie* but a very precise reference to the real mills installed at Auschwitz and other camps for the purpose of effacing the traces of the genocide by grinding the bones of the murdered into dust.[446] Numerous articles in the German-language press as well as short films produced by the American military during and after the war document the existence of these machines, which the reports referred as "Todesmühlen" or, in English, "mills of death."[447]

Holthusen's personal failure to acknowledge the full reality of the genocide is one thing; the programmatic disavowal issuing from his general understanding of poetry is another. A frequent contributor to prestigious literary journals like the *Merkur* and the *Neue Rundschau*, as well as a member of high-standing within important cultural and academic institutions both in Germany and later abroad, Holthusen commanded a considerable amount of symbolic capital within the German literary field.[448] As someone responsible for various forms of literary accreditation, Holthusen helped set the boundaries of this "field" and establish the terms by which new work was recognized, classified and evaluated. For a younger generation of poets including Ingeborg Bachmann, he was often instrumental in organizing institutional and financial support in the form of fellowships, prizes

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445 Holthusen, "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954, 157.

446 See Brigitta Eisenreich, *L'étoile de craie: Une liaison clandestine avec Paul Celan accompagné de lettres et autres documents inédits*, ed. Bertrand Badiou, trans. Georges Felten (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2013), 191 n1; Barbara Wiedemann, "Welcher Daten eingedenk? Celans 'Todesfuge' und der Izvestija-Bericht über das Lemberger Ghetto," *Wirkendes Wort: Deutsche Sprache und Literatur in Forschung und Lehre* 61, no. 3 (2011): 437–52; and Fisch, "Dichtung, das kann eine Atemwende Bedeuten: Paul Celans 'Todesfuge,' 'Lila Luft,' und 'Atemwende,'" 70–74.

447 One of the first critics to challenge Holthusen's reading of "Spät und Tief" was Peter Szondi. In 1964, when the FAZ printed a review of *Die Niemandsrose* in which Holthusen once more described "[die] Mühlen des Todes" as evidence of Celan's "Vorliebe für die 'surrealistische,' in X-Beliebigkeiten schwelgenden Gentivmetapher," Szondi responded with a forceful letter of protest to the editor: "[Es] ist offenbar [Holthusens] Ansicht," Szondi asserted, "dass die Verbindung von 'Tod' und 'Mühle' hier eine 'beliebige,' eine 'surrealistische' Kombination darstellt. Da aber der assoziative Zusammenhang mit der Realität, und mit welcher!, feststeht (und man braucht Celans Bestätigung nicht, um darauf zu kommen), ist diese Ansicht Herrn Holthusens falsch und bedarf der Richtigstellung." Szondi, *Briefe*, 167.

448 Klessinger, *Bekenntnis zur Lyrik*, 46–47. Brambilla, *Hans Egon Holthusen*, 18–19.

and residencies.[449] That said, Holthusen's authoritative position within the German literary field and his staunchly bourgeois-conservative viewpoint were often felt as oppressive. In a short satire from the period, Günter Grass depicts Holthusen as a jealous gardener and neurotic detective, obsessed with purity and investigating literary credentials, all while spinning readings of Kafka, Eliot und Joyce into normative artistic proscriptions—"the true measure of value and common property" ("[das] wahre[…] Wertmesser und Allgemeingut") for the Adenauer era.[450] When in the pages of the *Merkur* Holthusen describes Celan as a "foreigner and outsider to poetic speech" ("Fremdling und Außenseiter der dichterischen Rede"), he tacitly invokes his authority as the unelected custodian of the "Allgemeingut" and the *de facto* customs official "der dichterischen Rede."[451]

As we saw above, "[das] weiße Mehl der Verheißung" is a construction which Holthusen considers beneath "truly" "dichterische Rede." Why exactly? Curiously for a doctor of philosophy trained in Germanistik, Holthusen's reasoning follows no clear methodology, be it critical, rhetorical, or philological. Instead, he appeals to the reaction of an anonymous reader, someone who (1) judges "das weiße Mehl der Verheißung" to be an instance of figurative language, (2) perceives this figure as somehow "artificial" [*künstlich*], and (3) concludes that the phrase is "therefore (*daher*) an entirely dead metaphor." This process of induction conforms to no definition of "dead metaphor" that one could find in a manual of rhetoric, ancient or modern. In fact, quite the contrary is the case. If one consults Nicole Ricalens-Pourchot's *Dictionnaire des figures de style*, for example, one reads that "une métaphore morte" is *not* a metaphor deemed dead by an imagined reader but rather what she calls "une métaphore lexicalisée," that is, a figure whose sense has made its way into the dictionary and whose use is current in everyday speech.[452] In English, the constructions "tail light," "foot of the bed," and "head of state" are all examples of dead metaphors. According to Ricalens-Pourchot and contra Holthusen, to call something "a dead metaphor" is not to exercise one's aesthetic judgment, but to make a rather specific claim about the contemporary use and accumulated history of one's lexicon. Dull as we may "subjectively" experience certain of them to be, dead metaphors are nonetheless accorded a certain kind of "objective" recognition. They are publicly "attested to" by the dictionary, by common usage, or by both. These sorts of attestations, however, do not exist for "das weiße Mehl der Verheißung," nor did they in 1953. The phrase has enjoyed no such public recognition. At least according to *Duden*, this "metaphor" has yet to "die."

It is a different kind of death Holthusen pronounces on Celan's "metaphor." It is a death no one need investigate, a death without a history, without a prior "life." What's striking about Holthusen's reasoning is not just its *result*—that is, the refusal to grant "das weiße Mehl der Verheißung" either a figurative or a non-figurative "sense"—it is also the curious chain of causation Holthosen proposes between the supposed "artificiality" of the metaphor and the nullity of its "Sinngehalt." It is *because* "das 'weiße Mehl der Verheißung' is "eine künstliche [Metapher]" that the reader is permitted to regard it as "[eine] gänzlich tote Metapher." Having germinated "artificially" in "a test-tube" ("in der Retorte gezüchtet"), the metaphor is from the very beginning excluded from the domain of the living. This is a ridiculous conclusion for anyone to make, but it is especially bizarre coming from a poet. The logic would seem to deny the possibility of language ever undergoing historical change. If anything, one should be inclined to take the opposite point of view:

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[449] Albrecht and Göttsche, *Bachmann-Handbuch*, 13.

[450] Grass, *Das Rundschreiben der Claire Goll*, 5–6; n10. If Grass's short text does not mention Holthusen by name, Barbara Wiedemann nonetheless identifies the latter's "Vollkommen sinnliche Rede" as one of Grass's principal inspirations. See "Kommentar," 20–29. See also Arthur Zimmermann, *Hans Magnus Enzensberger: die Gedichte und ihre literaturkritische Rezeption* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1977), 48.

[451] Klessinger, *Bekenntnis zur Lyrik*, 97.

[452] Ricalens-Pourchot, "Métaphore," 87. For a similar definition see Friedman and French, "Dead Metaphor," 337.

language will inevitably sound the most "unnatural," the most forced, unfamiliar, and non-idiomatic, when it stretches to accommodate new and unnamed realities. By this logic, however, the artificial would not be the "dead." Instead, it would qualify what is most "vital" in a language.

V. Catachresis

The fault that Holthusen finds in Celan's use of "das weiße Mehl der Verheißung" comes close to what in rhetoric is called "catachresis," a term which in Greek means "abuse" and which the *OED* defines as "improper use of words."[453] Indeed, it is precisely its tendency to "wild wuchernde Katachrese," that Günter Steinbrinker, building on Holthusen's assessment, singles out as the "decisive stylistic trait" of Celan's poetry generally, a "Stilzug" which he—again like Holthusen—assimilates to empty, mechanical plays on words ("Kalauer").[454] However, as in Holthusen's use of "tote Metapher," Steinbrinker's invocation of Celan's "Katachresen" is a polemical interpretation of a rather common trope. A tradition going back to the stoic grammarians recognizes a difference between a catachresis and a metaphor: a catachresis looks much like a metaphor, with the important exception that, unlike the vehicle of a metaphor, there exists no "proper" term (no "tenor") for which the catachresis supplies the figurative substitution. A catachresis is, in this tradition, the use of a borrowed expression for something that does not have a name of its own. In effect, it is the catachresis that functions as this thing's "proper" name.[455] Synthesizing this tradition, the linguist Bernard Dupriez defines a catachresis as a trope that "answers to the need of denomination." Whether the trope is constructed along the lines of a metaphor, a metonymy or a synecdoche, it "always produces [*opère*] a denotation and not a connotation."[456] Though one might want to qualify Dupriez's categorical assertion,[457] the basic thought that catachresis is a fundamental operation in the naming and predicating of reality is certainly sound. Why otherwise do we find so many examples of catachresis that are also dead metaphors? Not every piece of reality has its proper name; improper uses fill in the gap, that is, until they are lexicalized and become proper in themselves. "Tail light" is a perfect example: there is no other, "proper" term for which "tail light" is the substitution. This does not, however, make the construction "tail light" what Holthusen would call "a pure play of language which desires nothing but itself."[458] On the contrary, "tail light" sutures a hole in the lexicon, a lack which might otherwise be blinding (or at least blinking) in its self-evidence.[459]

As the general absence of the term "tail light" before invention of the locomotive attests,[460] there exists a deep relationship between catachresis and social, cultural and technological change. Catachresis is a necessary usage unauthorized by the language itself, a semantic abuse which, one way or another, history "legitimates." That such legitimation depends to a considerable degree on

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[453] *OED Online*, s.v. "catachresis," accessed August 1, 2019.
[454] Steinbrinker, "Kritsche Zwischenbilanz," 4–5.
[455] See Freinkel, "Catachresis," 209–11.
[456] Dupriez, "Gradus," 104–5. See also, *La Métaphor vive*, 111.
[457] Dupriez's confidence notwithstanding, it is quite difficult to imagine a catachresis that would not connote as well as denote. It seems more reasonable to consider the trope as designating that rupture in "normal" usage in which figurative and literal meanings are (re)negotiated. Rather than a strict difference, Derrida describes a relationship of "différance" implicating both literal and figurative meanings, which he calls "métaphore-catachèse" and "métaphore-figure." See Derrida, "La Mythologie Blanche."
[458] Holthusen, "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954, 159.
[459] For more on the figure, see Paul de Man's essay "Hypogram and Inscription" in *The Resistance to Theory*.
[460] The first attestation of "tail-light" the *OED* records is an 1844 newspaper description of a train car. See *OED Online,* s.v. "Tail-Light," accessed August 1, 2019.

institutions of accreditation, which are themselves historical, reminds us how important it is to reflect critically on the *terms* of historical discourse. Moreover, these often silent battles over the lexicon make plain catachresis's fundamentally *political* significance.[461] This is eminently true of Celan's verse. For this reason, Steinbrinker's claim that "wild wuchernde Katachrese" is particularly characteristic of Celan's style does get something "right." Although the judgment is unmistakably disparaging, it gestures obliquely at the unprecedented burden that bearing witness to the genocide places on language: the fact that, as Celan once remarked, there are *no words for what happened*.[462] In such circumstances, catachresis does indeed respond to a need.

Of course, neither Steinbrinker nor Holthusen acknowledge a relationship between Celan's catachreses and recent history. Instead, their treatment of Celan's "abuses" only serves to more thoroughly efface the Shoah as a possible historical referent for his poetry.[463] Rather than name the camps as a field of reference, they transplant Celan's verse into the carefully partitioned "field" of literary history, a domain which it is their institutional prerogative to order and taxonomize according to established morphologies and genealogies. Steinbrinker speaks of Celan's "partiality for Romantic formulae (*Romantizismen*)," of his combinations "according to Baroque principles."[464] Holthusen refers to Celan's place in the "era of Surrealist upheaval (*Entfesselung*),"[465] to a poetic lexicon that is "has been in use among the French for decades."[466] Assessing a verse like "Ihr mahlt in den Mühlen des Todes das weiße Mehl der Verheißung" by the norms of *French* lyric from *decades* prior is a convenient way to ignore the denotations that the *German* words "Mühlen des Todes" and "weiße Mehl der Verheißung" have acquired in the interim. According to Holthusen and Steinbrinker's readings, this history might as well not have happened.[467] It is from this perspective that one needs to read the chilling *mot d'ordre* Holthusen issues in relation to Celan's work: "[Celan's] language is a *sovereign* inner reality, and its answer to the world of external objects is a *subjective*, momentary *mythology* of beings that '*do not exist*' [*die es 'nicht gibt'*]."[468]

I wonder whether Holthusen was aware of the callousness of this statement, or whether it was not the express virtue of his understanding of poetry generally to shelter him from the

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461 On the politics of catachresis, see Spivak, "Poststructuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value," 219–39.

462 The full quote reads: "Sie, die Sprache, blieb unverloren, ja trotz allem. Aber sie mußte nun hindurchgehen durch ihre eigenen Antwortlosigkeiten, hindurchgehen durch furchtbares Verstummen, hindurchgehen durch die tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede. Sie ging hindurch und gab keine Worte her für das, was geschah; aber sie ging durch dieses Geschehen." "Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der freien Hansestadt Bremen," 185–86.

463 There is a bitter irony in this process of effacement, since, as I shall explore below, the genocide "itself" destroys the possibility of referentiality. This is in part why Celan regarded critics like Holthusen as continuing the work that the Nazis started. We shall return to this point in the next chapter.

464 Steinbrinker, "Kritsche Zwischenbilanz," 5.

465 Holthusen, "Vollkommen Sinnliche Rede," 350.

466 Holthusen, "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954, 156.

467 Deniela Beljan summarizes the implicit disavowal of Holthusen and co. as follows: "[W]ith the allusion to Celan's 'linguisitic artistry' and the insertion into a tradition of poets 'before Auschwitz' one ignored his poetry's reference to the reality (*Wirklichkeitsbezug*) of the national socialist crime. One traced the so-called incomprehensibility of Celan's verse back to his origins)*Herkunft*) and indirectly signaled that he did not master the 'normal' German language because he came from the eastern edge of the German-speaking world, Bukovina, and was a 'foreigner' (*Fremdling*). "Lexikon der 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' in Deutschland," 121.

468 Holthusen, "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954, 156. My italics. See also Holthusen's earlier article "Exkurse über schlechte Gedichte," in which he bemoans the derivativeness of poetry written concentration camps. "Exkurs über Schlechte Gedichte," *Merkur* 2, no. 2 (1948): esp. 605.

possibility of such twisted ironies.[469] More trenchantly than perhaps any other poet, Celan's work contests language's "souveräne innere Wirklichkeit" and the various formalisms such "sovereignty" underwrites. In his explicit turn to "Mythologie," Holthusen places the historical reference of Celan's verse in scare quotes, a sovereign decision on *Holthusen's* part that disassociates "Wesen, die es 'nicht gibt'" from the historical circumstances that produced this absence—namely that the "beings" in question "are not there" because they were murdered in mass and disposed of so thoroughly that even their bones were ground in mills into white powder.[470] The perversity of Holthusen's reading of "das weiße Mehl der Verheißung" as a "*dead* metaphor" is all the more striking for the sophistication with which Celan's image and surrounding verse actually address the problem of myth and disavowal.

> Wir wissen es längst.
> Wir wissen es längst, doch was tuts?
> Ihr mahlt in den Mühlen des Todes das weiße Mehl der Verheißung
> ihr setzet es vor unsern Brüdern und Schwestern –[471]

In these lines, Celan draws on the biblical connotations of the word "Verheißung" to more definitively refute the possibility of a "mythologizing" reading.[472] In ancient Judea, flour represented one of the principal sacrificial offerings used in the Temple, where it functioned as a token of the covenant (*berit*) joining God and the children of Israel, "brothers and sisters" of a common root.[473] Celan's poem, however, turns this rite inside out: the strophe imagines the destruction of the Jewish people as a ritual sacrifice performed by their persecutors ("Ihr," an interpolation which includes the reader), a "holocaust" that mocks God's promise to Israel.[474] In this context, the verb "vorsetzen" (literally: "to set before") is bitterly ironic, connoting the grotesque pretense of any gesture that would present genocide as a rite invested with religious significance.[475]

Were his understanding of poetry at all compatible with the principle of dialogue, one might expect Holthusen to read Celan's use of the second person plural ("ihr") as something other than an apostrophe to "Wesen, die es 'nicht gibt.'"[476] And yet, though one doubts Holthusen felt himself

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469 For a reading of Holthusen's own verse in these terms, see Boyken and Immer, "Die ewige Wunde des Geistes: Hans Egon Holthusens Kriegs- und Trauerlyrik," 104–5.

470 Holthusen's allusion to a "mythology of beings that 'don't exist'" darkly anticipates Claire Goll's description of the murder of Celan's parents as "seine traugrige Legende" in a 1960 article for the German journal *Baubudenpoet*. "Unbekanntes über Paul Celan," 252. Friederike and Leo Antschel's were murdered by the SS in the winter of 1942-1943 while prisoners in the forced-labor camps Gaïssin and Mikhaïlovka in Romanian-controlled Transnistria. Cf. Sagnol, "Celan, les eaux du Boug."

471 Celan, *KG*, 38. Celan, 38.

472 On "das Land der Verheißung," see Buber, *Israel und Palästina*, 34.

473 On the use of flour in the temple cult, see Yadin et al., "Temple," 624.

474 On the covenant between God and Israel, see Weinfeld, "Covenant." What is perhaps Celan's most famous treatment of the covenant can be found the fourth strophe of "Radix, Matrix." There, the line of Abraham disappears inside a parenthesis (o): "(Wurzel./ Wurzel Abrahams. Wurzel Jesse. Niemandes/ Wurzel – o/ unser.)" *KG*, 140.

475 It is no doubt in part due to the term's history as a description for burnt sacrificial offerings that Celan refused to refer to the genocide as "The Holocaust." Cf. Badiou and Cohen-Levinas, "L' estrangement du poéme," 140f. On interpretations of the Shoah as a "liturgie nouvelle," see Coquio, *La littérature en suspens*, 57–61.

476 Holthusen's dissociation of literary creation and historical testimony itself demands to be historicized. Claude Mouchard's concept of an "œuvre-témoignage" is one example of an analysis that refuses to separate the work on literary form and the work of bearing witness in the writing of figures like Celan, Chalamov, Sankichi and others. Interestingly, central to the Mouchard's concept of a "œuvre-témoignage" is the kind of address the work directs

addressed by Celan's "ihr," his reading of "Spät und Tief" nonetheless delivers on the poem's dark promise. His reading "passes off" (*vorsetzt*) "Mühlen des Todes" as a tired iteration of a metaphor long "dead." For Holthusen, bone ground in the mill is an image of transcendence.[477] It figures a promise untouched by history:

> With just a few, simple paradoxes Celan has managed to master a theme exceeding all human expression and transgressing all the limits of the artistic imagination. He does so by making it entirely 'slight' ('*leicht*'), by bringing it to a state of transcendence in a dreamy, super-natural, and in a certain sense already otherworldly language (*in einer träumerischen, überwirklichen, gewissermaßen schon jenseitigen Sprache*), so that it can fly free (*entfliegen*) from history's bloody chamber of horrors in order to ascend (*aufzusteigen*) into an ether of pure poetry (*ein Äther der reinen Poesie*).[478]

These words are offered in *praise* of Celan's poem "Todesfuge," though little save Holthusen's private whim distinguishes them from his critical assessment of the "surrealistische Entfesselung" of "Spät und Tief's" genitive metaphors. In both cases, history is less transcended by a flight into the "ether" of pure poetry than—to quote from a poem cherished by Holthusen—"etherized on the table." Or, in Holthusen words:

> [B]etween the unconditional arbitrariness of the poetic fantasy and the corresponding arbitrariness of the understanding fantasy the meaning content of a poem can only be intuited as something hovering undetermined (*etwas unbestimmt Schwebendes*).[479]

Holthusen's interpretation of Celan is such an important case not only because it is representative of the way many readers historically approached Celan's verse, but because it indicates the broader culture of disavowal against which Celan pitted his poetry. As Sigrid Weigel has argued, rather than see in art the possibility of naming and confronting the consequences of their own decisions, many Germans of Holthusen's generation used art as a drug to suspend the past right where they wanted it: hovering "in suspension between not-being-able-to-believe and not-wanting-to-know" ("*in der Schwebe zwischen Nicht-glauben-können und Nicht-wissen-wollen*").[480]

VI. Chalk and Lime

Holthusen, Steinbrinker and, after them, Blöcker show how even Celan's work can be stripped of its references and enlisted in a project of disavowal. In fact, it is just this eventuality that the poem "Spät und Tief" anticipates. The reader intent on taxonimizing *flores* and cataloguing metaphors will naturally overlook the historical specificity and extra-literary reference of an expression like "Mühle

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towards its unknown reader. Mouchard, like Celan, gets his idea of an "addressee" or "interlocutor" in part from Osip Mandelstam, and it is precisely this understanding of "address" that Holthusen's reading practice forecloses. See *Qui si je criais ... ?*, 93–118.

[477] Cf. Teubner, *Celans Gedichte wollen das äusserste Entsetzen durch Verschweigen sagen*, 327.

[478] Holthusen, "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954, 165.

[479] Holthusen, 157.

[480] Weigel, "Die Spur von Scham, Schuld Und Schulden: Vergangenheitspolitik Und -Rhetorik Im Intergenerationellen Gedächtnis Seit 1945," 468–69. See also, Kleindienst, *Beim Tode! Lebendig!*, 73–78.On the strategic "vagueness" of Holthusen, Krolow, and other post-war writers of the "Zwischengeneration," see Klessinger, *Bekenntnis zur Lyrik*, 96–97.

des Todes."[481] Such reading habits are forms of resistance not easily overcome. Simply repeating what one knows to be the truth, for example, is not sufficient. Repetition, after all, is also a trope: "what's the use?"

> Wir wissen es längst.
> Wir wissen es längst, doch was tuts?[482]
>
> [We've known it a longwhile.
> We've known it a longwhile, but what's the use?]

The skepticism these verses voice about whether the perpetrators will ever assume responsibility for their crimes resonates with the barbed irony that laces Celan's aphorism about Pound. One only understands what is in one's interest to understand. "Wenn sie Pound lesen, verstehen sie sogar Chinesisch." Celan's bitter joke here is that for the group of readers im-pounded in the pronoun "they," "even Chinese" is more comprehensible than his German. With this swipe at fair-weather sinophiles, however, Celan is not just mocking the shallow, self-serving internationalism of all those who, following Hans Magnus Enzensberger, defended a "world-language of modern poetry" (*die Weltsprache der modernen Poesie*),[483] he is indicting a form of understanding that proudly defies linguistic barriers and yet stops before the walls of the ghetto. In this sense, Pound's Chinese is a foil for Celan's poetry: Celan's thwarted reception in German echoes in the words "wuchern" and "Shylock." Since the Romantics, German literary culture has often been thought to value linguisitic and cultural difference.[484] What Celan's aphorism suggests is that while such openness to difference might be superficially true of foreign literatures, it does not apply to those more proximate "outsiders" and more familiar "strangers" who, like Celan, remain intractably "Fremdling und Außenseiter der dichterischen Rede." Literary "Wucherer" like Holthusen are skilled in this "double jeu": they hedge their own positions within the domestic literary field by pegging German literary production to a purportedly international "Pound standard" while at the same time profiting off a long-standing local trade in anti-Semitic clichés.

And yet, in casting his critics as themselves Wucherer, Celan does not simply turn the tables on his accusers, charging them with the Wucherei that they have accused him of practicing. The situation is far more complex. Whatever it means to "profiteer off Pound"—a racket we still need to discuss in more detail[485]—it *does not* refer to a kind of usurious abuse to which Celan's own poetry would provide the definitive counter-example, a "just" or "proper" poetic economy righteously opposed to the abuses of poundian "chrematistics."[486] Whatever claim Celan's poetry makes upon its

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[481] Compare this with Celan's observation in a letter to Szondi from August 1961. Writing about his critics' tendency to transform his simplest words into their opposite, Celan jumps to the dangers of overly figurative readings. "[D]ieser ganze Metaphern-Trend," Celan writes, "kommt aus dieser Richtung; man überträgt, um…fort- und abzutragen, man verbildlicht, was man nicht wahrnehmen, nicht wahrhaben will; *Datum* und *Ort* werden…zum 'topos' zerschwätzt. Nun, Auschwitz war ja auch tatsächlich ein Gemein und Tausendplatz […]." *Paul Celan, Peter Szondi*, 40–41.

[482] Celan, *KG*, 38.

[483] Enzensberger, *Museum der modernen Poesie*, II: 773f.

[484] See, for instance, Antoine Berman's classic study, *L'épreuve de l'étranger*.

[485] See the following chapter.

[486] Someone who *does* make this kind of argument is Martin Heidegger. In his lectures on Hölderlin's hymn, *Der Ister*, Heidegger warns when the German language ceases to dwell in the "*oikos,*" abandoning itself to "das Technische-Praktische" that is the order of the day, it loses all sense of measure and becomes "Englisch-Ameriskanisch." It's easy to imagine that, had Heidegger read Ezra Pound, he would not have hesitated to describe such a debased form of the German language as "Poundian." (See *Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister,"* ed. Walter Biemel (Frankfurt am Main: V.

readers, it does not come from "the tradition."[487] This point cannot be stressed strongly enough. To laud Celan's work as the rightful heir to the German poetic tradition, as the authentic form of "der dichterischen Rede" to which Holthusen and co. represent the inauthentic perversions, is, in its own way, to succumb to an analogous form of historical disavowal. Well intentioned though it may be, claiming Celan as a "Einheimischer und Innenseiter" as opposed to a "Fremdling und Außenseiter der dichterischen Rede" presupposes a meaningful continuity of this tradition and thereby overlooks the full implications of the historical caesura produced by the Shoah.[488] What "Todesfuge" calls into question, and Adorno's dictum about poetry after Auschwitz reprises in the form of a provocation, is the very self-evidence of the distinction between a truly "dichterische Rede" and the most trivial "Wuchern der Worten."[489]

The irony of this situation is not immediately apparent in Celan's aphorism about Pound. It is, however, a contradiction that courses through many of Celan's poems. This is particularly true of several poems from Celan's 1955 collection, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, which, as Barbara Wiedemann has shown, can be read as more-or-less direct responses to Holthusen's criticisms.[490] The strongest allusion to Holthusen can be found in the poem "Kenotaph," a text written shortly after the 1954 issue of *Merkur* containing Holthusen's discussion of *Mohn und Gedächtnis*. A cenotaph is a commemorative monument dedicated to a person or to people buried elsewhere—or who never received a burial at all. The empty tomb already draws attention to an impasse in the work of mourning that is historically coded: the absence of the bodies that would ground or even "root" the so-called "Wucher" of Celan's verse. But "Kenotaph" contains further ironies. With unmistakable animosity, its first verse parrots Holthusen's description of Celan as a "stranger (*Femdling*) and outsider to poetic speech" and mocks the figure of the poet-gardener—so dear to the tradition of Naturlyrik that Holthusen assembled in the analogy *Ergriffenes Dasein*.[491] In fact, the poem's first words are not Celan's, they are Holthusen's:

> Streu deine Blumen, Fremdling, streu sie getrost:
> du reichst sie den Tiefen hinunter,

Klostermann, 1993), 79–81). Although he would have unquestionably considered Pound's poetry as part of the problem and not the solution, there is an alarming consonance between Heidegger's disdain for "Englisch-Amerikanisch" and Pound's judgment of English "Jewspapers." In fact, the *Schwarze Hefte* refer several times to the "Machenschaft" and the "händlerische Rechenhaftigkeit" of the "englisch-amerikansichen Welt," a chrematistics which Heidegger, like Pound, doesn't hesitate to link to the trope of an international Jewish conspiracy—what he calls "die Weltgeschichtlichen Aufgabe […] des Weltjudentums." See *Überlegungen XII-XV (Schwarze Hefte 1939-1941)*, 114; 243.

[487] Not even a specifically German-Jewish tradition. See Stéphane Mosès extremely helpful distinction between the writers and thinkers of a "modernité normative" (Cohen, Rosenzweig, Levinas) and those of a "modernité critique" (Celan, Benjamin, Arendt). *Un retour au judaïsme*, 66. See also Danièle Cohen-Lévinas' more Derridian discussion of Celan's "disappropriation" of tradition, *Le Devenir-Juif Du Poème*, esp. 38.

[488] It is on these grounds, for example, that Jean Bollack categorically rejects scholars' attempts to situate Celan's work within broader literary genealogies or networks of artistic filiation. See Bollack, *L'écrit*, 74; 87–88.

[489] For a careful rapprochement of Celan and Adorno, see Antoine Bonnet's contributions to the edited volume *Paul Celan, la poésie, la musique*—particularly "Prendre la mesure – sous le signe de la contradiction: Une introduction," in *Paul Celan, la poésie, la musique: avec une clé changeante*, ed. Antoine Bonnet and Frédéric Marteau (Paris: Hermann, 2015), and "'Tout dans la main de personne': Accompagner musicalement Celan, avec et après Adorno." See also Teubner, *Celans Gedichte wollen das äusserste Entsetzen durch Verschweigen sagen*, esp. 87-120.

[490] Wiedemann, "'Lesen Sie! Immerzu nur lesen,'" 179–81.

[491] Celan's changing practices of citation are an intensely studied aspect of his work. For an overview of the scholarship, see Dueck, *L'étranger intime*, 113–31. For an in-depth analysis of particular examples from various periods of Celan's career, see Barnert, *Mit dem fremden Wort*.

den Gärten.[492]

[Scatter your flowers, stranger, scatter them assured:
you hand them down to the depths,
to the gardens.

These lines don the mixture of pity and condescension that Celan experienced on the part of the reviewers of his first volume of poems—his poppies (*Mohne*), his "flowers" (*Blumen*). "Kenotaph's" gardens, its "flowerage" (*Flor*), its "plucked" (*gepflückt*) and "scattered" (*gestreut*) blossoms cite the poetic commonplaces to which Celan's verse was uncritically reduced and which many of his German readers failed to see beyond. The tacit assumption of a reader like Holthusen was that, being a foreigner and a Jew, Celan was incapable of genuinely innovating with the language. All he could muster was a little "Wuchern von Worten."[493]

"Kenotaph" tells us a lot about the extreme ambivalence of Celan's relationship to his German audience. However, there is another, lesser known poem from the same period which reflects on these circumstances in a more complex, and, for us, more illuminating fashion. This poem is called "Flügelnacht" ("*Wing-night*"), and the editor of Celan's *Kommentierte Ausgabe*, Barbara Wiedemann, spots Holthusen in this poem as well. We will see him in the second strophe, dressed in the brown shirt of the NSDAP that Celan's friend Hanne Lenz recalled him wearing in the early years of the Third Reich.[494] The full poem reads:

Flügelnacht, weither gekommen und nun
für immer gespannt
über Kreide und Kalk.
Kiesel, abgrundhin rollend.
Schnee. Und mehr noch des Weißen.

Unsichtbar,
was braun schien,
gedankenfarben und wild
überwuchert von Worten.

Kalk ist und Kreide.
Und Kiesel.
Schnee. Und mehr noch des Weißen.

Du, du selbst:
in das fremde
Auge gebettet, das dies
überblickt.[495]

[492] Celan, *KG*, 84.
[493] On the cliché of the "uncreative Jew" and the Jewish poet as an "merchant of old metaphors" [*Altmetaphernhändler*], see Wiedemann, "'Es ist eine lange, unglaubliche, bitter-wahre Geschichte': Glaire Golls Angriffe auf Paul Celan: Gründe und Folgen."
[494] See Wiedemann's commentary in Celan et al., *Briefwechsel mit den rheinischen Freunden Heinrich Böll, Paul Schallück und Rolf Schroers*, 492f. Also Wiedemann, *Die Goll-Affäre*, 208 n1.
[495] Celan, *KG*, 81.

[Wing-night, come from afar and now
stretched for ever
over chalk and lime.
Pebbles, rolling abyss-ward.
Snow. And still more of the white.

Invisible,
what appeared brown,
thought-colored and wildly
overgrown by words.

Lime is and chalk.
And pebbles.
Snow. And more still of the white.

You, you yourself:
bedded in the
foreign eye, that
overlooks this.]

"Flügelnacht" is the third poem in *Schwelle zu Schwelle's* final cycle, *Inselhin* (*Island-ward*). This cycle begins with a poem about burying the dead ("Nächtlich Geschürzt") and ends with an invocation of the boat of the dead, the poet-speaker rowing "Inselhin, neben den Toten."[496] Between these two poles the cycle traverses a poetic landscape that is less garden than mass, open grave covered with quicklime (*Branntkalk*), which is to say, "die Gegend, wo/ rasten, die wir ereilt" ("the region, where those we've caught up with are resting").[497] If the dead "bud and blossom" ("knospen und blümen") in the negative space of these poems, it is because they have been denied any other form of burial.[498] As Celan puts it in "Kenotaph": "He who should lie here, he lies/ nowhere".[499]

Holthusen once described the sylvan landscapes of *Naturlyrik* as "the natural base of resistance against the absurdity of the historical existence of humans."[500] What he valued in the meadows, woods, and lakes of Wilhelm Lehmann's verse, for example, was precisely their carefully tended seclusion from the field of history and political engagement.[501] The landscapes of *Inselhin*, by contrast, exhibit the traces of the history that the gardens and preserves of Naturlyrik were designed

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496 Celan, *KG*, 88.
497 Celan, 80. An especially challenging verse, since Celan seems to have elided the subject of one relative clause and the auxiliary verb of another: "die Gegend, wo rasten [sie], die wir ereilt [haben]". Here I follow John Felstiner's English translation. See *Paul Celan*, 66.
498 The lines "die Toten/ knospen und blühen" come from the cycle's second poem, "Auge der Zeit." The "negative space of the poem" refers to the lines "Ein Wort – du weißt:/ eine Leiche" ["A word – you know/ a corpse"] from "Nächtlich Geschürzt." Besides being the German word for a dead body, "Leiche" is a technical term for a printing error in which one or several words are left out of a text. Here, it would seem, those words which would remember, evoke, or figure the dead are marked as both present in the text and, crucially, missing from it. See *Das Deutsche Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm*, s.v. "Leiche," accessed August 1, 2019.
499 "Der hier liegen sollte, er liegt/ nirgends […]." Celan, *KG*, 84.
500 Holthusen, "Naturlyrik Und Surrealismus: Die Lyrischen Errungenschaften Karl Krolows," 323.
501 Rühmkorf, "Das lyrische Weltbild des Nachkriegsdeutschen," 13–14.

to keep out. In a certain respect, these poems invert the usual procedure: although Celan thematizes the cyclical rhythms of nature[502] and invokes familiar mythical topoi (Charon, the *nekuia*[503]), these patterns of natural and cultural recurrence are syncopated by symptomatic ellipses, deformed by intractable opacities, and traversed by shards of another temporality. In a poem like "Flügelnacht," Celan pierces one sort of natural paradigm—the "wild wuchernd" variety—with the stony edge of another. The first three strophes of the poem contextualize the budding and blooming of nature within the immense scales of geological time. While both the organic and inorganic paradigms are usually opposed to the "absurdity of the historical existence of humans," their mutual interference in "Flügelnacht" discloses a set of "occupiable" ("besetzbare") intervals in which a dialogue with the reader in history about history can take place.[504]

As Celan notes in the Bremen address, such an attempt to reach "through and across time" ("durch die Zeit hindurch") is not to be confused with the ethereal flight "over and away from time" ("über [die Zeit] hinweg") that Holthusen, for example, reads into "Todesfuge's" "poésie pure."[505] Nor, however, is it to be confused with time understood as an infinite series of chronologically distinct events running from the past, through the present and into the future. The timeline of a poem like "Flügelnacht" is foreshortened, as though impacted by historical trauma. Consider, for example, the tension—the "Spannung"—generated through the careful combination of participles and adverbs in the poem's first three lines.

> Flügelnacht, weither gekommen und nun
> für immer gespannt
> über Kreide und Kalk.
>
> [Wing-night, come from afar and now
> stretched for ever
> over chalk and lime.]

The eponymous wings of "Flügelnacht" do not, as Holthusen would have it, "take flight" from history into the "ether of pure poetry."[506] Instead, the poem describes an interruption in the regular cycle of days and nights: having traversed a great distance ("weither gekommen"), darkness arrives punctually ("nun") and stays, as it were, to nest. "Flügelnacht" keeps time in a manner familiar to many psychoanalysts: the darkness stretched out ("gespannt") beneath its wings strangely includes the future in its "span" ("Spanne"), as if this night were nothing but the anxious tension ("Spannung") in which what has already happened continues to happen, "für immer."[507]

This unfinished history is a collective burden. In the fourth stanza Celan invites his reader to imagine this shadow falling over the present in which he or she reads the poem. Indeed, the strict parallelism between the poem's first three lines, where wings project a dark silhouette over a white

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[502] In the poem "Die Winzer" ["The Vintagers"] for example: "Sie herbsten den Wein ihrer Augen" ["They harvest the wine of their eyes"]. Celan, *KG*, 87–88.
[503] See "Sprich auch du." Celan, 85.
[504] On the "bestetzbare" temporal disjunctions opened up by the poem, see Celan, *Der Meridian*, 70. For an analysis, see Olschner, *Im Abgrund Zeit*, 41–55.
[505] Celan, "Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der freien Hansestadt Bremen," 186.
[506] See above (Holthusen, "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954, 165).
[507] Very similar descriptions of psychic "Spannung" in which the past does not "pass" can be found in classic accounts of traumatic neurosis. See, in particular, Freud, "Hemmung, Symptom und Angst."

plane, and its last three lines, where the addressee is displaced into "the foreign eye" surveying the poem itself ("dies"), suggests that it might be the reader him or herself who casts the shadow.[508] Here, the interchangeability of the represented landscape ("Kreide und Kalk") and the scene of writing ("dies") makes a certain amount of sense, since "Kreide" ("chalk") names both a variety of sedimentary rock—the form of limestone found in the White Cliffs of Dover, for instance—and a writing instrument that Celan invokes several times throughout his œuvre as a metonymy for his own poetry.[509] What's more, Celan's habit of figuring poetry as a kind of writing in chalk is a way of emphasizing the complex ways his poems signify. Chalk is an exemplary instance of a means of communication that, "in itself," is also sign. This is to say that chalk signifies both conventionally, as the medium in which words are formed, and "naturally," as a sign bearing the trace of what it signifies.[510] In other words: much as smoke indicates a fire, so does chalk index the geochemical processes that brought it into being. More specifically, chalk is the sedimentary residue of billions of microscropic marine organisms that died millions of years ago. To write with chalk is to write with the skeletal remains of an unimaginable number of these ancient creatures.[511] If only indirectly, the moment in which the wings spread "über Kreide und Kalk" includes this fossil history in its span. In a non-metaphorical if implicit sense, the "now" of "Flügelnacht" unfolds over a surface constituted by the petrified remnants of the dead in which every word—never mind "was [Celan] damit sagen [will]"—is the sign of an interminable work of mourning.[512]

For all the incredible sophistication with which Celan's chalky "Wortlandschaft" ("word-landscape") gives shape to the burden of history, it is nonetheless the case that petrification is one of the most common and most enduring motifs in elegy and the literature of mourning generally.[513] On one level, "Flügelnacht" certainly belongs to this tradition, and one is not wrong to wonder about the degree to which the poem depends on the ready legibility, if not the "currency," of its stock of tropes.[514] At the same time, however, one must keep in mind how the conventional eloquence of stone as a *topos* of mourning strains under the less figurative denotations of specific minerals like chalk and limestone, which, in a poem like "Flügelnacht," threaten to crush poetic fiction under the

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[508] Peter Szondi has noted an analogous figuration of the text as a play of light and shadow in the slightly later poem, Engführung. See "Durch die Enge geführt," 48.

[509] See, for instance, the poem "Heute" ("Kreide ging schreibend umher;/ offen lag es und grüßte:/ das wassergewordene Buch". *KG*, 187. To this network of connotations one should also add the verb "ankreiden," meaning "to claim a debt against someone" or, even more colloquially, "to charge someone with some fault." Hence Celan's punning response to a suggestion by his copyeditor at the DVA concerning the placement of a comma in the third stanza of "Flügelnacht": "Ebenso kreiden Sie mir mit Recht das Komma an, das ich […] durchaus regelwidrig gesetzt hatte." 636.636.

[510] Thouard, "L'interprétation," 232.

[511] Incidentally, the line "über Kreide und Kalk," surreptitiously names the geologic period known in German as the "Über-" or "Oberkreide" and in English as the late Cretaceous period. In the years since Celan's death, this period in earth's history has entered popular imagination because it ended with a mass extinction event in which roughly three-quarters of the earth's plant and animal species disappeared. This is the asteroid impact thought to have killed the dinosaurs: what geologists call the "K/T boundary event" ("K" for "Kreide"). The white of the cliffs of Dover, like the white of old-fashioned blackboard chalk, is the ghostly residue of the microscopic creatures that populated the oceans of the "Oberkreide" prior to the catastrophic event. See Michael Allaby, ed., "Cretaceous," *Dictionary of Geology and Earth Sciences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 141; and "K/T Boundary Event," 327.

[512] On the idea of "natural-history," see Walter Benjamin's famous discussion of how mourning structures the field of representation on the German baroque stage in "Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels," 320; 342–43; 353–54; 391–92. See also Judith Butler's discussion of pantomime in her reading of the Trauerspielbuch: "Afterword: After Loss, What Then?," esp. 469-470.

[513] Celan describes his poems as "Wortlandschaften" in his notes to the *Meridian*. See *Der Meridian*, 102.

[514] See Starobinski, *L'encre de la mélancolie*, 471–98.

dumb weight of the fossil record. It is certainly no coincidence that *The Meridian's* reflections on the historicity of the poem explicitly oppose a "mindfulness of dates" to the stony mythologizing of Medusa's gaze. In the end, Celan's use of "Kreide und Kalk" might be better glossed by a dictionary of geology than by a work of "Topos-Forschung" like *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*.[515] Or, to be more precise, "Flügelnacht" maps the intersection of the one domain with the other, the fault at which literary history and natural history collide.[516] The reader does not need to share Celan's interest in earth science to intuit the particular fault he or she is surveying. That said, even the most cultured reader might overlook the "literalness" of this collision of trope and history, for not only do "Kreide und Kalk" both designate the same substance, calcium carbonate, but this chemical compound, calcium carbonate, is also the principal component making up bone ash.

Spewed from the chimneys of the crematoria in such quantities that it is reported to have blanketed every surface in the vicinity under a coat of fine, grey-white powder, "ash" is not only a synecdoche for the genocide, but a key word and organizational matrix of Celan poetry.[517] Ash is, in a sense, one of Celan's "master tropes," the "common *place*" (or mass grave[518]) in which all his verse can be said to rest.[519] In this respect, however, "ash" is *not* a figure of speech. As Uta Werner explains:

> For Paul Celan, to understand "the ashes of Auschwitz" means first of all to picture them as bone-ash, as a principally basic phosphate chalk (*Kalk*). His point of departure is the ash particles circulating in the terrestrial sphere, the final residue that one can still get a hold of. Out of this thought, into which he enters completely, he formulates his vision of the text-grave (*Textgrab*) in the perceptual spaces (*Anschauungsräumen*) of geology. Because those things which are eternally persisting and anorganic in the human body are the chemical building blocks of its skeleton. Here is the place, where unperishable matter resides in humans, and it is here where one also recognizes the point of articulation (*Gelenkstelle*) that joins the exterminated dead with the geological world of rock. As a matter of fact, for this reason, the euphemism 'ash' emerges as a metaphor without a figurative function (*Übertragungsfunktion*), as a linguistic expression (*sprachliche Ausdruck*) that refers to 'nothing.' In Celan's poetry, it [the euphemism] is taken literally, without disguise (*unverhüllt wörtlich genommen*).[520]

As Werner suggests, the importance of the "perceptual" or "intuitive spaces" of the earth sciences for Celan's poetry lies in the possibility that figurative discretion and denotative precision associated with such disciplines might reclaim his "text-graves" from crudely sentimental and overtly idealizing

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515 Celan's profound reservations regarding Ernst Robert Curtius's method—then at the height of its influence—are well known. See Rémy Colombat, "La poétique de Paul Celan dans le contexte de la modernité," *Études Germaniques* 270, no. 2 (2013): 279; and Pöggeler, *Der Stein hinterm Aug*, 179.

516 Florence Pennone proposes a version of this thesis in her reading of the "Bergwerkmotive" in the late works. See *Paul Celans Übersetzungspoetik*, 483–84.

517 See Rochelle Tobias' reading of "Engführung" in *The Discourse of Nature in the Poetry of Paul Celan*, 14–41.

518 Lime, a powerful caustic, is also the chemical Ukrainian "Schutzmannschaften" habitually dumped into mass graves like those in Mikhaïlovka thought to contain Celan's parents. See Sagnol, "Celan, les eaux du Boug."

519 On the importance of acknowledging the Shaoh as a kind of *space* and not simply as a span of time, see Baer, *Remnants of Song*, 211–55.

520 Werner, *Textgräber*, 92.

readings ("Streu deine Blumen, Fremdling…").[521] A material like ash, after all, is an eminently symbolic substance. Not only are spirits said to rise from the ashes, but many traditions (though typically not Jewish ones[522]) preserve and venerate the ashes of the dead. In this sense, ashes are often a ritual means of sustaining a relationship with a friend or family member after his or her death. Particularly when they are enshrined in sanctuaries alongside the remains of others from which they are nonetheless carefully distinguished, ashes can be thought to symbolically assume the place in the family or community where the departed would have been.

All this, however, is quite foreign to the "perceptual spaces of geology." Analogous rites do not, for instance, exist for $CaCO_3$, though this is in fact the principle substance to be found in all mortuary urns. Unlike ash, calcium carbonate does not lend itself to the sort of "Transzendieren" of which Holthusen speaks: spirit rises less wingedly from such dust, whose brute and undifferentiated materiality drags down any ascent "into the ether of pure poetry."[523] As Werner suggests, Celan's emphasis on the "Gelenkstelle" joining the victims of the Shoah and the "geologische Gesteinwelt" implicitly revokes such models of transcendence. For the victims, life did not come full circle in a harmonious return to the earth ("ashes to ashes…"). The history that transformed millions of individual human beings into chemically-identical quantities of the same inert compound taxes the old myths with an unsupportable irony.[524] The destruction perpetrated in the camps attained such a magnitude that to retain any trace of anthropomorphism in its description verges on the disingenuous. Words like "Erde," "Staub" and "Asche" are *too* human. The familiar liturgical vocabulary needs to be refined further, pulverized into its bare components: "Kiesel," "Kreide" and "Kalk."

On one level, nothing could be farther from the "wild wuchernde" and "hypotrophierte" poetic idiom taxonimized by Holthusen and Steinbrinker than the sterile, frozen, and calcified landscape of "Flügelnacht." As species of sedimentary rock, formed over vast stretches of time deep in the ground, "Kreide und Kalk" are separated by millions of years from the cycles of organic growth and biological reproduction from which Celan's critics draw their images of excess. Chalk and limestone are neither fertile nor robust; they are, in fact, extraordinarily brittle. They crumble easily when touched, which is why one can write with them. And yet, by virtue of their very proneness to disintegration and erosion, "Kreide und Kalk" do participate in the paradigm of "usure" (French: "to wear away," "to deteriorate")[525]. Indeed, the poem "Flügelnacht" seems to be centrally concerned with just this sort of "inverted" or "inorganic" "Wuchern"—an excessive dying away. In image and in letter, the sequence of its stanzas documents a process of progressive decay. Consider again the first stanza:

> Flügelnacht, weither gekommen und nun
> für immer gespannt

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[521] Werner's term "Anschauungsraum"—usually translated as ""perceptual" or "intuitive space"—is itself a bit of jargon, a word belonging to the conceptual framework of Kantian epistemology and the phenomenology of knowledge. See, for example, the section "Das Problem der Repäesentation und der Aufbau der anschaulichen Welt" in Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen: Teil 3 - Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis*, esp. 159-182.

[522] Werner, *Textgräber*, 92 n2.

[523] See above ("Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954, 164–65).

[524] One should point out that even when a discussion of the "ashes of Auschwitz" avoids sublimating the evidence of genocide into a new sacrament, the image of the ashes constantly runs the risk of *regressing* into a fetish in the Freudian sense, covering up the sight of what's not there. The fact is that at Auschwitz, as Werner puts it, "even the ash was exterminated" (*selbst die 'Asche' wurde vernichtet*)—carted off by the ton and dumped in the Vistula River (Werner, *Textgräber*, 10). On fetishism and disavowal, see Freud, "Fetischismus."

[525] Cf. Baumann and Beauffort, "Introduciton," esp. 13f.

über Kreide und Kalk.
Kiesel, abgrundhin rollend.
Schnee. Und mehr noch des Weißen. l. 5

With the ironic exception of the verb "to be," conjugated in the present tense, the third strophe is composed exclusively out of the words of the first. But not all of them reappear. I have introduced blanks into the quotation below to show what has been lost in the interim. Of the five verses of stanza one, this "is" what remains:

[_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _]
[_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _]
Kalk ist und Kreide.
Und Kiesel. [_ _ _ _ _ _ _]
Schnee. Und mehr noch des Weißen.

As this disposition of its text shows, stanza three is a patchy reproduction of stanza one. Three re-cycles one. It repeats its images and sonorities, as though the poem were itself rolling toward the abyss, rotating over its own axis and growing thinner with each iteration. The alliterative string "über Kreide und Kalk./ Kiesel" is already a kind of repetition of sound and sense before Celan "turns it over," transposing its principally trochaic rhythm into the iambs of "Kalk ist und Kreide./ Und Kiesel." The accumulation of "und's" ["and's"] emphasizes the momentum of the verse as it tumbles from phoneme to phoneme and from metonym to metonym. What's more, chalk is an opaque white stone. The "Kieselstein" one finds in riverbeds and beneath limestone cliffs are similarly white. If "Flügelnacht's" pebbles are in fact "Kalkkiesel," then the whole poem assumes a new and uncanny appearance: white stone on white snow on the white page, with more white to come ("Und mehr noch des Weißen"). The black letter of the text is projected against the scene of blank whiteness it describes. In some cases, the text remains just long enough to announce its own disappearance into the wordless white of the page. By stanza three, the words "abgrundhin rollend" have themselves rolled into the abyss. For those who remember stanza one, the empty space is full of their loss. The negative space of Celan's texts, as Maurice Blanchot once observed, "[is] less a void than a saturation, a void saturated with void."[526]

Strictly complementary to this adduction of whiteness as a witness is "Flügelnacht's" extended pun on whitewashing ("mit *Kalk*milch tünchen"). The poem's "Weiß" is both the cover-up and the evidence of the erasure: a "wisdom" [*Weis*heit] concerning literature's own participation in mechanisms of disavowal. But, if there is an obvious component of "ideology critique" to "Flügelnacht's" carefully calibrated negativity,[527] there is also a recognition that what has been lost,

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[526] "[…] [est] moins un manque qu'une saturation, un vide saturé de vide." *Le dernier à parler*, 11. Blanchot's small book, whose floating blocks of poetry, translation and commentary, as well as illustrations, disarticulate the boundary between form and content, does not pretend restore this loss to speech. With its unusual visual layout, it attempts instead to open itself to the "outside" encrypted in the arid materiality of Celan's verse. As Charlotte Mandell's translates: "The outside […] reaches us through words that return with insistence […]—*Schnee, Ferne, Nacht, Asche*—that return as if to make us believe in a relationship with a reality or matter that is powdery, soft, light, perhaps welcoming, but such an impression is soon turned toward the aridity of *stone* (a word that is almost always there), of *chalk*, of *limestone* and *gravel* (*Kreide, Kalk, Kiesel*), snow whose sterile whiteness is the always whiter white (crystal, crystal), without increase or growth: the white that is at the bottom of what is bottomless […]. "The Last to Speak," 69. *Le dernier à parler*, 24–25.

[527] As Adorno puts it, "[Celans] Lyrik ist durchdrungen von der Scham der Kunst angesichts des wie der Erfahrung so der Sublimierung sich entziehenden Leids. Celans Gedichte wollen das äußerste Entsetzen durch Verschweigen sagen.

what the historical accounts omit and what critics like Holthusen "overlook," will never be recovered. Some things will stay hidden in the white, "nun" and "für immer":

Schnee. Und mehr noch des Weißen. l. 5

Unsichtbar,
was braun schien,
gedankenfarben und wild
überwuchert von Worten.

[Snow. And still more of the white.

Invisible,
what appeared brown,
thought-colored and wildly
overgrown by words.]

The adjective "invisible" (*unsichtbar*) follows closely upon the poem's refrain "Schnee. Und mehr noch des Weißen." The white space intervening between the two verses is less a mark of separation than a continuum, a snow whiter than "Schnee" can say. By this reading, the adjective "Unsichtbar," while clearly modifying line seven's "was braun schien," also predicates the invisible contents of the ostensibly empty line preceding it. This space, and the negative space of the poem generally, becomes dense, saturated, "incorporating" what the poem cannot show by displaying its invisibility.[528]

As Barbara Wiedemann suggests, one of the referents inhabiting the poem's blanks, invisible because written in white, is Hans Egon Holthusen, who in the mid-thirties appeared before Celan's close friend Hanne Lenz in a Brown Shirt.[529] At the moment Celan wrote "Flügelnacht," in 1956, Holthusen had yet to publically acknowledge his membership in the SS.[530] As Celan was acutely aware, Holthusen was far from the only public figure in post-war Germany to conceal a history of collaboration—what's called a "braune Vergangenheit."[531] Indeed, as the defamation campaign against him grew more intense, Celan was known to comb the catalogue of Nazi literary journals

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Ihr Wahrheitsgehalt selbst wird ein Negatives. […] Die Sprache des Leblosen wird zum letzten Trost über den jeglichen Sinnes verlustigen Tod." *Ästhetische Theorie*, 477.

528 On the relationship between incorporation and symbolization, see Abraham and Torok, "Deuil ou mélancolie, Introjecter-incorporer."

529 Wiedemann, *Die Goll-Affäre*, 208 n1.

530 Holthusen was a member of "die allgemeine SS" (Gruppe Julius Schreck) from November 1933 until Juli 1937, when he withdrew himself without providing a formal explanation. During the war, he served on various fronts as a radio operator in the Wehrmacht. His early membership in the SS only became public knowledge in 1961, at which point it sparked a controversy in the US (where Holthusen was director of New York Goethe-Haus) and in the Federal Republic. Holthusen responded to the controversy in 1966 in an autobiographical text published in the *Merkur* ("Freiwillig Zur SS," *Merkur* 20 (1966): 921-929-1049). This article, in turn, triggered a heated public exchange with the Austrian-Jewish writer and survivor Jean Améry. For details see, Schneider, *Jean Améry und Fred Wander*, 119–31.

531 *Duden Online*, s.v. "Vergangenheit," accessed June 16, 2017.

archived in the Bibliothèque Nationale researching the backgrounds of his critics.[532] One can well imagine that such names, whose "brown past" is no longer visible, also figure on "Flügelnacht's" chalk surface, "angekreidet" in the white margins of the text.[533]

Naturally, the unnamed subject of stanza two admits other readings. Given the bird's eye view Celan sketches in stanza one, "what appeared brown" might be as simple as the ground buried under a layer of snow. Still, the ground is a portentous thing to lose sight of—particularly in German. The German word for "ground," "Grund," is famously polysemic: its semantic field extends beyond the sense of "ground" ("soil") and "ground" ("basis") to include the meanings "reason," "principle," and "rationale." "Ein Grund" might be the "premise" of a syllogism or the "cause" of an effect. The presence or absence of a "Grund," therefore, is an extraordinarily evocative "topos" not only for poetry and logic, but for the history of metaphysics generally.[534] Celan was intimately familiar with all the philosophical significations of this word—above all through his reading of Martin Heidegger, who, for his part, frequently plays "Grund's" technical denotations against its more familiar meanings.[535] In an extraordinary feat of poetic economy, "Unsichtbar,/ was braun schien" alludes both to the "Ab*grund*" (*Abyss*) into which Heidegger is said to have rolled the history of metaphysics as well as the uniform Heidegger wore at the time, the philosopher's own "braune Vergangenheit."[536]

VII. Grown over

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[532] It is in such a context that Celan may have come across the article "Für Dichtung - Volkstum – Glaube" that Holthusen published in the journal *Eckart* in 1940. In the article, Holthusen praises the 1939 invasion of Poland as a heroic return to the noble ideals of the medieval chivalric orders, writing, for example, that "the meaning of our march [into Poland] was one thousand years old." See Klee, "Das Kulturlexikon zum Dritten Reich," 265. On Holthusen's own account of his relationship with Nazi ideology, see Brambilla, *Hans Egon Holthusen*, 21–28. On Celan's visits to the BnF, see Weidemann's note on the literary critic Curt Hohoff in *Die Goll-Affäre*, 238 n41.

[533] In a letter to his editor at S. Fischer Verlag, Rudolf Hirsch, from February 1961, for example, Celan returns to the "topos" laid out in "Flügelnacht." Here, the play of attestation, accusation, discretion and invisibility latent in the idiom "jemand etwas ankreiden" (literally: "to chalk something on someone"; "to blame, to fault someone for something") serves to dramatize both the strategies of Celan's accusers and the process of Celan's own effacement. "Es ist eine wahre Maffia," Celan says of the authors of the Goll-Affäre. "Die 'verrissennen,' die totgeschwiegenen Veröffentlichungen, – auch das kommt aus dieser Ecke. Dies nur 'am Rande.' Am Rande auch – es gibt da Ränder und Ränder –: alles mir 'nur' mündlich Angekreidete. Einige, ja, bleiben da auf das vorteilhafteste *weiß*. (Wie übrigens auch ich. Bei soviel Kreide …)." Celan and Hirsch, *Paul Celan, Rudolf Hirsch: Briefwechsel*, 160.

[534] See Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt's brief genealogy of "Grund's" origins in German Pietist thought: *Heidegger et la langue allemande*, 58f.

[535] For instance, in Celan's copy of *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, which he likely read for the first time in September-October 1954 and which bears traces of close study, one finds the following paragraph with the marked sentence underlined: "Zunächst erschien uns "Sein" wie ein leeres Wort mit einer veschwebenden Bedeutung. Daß dem so sei, erschien als feststellbare Tatsache unter anderen. Zuletzt aber zeigte sich das anscheinende Fraglose und weiter nicht mehr Befragbare als das *Fragwürdigste*. Das Sein und das Verstehen des Seins sind nicht eine vorhandene Tatsache. Sein ist das Grundgeschehnis, auf dessen Grunde überhaupt erst geschichtliches Dasein inmitten des eröffneten Seienden im Ganzen gewährt ist." Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 40:210. Cf. *La bibliothèque philosophique*, 348. For one of Celan's later poetological reflections on the "Grundlosigkeit des Gedichts," see Celan, *Der Meridian*, 60.

[536] For a comparison of Heidegger and Celan's "Abgründe," see Bambach, *Thinking the Poetic Measure of Justice*, 195f.

It is perhaps no coincidence that "Flügelnacht" was written during a period in which Celan was intensely preoccupied with Heidegger's philosophy.[537] For those so inclined, the missing ground of "Flügelnacht" certainly invites a Heideggerian reading: one can imagine several ways such "Grundlosigkeit" might be redescribed in the language of the philosopher's "Grundverfassung des Daseins."[538] Rather than ground my own reading in the categories of Heidegger's fundamental ontology, however, I would like to direct our discussion to the poem's own peculiar conjugation of being and time—which is to say, its use of *tense*. It is of some importance, for example, that in "Flügelnacht" the tense in which "die braune Vergangenheit" appears is not the perfect—a tense which would imply that the repercussions of the completed action continue to affect the present moment in which it is reported (i.e. "was braun geschienen hat")—but the preterit—a tense which locates the denoted action more definitively in the past ("was braun schien"). This subtle difference is significant, because, as one of the poem's three conjugated verbs and the sole instance of the simple past in the poem's tangled network of participles ("gekommen," "gespannt," "überwuchert," "gebettet," as well as the present participle "rollend"), "schien" predicates the only phenomenon to fall outside the temporal horizon sketched in stanza one.[539] Whatever it was that "appeared brown," it seems to have done so before the arrival of the "wing-night," the event which cast the poem into the tense shadow of an eternal perfect—"nun/ für immer gespannt."

By linking the change from preterit to present perfect with a chromatic shift from brown to white, Celan makes the difficulties of narrating the past in the present ironically "manifest." In "Flügelnacht," the past is color-coded but present is monochrome. Reported in the present, the eyewitness account loses sight of the past. Under such conditions, one does not get to the "bottom" of the story: in a landscape painted white-on-white, the "Grund" vanishes from its own "Darstellung"[540]:

> Unsichtbar, l. 6
> was braun schien,
> gedankenfarben und wild
> überwuchert von Worten.

As we noted earlier, the isolated adjective "unsichtbar" grammatically modifies the subject of the clause "was braun schien," but so does the complex adjectival group "gedankenfarben und wild/ überwuchert von Worten." "What seemed brown" is qualified by both, but, at least initially, it is not clear what these attributes have to do with each other or where they stand in relation to the grammatical subject's earlier mode of appearance. In what sense, for example, does one perceive a "Gedankenfarbe"? If such a color is "unsichtbar" in one sense, could it be "lesbar" ("legible") in another? Here, the difficulty lies in part in Celan's choice of a word: "gedankenfarben" ("thought-

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[537] Badiou, "Chronologie," in *Correspondance 1951-1970*, Vol. II, 492. A tremendous amount has been written concerning the meridian Celan-Heidegger. Of the many treatments of the subject, Anja Lemke's book-length study is of exceptional quality and insightfulness. *Konstellation ohne Sterne*. Also to be recommended is André, *Gespräche von Text zu Text*.

[538] A good deal of this terrain has already been surveyed by Werner Hamacher in his extraordinarily rich reading of "Todnauberg." See "WASEN: Um Celans Todtnauberg."

[539] Cf. Jadwiga Kita-Huber's analysis of "Flügelnacht's" use of tense in *Verdichtete Sprachlandschaften*, 143.

[540] The obvious affinities between "Flügelnacht" and landscape painting are in all likelihood not coincidental. Frank Brüder notes the interest Paul and Gisèle Celan shared during the early nineteen fifties for the abstract landscapes Nicolas de Stäel painted of the coast of Normandy (See, for instance, "Face au Havre" (1952). Brüder links "Flügelnacht's" use of images to de Stäel's visual idiom. Cf. "Kunst," 281.

colored") is a very rare word in German—virtually a neologism. It seems to be formed like the composite adjective "goldfarben" ("gold-colored," as in "die goldfarbenen Schuhe"), and is attested in at least one dictionary with the rather technical meaning, "von zwar vorstellbarer aber nicht darstellbarer Farbe" ("of an intuitable [or imaginable] but not demonstrable [or presentable] color").[541] Although such a definition poses more questions than it answers, its distinction between intuition/imagination and demonstration/presentation shares in the complexity of "Flügelnacht's" exploration of the limits of visibility. In both, the seemingly simple position of eyewitness decomposes into a complex intentional structure in which little, if anything, is self-evident. Does "gedankenfarben" describe the memory of a color that was once but is now no more? Or does it, by seeming contrast, specify the portion of the visual spectrum in which "die braune Vergangenheit" continues to appear in the present tense—invisible, as it were, to the eye but not to the mind?

In certain respects, these and other questions about what constitutes the form of appearance—and the kind of evidence (*Evidenz*) proper to "gedankenfarben" are the sort of topics treated by phenomenology, and particularly by those phenomenological accounts of perception we know to have interested Celan. Of particular interest in this context is the final chapter of *Die Idee der Phänomenologie* in which Husserl explains how, through a process of reduction and "eidetic abstraction" (*ideiernde Abstraktion*) the phenomenologist moves from the thought of a real or imagined colored object—say, a red wheelbarrow—to the "meaning of the thought red generally, red *in specie*" (*Sinn des Gedankens Rot überhaupt, Rot* in specie).[542] "[Der] Sinn des Gedankens Rot," for Husserl, is not a platonic form, but a purely immanent and absolutely self-evident "essence" (*Wesen*) disclosed—if only indirectly—by the conscious intuition of this or that real or imagined red wheelbarrow. Judging from the annotations he left in his own copy of *Die Idee der Phänomenologie*, Celan seems to have been drawn to Husserl's discussion of such "Gedankenfarben." And, while it is difficult to specify when exactly Celan studied Husserl's text, it is easy to imagine how such a reading might have informed "Flügelnacht," whose landscape is neither a picture of the post-war world nor its metaphor, but a kind of "reduction," or, as Werner Hamacher proposes, a "re-diction" of its historical moment, which, precisely in its attention to what has been elided from the field of appearance ("was braun schien"), reveals "die braune Vergangenheit's" highly ambivalent mode of "self-givennesss" (*Selbstgegebenheit*).[543]

That said, far more important than deciding whether or not Celan's modifier "gedankenfarben" actually refers to Husserl's "eidetic intuition" is noting the rough parallelism of Celan and Husserl's stances toward poetic language and philosophic discourse respectively. At a time when Celan's verse was routinely characterized as an empty and imprecise "Wuchern von Worten," Husserl's "strenge Wissenschaft"—his "*exact* science"—was a natural ally. Like Celan's work, phenomenology combines a total refusal of mimesis with an emphatic commitment to the truth of certain forms of perception (*Wahrnehmung*). If only in this limited sense, Husserl's method legitimated Celan's poetic practice. It demonstrated that certain uses of abstraction were not at all opposed to "realism."[544] *Die Idee der Phänomenologie's* laborious analyses of the redness of real or

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[541] Kaltschmidt, "Gedankenfarbig, gedankenfarben, adj."
[542] Husserl, *Die Idee der Phänomenologie*, II:55–56.
[543] Though advancing the idea of a kind of poetic *épochè*, Hamacher is careful to explain how Celan's "re-diction" radically decenters phenomenology by putting the the transcendental subject of Husserl's reduction itself "in parentheses." Self-evidence, in other words, is precisely what Celan's reduction "brackets" out. See "Époché poème," esp. 320.
[544] Bernhard Böschenstein makes this point in conversation with Jean Daive, see "Intime," 31–32.

imagined wheelbarrows is an example of a description, "thought-colored and wildly/ overgrown with words," that at no point sacrifices an intentional relation to lived experience.

There are, of course, literary precendents for such abstract uses of color. Celan's notes to *Die Idee der Phänomenologie's* suggest that he read Husserl's application of the phenomenological reduction and the "eidetic abstraction" to the color red as a philosophical gloss on the poetic technique of the early twentieth-century Austrian poet Georg Trakl.[545] Popularly, Trakl is above-all known for his "Farbwörter": the whites and blacks as well as the vibrant blues, greens and golds that return so insistently, and in such other-worldly combinations, in many of his poems. A poem like "Elis," for example, speaks of a "blaues Wild," ("a blue animal"), a "rosige[r] Seufzer" ("a rosy sigh"), and a "goldener Kahn" ("a golden rowboat"), colors whose significance seems not to derive from their empirical hue, but rather from the value they assume within the chromatic matrix tabulated by the poem itself.[546] As Bernhard Böschenstein has argued, it was above all the temporal values that Trakl assigns his various colors that appealed to Celan.[547] Trakl's colors are not attributes of objects the poem represents; they predicate the different strata of memory and perception that the poem synthesizes. By correlating color and verbal tense, Trakl in effect transposes the chromatic scale onto a temporal one, so that the famous "Farbwörter" of his poems read as stills from an "invisible" moving picture painted "gedankenfarben."

Although Celan works from a radically reduced palette, "Flügelnacht" uses color in just this sense. The shades of white and brown conjugate the poem's "image-language" (*Bildersprache*). As Dirk Weissmann has put it, in a poem like "Flügelnacht," "to tell color […] is also to *tell* history" (*dire la couleur […] c'est aussi* dire *l'histoire*).[548] Whatever "Flügelnacht's" brown might represent—hidden "Grund" or Holthusen's "Brown Shirt"—and whatever its white may refer to—the "Kalkmilch" that whitewashes "das was geschah" or the chalk in which "die braune Vergangenheit angekreidet wird"—both colors are, under the pressures contributed by the poem's construction, singularly "in tension" ("gespannt") and, by the same token, "in-tentional."[549] The neologism "Flügelnacht" specifies a period of time (a "night") which is determined not by the relationship of the earth to the sun, but by the relationship of these two "Farben" to each other: the tension between what once appeared brown and the layer of white that has since replaced it. Put slightly differently, it is through the difference between brown and white—a difference that is no longer apparent—that Celan generates the "Spannung" constitutive of "Flügelnacht's" present tense. These two colors are what, in his notes to *The Meridian,* Celan calls "a form of language's appearance" (*eine*

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[545] In his personal copy of Husserl's *Die Idee der Phänomenologie*, for instance, Celan wrote the name "*Trakl!*" in the margin of a passage about the manner in which "fantasized colors" [*phantasierte Farben*] are given to consciousness. Cf. Celan, *La bibliothèque philosophique*, 420. *Die Idee der Phänomenologie*, II:69f. For a detailed discussion, see Grube, *"so oder so, es bleibt blau oder braun, das Gedicht" Aspekte der Trakl-Rezeption Paul Celans*, 98–111.

[546] See Celan's note on Trakl's Farbwörter in the Meridian dossier, as well as Walther Killy's discussion of Trakl in "Der Tränen nächtige Bilder," an essay we know Celan consulted as he prepared the text of his 1960 Büchner Prize speech. Cf. Celan, *Der Meridian*, 93; and "Der Tränen Nächtige Bilder: Trakl Und Benn," esp. 123. For the full text of "Elis," see Trakl, *Dichtungen und Briefe*, 75.

[547] See Böschenstein, "Celan Als Leser Trakls," 144f.

[548] "[L]a couleur n'est plus une matière qui entraine à la dérealisation, qui occulte le passé, mais elle contribute au contraire à introduire la dimension historique dans le poème. Dans ce sens, dire la couleur, ce n'est pas forcément se voiler la face devant l'atrocité de l'histoire, c'est aussi *dire* l'histoire." Weissmann, "'Farbenbelagert Das Leben': La Double Face de La Couleur Chez Celan," 141. Weissmann's italics.

[549] On the relationship between tension ("Spannung") and scholastic accounts of intentionality, see Hirano, *Toponym als U-topie bei Paul Celan*, 6–8. Hirano's own analysis builds off of Walter Benjamin's notion of an "Intention auf die Sprache" as read by Peter Szondi.

Erscheinungsform der Sprache). Brown and white are "by no means something visual" (*keineswegs etwas Visuelles*); they are instead "a mental phenomenon" (*ein geistiges Phänomen*). The two colors supply the "invisible" dimensions through which the poem articulates its temporal perspective.[550]

In the same note in the *Meridian* dossier, Celan poses the rhetorical question, "language: is that not an encounter with what is invisible" (*Sprache: ist das nicht Begegnung mit Unsichtbarem*)? In this encounter, the invisible is not seen but, as he writes, "wahrgenommen[ ]" (*perceived*)—a word Celan often associated with Husserl,[551] and which he liked to interpret literally, as a "taking-true" or a "true reception."[552] The brown and white hues coloring "Flügelnacht" ask to be "wahrgenommen" in this sense: they are attributes of its language ("Sprache") and, as the poem's play on "chalk" shows, even of its writing. The relationship between the "invisible thing" ("[das] Unischtbar[e]") that Celan's reader is invited to "perceive" (*wahrnehmen*) and the written words he or she is given to read is most "apparent" in the enjambment that breaks the syntactic unit "gedankenfarben and wild überwuchert von Worten" over two lines of verse:

> was braun schien, l. 7
> gedankenfarben und wild
> überwuchert von Worten.

By hewing "wild" from "überwuchert," Celan's enjambment introduces an interpretative ambivalence known as "double syntax."[553] Read without line nine, the words "gedankenfarben" and "wild" in line eight both parse as adjectives qualifying "was braun schien." When once reads on to line nine, however, the modifier "wild" changes its grammatical object. Within the larger syntagm spanning lines eight and nine, "wild" is not an adjective but an adverb ("wildly"), and it no longer modifies "was braun schien" but the verbal adjective, "überwuchert" ("wildly/ overgrown"). This change retroactively effects how one reads "gedankenfarben," which, from the vantage point of line nine, is legible "amphibologically," as an adjective *and* as an adverb. Both readings are grammatical: either "gedankenfarben" predicates "was braun schien," or, like "wild," it qualifies "überwuchern." In the former case, "gedankenfarben" would seem to specify the "invisible" ("unsichtbar") color that characterizes the present mode of appearance of what once appeared brown. In the latter case, where "thought-colored" modifies "überwuchert," one is asked to imagine a situation in which the proliferation of the words contributes the "thought-colored" pigment. The difference between the two readings is subtle but important: in the first, one is presented with the same thing (nämlich, 'das was braun schien'), only in a different color. In the second, this identity is broken: whatever it was that seemed brown has been lost *under* the thought-colored, lexical canopy that has wildly grown *over* it.

The difference between words that uncover "die braune Vergangenheit" and words that cover this past up returns us to some of the central preoccupations of this chapter, and above all to the many meanings of "wuchern." As we observed, one of the common threads winding through the various historical senses of "wuchern" is the notion of excess. "Wuchern," we noted, not only

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[550] Celan, *Der Meridian*, 107.
[551] Celan, 141.
[552] 107. Celan's pun on "wahrnehmen" ("to perceive") is a recurring figure throughout the *Meridian* notes. The pun plays on the verb's components—"wahr" ("true") and "nehmen" ("to take")—as well as lexically proximate terms: "bewahren" ("preserve"), "wahren" ("protect"), "(nicht) wahrhaben" ("[not] to accept"), and "wahrsein" ("to be true"). Celan, 137; 134.
[553] Ferguson, "Syntax, Poetic," 1405.

names the practice of lending money at an excessive rate of interest, "wuchern" also describes a phase of excessive growth that seizes hold of a given domain, whether a garden, a suburb, or a tumor. In fact, in the sense that the prefix "über" can imply the transgression of a boundary ("eine Grenze überschreiten"), one could say that all "wuchern" is, at least potentially, an "über-wuchern." This is particularly true of the tradition of economic thinkers running from Aristotle through the Medieval Canonists to Ezra Pound, all of whom regarded "Wucherei" as essentially an *over*-charge or, as Pound often put it, an "overplus" (Canto XLI, 205). Because rates are determined by the availability of credit and not by production, the usurer's profits have no direct relationship to the real "ground" of value.[554] The debits and credits entered in a usurer's leger float over real values like a mist. According to these thinkers, since "Wucherer" generate their profits from speculating on the monetary signs representing value and not the valuable things themselves, they systematically obscure—that is, they cover *over*—the true fundament ('die braune *Grund*-lage,' so to speak) of the economy.

Something similar happens when Wuchern grabs hold of the signs circulating in the carefully managed signifying economies of particular discourses—the discourse of the law, for instance, or the discourse of history, or even that well-tended garden that Holthusen calls "die dichterische Rede." These complex assemblages of codes, principles, methods, and taboos are themselves dynamically implicated within larger structures of power. In the context of his introductory lecture at the Collège de France, Michel Foucault reminded his audience that all discursive regimes—the Collège's included—are founded on the fear of their own perversion, of the 'nullification of reality' that ensues when the aleatory play of signifiers overtakes a serious exchange of words. As Walter Seitter translates,

> Es hat den Anschein, daß die Verbote, Schranken, Schwellen und Grenzen [des Diskurses] die Aufgabe haben, *das große Wuchern des Diskurses* zumindest teilweise zu bändigen, seinen Reichtum seiner größten Gefahren zu entkleiden und seine Unordnung so zu organisieren, daß das Unkontrollierbarste vermieden wird […].[555]

A German translation which, translated into English, reads:

> It appears that the prohibitions, barriers, thresholds and limits [of discourse] have the task of taming, at least partially, *the great proliferation of discourse*, of ridding its riches of its greatest threats and of organizing its disorder so that the most uncontrollable is avoided […].

And yet, for all the fear it inspires, what Seitter elsewhere translates as "the rampant, cancer-like production of discourse" [*die krebsartige wuchernde Produktion von Diskursen*] is not a tumor one irradiates once and for all.[556] If only as a danger, if only as a cliché, the cancer, the Wucherer, is invariably "kept alive," since it is above all the "prohibitions, barriers, thresholds and limits" protecting it from "das große Wuchern" that constitute a particular discursive regime in the first place.

Hans Egon Holthusen is a striking example of a writer who, from his place within the German literary field, arrogated to himself the responsibility "das große Wuchern zu bändigen." "The order of discourse" that Foucault elucidates ironically from his chair at the Collège de France is a *mot d'ordre* that Holthusen issues quite solemnly in the pages of the high-profile publications like

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554 Le Goff, *La bourse et la vie*, 17–18.
555 Foucault, *Die Ordnung Des Diskurses*, 33.
556 Foucault, *Sexualität und Wahrheit: Der Wille zum Wissen*, 1:98.

Merkur and Hans Bender's *Mein Gedicht ist mein Messer*. As we've seen, in these texts Holthusen systematically turns to Celan's verse for examples of the discursive cancer to be excised from "der dichterischen Rede." As I have also noted, Holthusen reads "metaphors" like "Mühlen des Todes" and "weiße[s] Mehl der Verheißung" as symptoms of literary decadence. Without naming Celan directly, he diagnoses a failure of what he calls the "control-organ of self-criticism" (*Kontrollorgan[ ] der Selbstkritik*) followed by a pathological sort of metastasis in which figures proliferate "wildly" across the boundaries of sense.[557] "In this manner discourse nullifies itself, in its reality, by submitting itself to the order of the signifier,"[558] becoming, in the process, "a pure play of language that desires nothing but itself" (*ein reines Spiel der Sprache, die nichts will als sich selbst*).[559] Put another way: as signs enter into commerce exclusively with themselves, moving swiftly through a series of tropological permutations, phonetic transpositions and metaphoric displacements, the "real" ground of value—what Holthusen sometimes refers to as "expressive value" (*Ausdruckswert*)—recedes from sight.[560] It is, one could say, "überwuchert von Worten." More exactly: the Wucherer of words, like the Wucherer of "pounds," wrests the medium of representation away from the ground of value and installs it in a world apart (the poem, the credit market) where, liberated of the distinction between signs and things, value accumulates without limit, compounding senselessly in a giant chrematistic-catachrestic circuit. As Holthusen rules of Celan's poetry: "where everything has become a metaphor, there it seems not to be allowed to look for the 'sense' (*Sinn*) of the poem, as it were, *behind* the metaphors."[561]

VIII. Caesura contra usura

Of course, Holthusen's judgment of the "wild blühende Chaos der Metaphern" running rank through Celan's poetry is anything but convincing. And yet, we have still to mention one of the most conspicuous blind spots of Holthosen's analysis—a blindness, in fact, which Holthusen shares with all the critics we have discussed so far. What these assessments of Celan's 'wild wuchernde Sprache' systematically overlook—what they consciously or unconsciously refuse to see—is the emphatically *dialogic* aspect of Celan's poetry. This striking omission is in many respects symptomatic of the biases that shaped the reception of modernist poetry in the young Federal Republic. Not only did Gottfried Benn's verdict about the "uncontestably […] monological character" (*unbestreitbar[…] monologische[r] Charakter*) of the modern poem become axiomatic in so many young writers' understandings of modernist poetics,[562] but the works of the older generation of writers who had

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[557] Holthusen, "Vollkommen Sinnliche Rede," 350.
[558] "Le discours s'annule ainsi, dans sa réalité, en se mettant à l'ordre du signifiant." Foucault, *L'ordre du discours*, 51.
[559] Holthusen, "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954, 159.
[560] Holthusen, "Vollkommen Sinnliche Rede," 354. See also Holthusen's mostly positive review of Ingeborg Bachmann's 1956 volume, *Anrufung des großen Bären*. "Kämpfender Sprachgeist: Zur Lyrik Ingeborg Bachmanns," 570–71.
[561] "Wo alles Metapher geworden ist, da scheint es nicht erlaubt zu sein, den 'Sinn' des Gedichts gleichsam *hinter* den Metaphern zu suchen." Holthusen, "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954, 159. The paradigm of Holthusen's argument is extensively discussed in Jean-Joseph Goux's important work, *Symbolic Economies*. More recently, Goux has described the capacity of monetary (and linguistic) signs to "dériver vers la frivolité de la valeur" as a tendency immanent to symbolic economies post Breton Woods. Cf. *Le réel en économie*, esp. 107-108.
[562] In a talk delivered in Marburg in 1951 and published as *Probleme der Lyrik*, Gottfried Benn famously claimed, "Alles möchte das moderne Gedicht, dessen monologischer Zug außer Zweifel ist" ("Probleme der Lyrik," in *Gesammelte Werke in vier Bänden*, ed. Dieter Wellershoff, vol. I (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1997), 528). On Celan's relationship to the tradition of thinking of poetry as a kind of monologue, and to Benn's version of it in particular, see Colombat, "La poétique de Paul Celan dans le contexte de la modernité." See also, Reuss, *Im Zeithof*, 175f.

been most interested in "das dialogische Prinzip"—figures like Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig—were, for one reason or another, largely absent from this canon.[563] For his part, Celan was certainly familiar with this strongly German-Jewish tradition, even if it seems that his mature thinking about poetic address draws more directly from the structural linguistics of Émile Benveniste and the poetics of Osip Mandelstam.[564]

Different though they may be in their premises, argumentation, and conclusions, what all these thinkers hold in common—and where their own work converges with Celan's—is an insistence on the ethical, metaphysical, poetic, and/or grammatical uniqueness of the I-you relationship. Even on the most basic level, as in Benveniste's discussion of the functional differences of the various deictic pronouns, the act of address produces an asymmetry within speech (*parole*) by which the subject who says "I" not only exposes him or herself to the other ("you"), but also, and in the same gesture, acquires a certain historicity.[565] This is not to say that the performative dimension of address is not itself largely scripted, nor that the various protocols of address may not themselves be ironized, fictionalized, cited or disavowed.[566] Neither, for that matter, is it to deny the fundamental role repetition plays in address—so central, for example, to psychoanalysis.[567] What it does mean, however, is that critics must take into account the way the pragmatics of address inflect the signification of the words used, whether written or spoken. For the study of literature, the implications of this perspective are sweeping. When it comes to poetry, for instance, the asymmetry that traverses the scene of allocution—that is, the difference between the "I" who proffers words, and the "you" who may or may not receive them[568]—challenges the pretention that the poem is, as Holthusen says, "a pure play of language that desires nothing but itself."[569] Although the addressee may certainly be enlisted in this speculative and specular economy as a kind of straw-man or dramatic fiction, the turn to the other always has the potential to interrupt this narcissistic circuit. As William Waters puts it in his study of modern forms of lyric address,

> The *you* that (perhaps) calls to the reader is a wild spot in poetics, a dynamically moving gap in whatever secure knowledge about poetry we may think we have; and 'live' as it is, this *you*

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563 Besides Martin Buber's *Ich und Du*, a text Celan knew well, one thinks of Franz Rosenzweig's "neues Denken" and, closer to Celan's own moment, texts like *Le Temps et l'autre* by Emmanuel Levinas. On Celan and Buber, see Lyon, "Paul Celan and Martin Buber." For a discussion of "Dialogizität" that includes Levinas, see Fassbind, *Poetik des Dialogs*.

564 Celan refers to Benveniste's important 1956 essay, "Remarques sur la function du langage dans la découverte freudienne," on several occasions in his notes to *The Meridian* (*Der Meridian*, 104–5, 159). On the relevance of Benveniste's work on the scene of allocution for Celan's poetics, see Mosès, "Note sur 'L'entretien dans la montagne.'" For Celan's reading of Mandelstamm, see Broda, *Dans la main de personne*. A helpful critical work that methodically breaks down various interpretive approaches to Celan's "du" (linguistic, rhetorical, literary) is Kähne, *Anreden, Absichten, Apostrophen*.

565 Benveniste, "Remarques sur la fonction du langage dans la découverte freudienne," 77–78.

566 On fictional address, see, in particular, Kathleen McCarthy's discussion of classical genres in "First-Person Poetry." On the figurative resources of address, see Jonathan Culler's article "Why Lyric?"

567 Hence Benveniste's own turn to Freud ("Remarques sur la fonction du langage dans la découverte freudienne," 86–87). For a more fully developed discussion, see Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 65–82.

568 It is worth emphasizing that, particularly for Celan, the scene of address does not imply a "you" who can respond. One can address—and be addressed by—an other with whom one does not share a common language. And, of course, one can address the non-living or the no longer living, and one can be addressed by the dead. See, in particular, the chapter of *Autrement qu'être* that bears a verse of Celan's as its epigraph: Levinas, *Autrement Qu'être Ou Aud-Delà de l'essence*, 179ff.

569 Holthusen, "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954, 159.

> makes palpable poetry's claim on being read, which is to say, its claim to make an accidental reader into the destined and unique recipient of everything the poem contains or is.[570]

The kind of "accident" or contingency to which the poem exposes itself when it turns to the reader is an "outside" that undermines poetic language's vaunted autonomy and intrudes upon that "sovereign *inner* reality" (*souveräne* innere *Wirklichkeit*) to which Holthusen and others had exiled Celan's poetry.[571] Put differently: for the usurer of words, address is bad business. Any claim on the second person had better be well hedged rhetorically. After all, if the poem's interest lies in its capacity to "se payer de mots" (*pay oneself with words*), what could be less economic than exposing the fruits of its "wild wuchernde Sprache" to foreign valuation?

If poetic address can function to implicate the reader and his or her historical context in the meaning of the poem, it is not hard to imagine why many of Celan's readers happened to "overlook" just this aspect of his poetics. Indeed, the early critical consensus on the emptiness, artificiality, and/or "deadness" of metaphors like "Muhlen des Todes" can be read as an attempt to defuse the unacceptable "liveness" of Celan's "Du." Again, what is striking is not simply the deafness of Celan's early critics, but the incredibly sophisticated way in which Celan's poetry thematizes this resistance. The final stanza of "Flügelnacht," for instance, *addresses* just this problem, by imagining someone who, looking over the poem ("überblicken"), manages to overlook ("überblicken") what it has to show:

> Du, du selbst:
> in das fremde
> Auge gebettet, das dies l. 15
> überblickt.

In an earlier version of the "Flügelnacht," the positions of strophes two and four are switched.[572] This earlier structure more firmly linked the arrival of "Wing-night" ("Flügelnacht, von weither gekommen…") with the gaze of the "foreign eye" ("das fremde Auge"), so that the reader might well imagine both actions being performed by the same exotic bird or representing two dimensions of the same event. Celan's final decision to place the address at the end of the poem does not efface the rhymed strangeness ("Fremdheit") that couples the onset of night with the eye that sees (or thinks it sees) in the dark, but it does attribute the unfamiliar gaze less ambiguously to the poem's current reader, its "live" addressee, who, looking over the poem, reads the words "das dies überblickt" ["that looks over this"].[573]

Displaced to the final stanza, the apostrophe self-consciously engages the historicity of the poem's address and the ambiguous traces of that history in the poem's form. This self-reflective turn pivots on the multiple possible readings of "this" [*dies*]. Stanza four's demonstrative pronoun might refer to the terrain of "Kreide und Kalk" described in stanzas one through three. It could also, however, refer to the text of the poem itself. Additionally, as we discussed in section VI, "dies" could refer to the principally white surface of the page *as* a "Wortlandschaft": a kind of historico-linguistic topography composed of various temporal strata and material traces, some visible, some

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[570] Waters, *Poetry's Touch*, 15.
[571] Holthusen, "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954, 156. Holthusen's italics.
[572] Celan, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, 90.
[573] Cf. Jean Bollack's analysis in *Poésie contre poésie*, 161.

buried. The complexity of the pronoun renders the meaning of the verb "überblicken" especially ambivalent. On one hand, "überblicken" describes the view from on high, the "bird's eye view." More figuratively, an "Überblick" ("overview") names a broad yet concise statement about any topic, the kind of synoptic perspective that emerges through a process of selection, collation and synthesis of information. On the other hand, "überblicken" specifies an omission, as when one overlooks a typo in a manuscript.[574] This latter meaning is particularly relevant for "Flügelnacht," where our habits of reading, of surveying the black letters on the white page, predispose us to overlook the way the white itself ("d[as] Weiße[ ]") is implicated in the poem's mode of signifying. The reader who surveys the poem in this fashion systematically confuses a form of presence with a kind of absence: he or she remains blind to what's invisible and deaf to what's silent.

The distinction stanza four introduces between the "you" the poem addresses and the "unfamiliar eye" scanning its text is a way of marking this discursive parallax separating reading from that more "truthful" ("wahrhaftig") form of perception that Celan calls "Wahrnehmen." In fact, the clarification that follows the colon of line thirteen suggests that the poem's "real" addressee ("Du, du selbst") is the "you" which has fallen asleep in the "eye" (in the "I"?) of the reader ("in das fremde/ Auge gebettet"). If the eye is what scrutinizes the text of the poem, the "you" is what awakens to the difference between what can be read and what can only be "wahrgenommen." To return to Waters' language: part of the reason the "you" is "the wild spot in poetics" is that it coincides with the "blind spot" in the reader understood as a kind of abstract eye, disembodied and ahistorical.[575] A poem like "Flügelnacht" invites *you* to "perceive" ("wahrnehmen") how our habits of reading poetry can also be means of "overlooking" what the poem has to show. In the case of "Flügelnacht," what's elided is not just the poem, it is "your" past. One of the implications of stanza four's final twist is that what one misses when one overlooks the poem is, ultimately, a dimension of "yourself," since, strictly speaking, "You, you yourself" are the inverted image that the poem casts on the retina of the reader's eye. Put differently: the prone body that the strange eye peruses from above is the image of "du selbst," "overlooked" and "overlooked." The brown buried under the white, the past forgotten under the snow, the unnamed "thing" ("dies") "überwuchert von Worten" is that aspect of "you yourself" hidden from sight, put to rest, and covered up with words. This certainly applies to readers like Holthusen who, having retired their brown shirts to the back of their closets, insisted that there was nothing to see "behind" [*hinter*] Celan's "wild blühende Chaos der Metaphern."[576] But the exclusion—the "scotomisation"—of "die braune Vergangenehit" from conscious awareness also traverses post-war culture in a more general sense.[577] As Celan will note in the poetological statements written after "Flügelnacht," such disavowal constitutes the invisible ground of the visible. The unprocessed history of "that which happened" during the twelve years of the Third Reich supplies an unspoken sub-text—a kind of fossil record or "brown" gold—that "enriches" ("an-*reich*-ert") the most anodyne topoi of German language with ominous allusive resources which certain speakers easily put to profitable use: "mit diesem Pfund wuchern sie gerne."[578]

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574 *Das Deutsche Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm*, s.v. "überblicken," accessed August 1, 2019.
575 Waters, *Poetry's Touch*, 15.
576 Holthusen, "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954, 159; 162.
577 "Scotomisation" is a term coined in 1920s by the French analysts René Laforue and Éduoard Pinchon to describe the exclusion of some part of reality from the field of conscious perception. For a further development and application of the concept, see Lacan, *Les écrits techniques de Freud, 1953-1954*, esp. 176.
578 On Celan's pun on the noun "Reich" ("kingdom") in the verb "anreichern" ("to enrich"), see "Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der freien Hansestadt Bremen," 186.

The final, syncopated cadence with which Celan concludes "Flügelnacht" throws the unnamed history buttressing the poem's written words into a paradoxical relief. The poem really ends with a jolt:

> Du, du selbst:
> in das fremde
> Auge gebettet, das dies l. 15
> überblickt.

Celan distributes the final clause of his poem over the last two lines of his poem, splitting the syntagm "das dies überblickt" down the middle. The disarticulation of verb and object adds to the semantic ambivalence of "überblicken" ("to look over," "to overlook") and renders an already ambiguous relationship between the eye and what it sees ("das" and "dies") even more fraught. To what, in fact, does "dies" refer? There is no single answer to this question. If one abides by the terms of the mimesis (supposing there is mimesis), "dies" would seem to specify something the poem represents: in this case, the landscape of chalk, lime and crumbling stone. However, if you read line thirteen's turn to "Du, du selbst" not as part of the poetic fiction but as an address intended for "you yourself," then "dies" seems much more naturally to refer to the poem itself. At the limit, you could say that "dies" refers to the letters d-i-e-s which, so ominous in English, you have looked over. Put slightly differently: if in the first instance, "this" refers to something the poem *represents*, in the second instance "this" refers to something the poem *is*. As in an anamorphic *trompe l'œil*, "Flügelnacht's" "dies" opens onto two connected but mutually exclusive perspectives: from one angle, "this" is the fictional tableau that stimulates the "eye." From another, "this" is the poetic speech act that addresses the "you." For "you," "dies" is not the mimesis of history but the poem as a dialogue in and through history—which is to say, a "conversation" ("Gespräch") whose topic (*topos*) is the experience of genocidal exclusion ("die braune Vergangenheit") encrypted in the language seemingly held in common—in the *koine*.[579]

In a certain sense, these two readings of "dies" are two sides of the same coin: to perceive the one is to overlook the other. That said, to speak of the effect in exclusively visual terms (as a *trompe l'œil*, as a tableau, as a coin) poses problems, since what's at stake is quite explicitly *not* two different "views" of the poem, but the tension between vision and some *other*, "invisible" ("unsichtbar") relationship to the object. If only to dispel the easy confusion of the sort of thing a "you" can "perceive" ("wahrnehmen") with the sort of thing an eye can "witness,"[580] it is important to emphasize that the enjambment at "dies" is above-all a rhythmic phenomenon, or indeed—for reasons that I will clarify at once—what I will call a "gegenrhythmische Unterbrechung ("counter-rhythmic interruption").[581] As in any other dependent clause written in German, the conjugated verb

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[579] On "Gespräch," see Celan's short prose text, "Gespräch im Gebirge." Interestingly, the themes, motifs, and even many formulations of this latter text bear a striking resemblance to the poem we've been examining. The echoes commence with the text's first line, "Eines Abends, die Sonne, und nicht nur sie, war untergegangen […]," and ramify into what at times seems like direct citations—as with numerous variations of the phrase "von weit gekommen," or the strange ubiquity of the color white: "[D]as Wasser ist grün, und das Grüne ist weiß, und das Weiße kommt von noch weiter oben." See Celan, "Gespräch im Gebirg," 169–71.

[580] Kurt Buhanan has analyzed this structure through both Heidegger and Celan's puning affiliation of "Ereignis" ("event") and "Eräugnis," which Buhanan reads as the "negative event of visuality." See "A-Voiding Representation."

[581] The phrase "gegenrhythmischen Unterbrechung" comes from Friedrich Hölderlin's commentaries on Sophocles' tragedies (Friedrich Hölderlin, "Anmerkungen zum Oedipus," in *Theoretische Schriften*, ed. Johann Kreuzer (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1998), 95). The phrase has a complex reception history, and my own use follows the line of interpretation

of the clause "das dies überblickt" is shifted from the second position to the final position. "Flügelnacht's" line break at "dies," however, compounds this deferral. As we already noted, when the reader's eye sweeps from the end of line fifteen down and left to read the beginning of line sixteen, his or her gaze will have physically passed over "dies." The gesture is automatic, almost mechanical: *this*, after all, is how we are taught to read a demonstrative pronoun like "this," whose signification is dependent on discursive context in which it is employed. That said, the carefully calibrated ambivalence of "überblickt"—the final word of the poem—suggests that somewhere along the way something was overlooked. The "you" stirs in the "eye," which had been until that moment soaring on autopilot, a kind of "Flügelaug."[582] What did *you* miss? Did the forward momentum of the poem get the best of *you*? Did *you* really "see" enjambment at "dies," or did your eye, guided by syntax and steered by habit, just pass over it? Could it be that the white space to the right of "dies"—which seems to be so incidental, a mere background for the poet's words, and therefore something destined to be overlooked ("Und mehr noch des Weißen")—, could it be that "this" was what "dies" meant all along?

Whatever the answers to these questions might be, the cadence that ostensibly concludes "Flügelnacht" is also the beat that launches another trajectory of reading, a counter-scansion that winds its way backward through the poem in search of what the eye overlooked the first time around.[583] If you read against the grain of the poem's own exposition, you quickly perceive that Celan's text is organized around two competing rhythmic principles. The first is repetition. "Flügelnacht" is one of the small number of Celan's poems to feature a refrain: stanza three is a rough repetition of stanza one. Line twelve is an *exact* repetition of line five. Added to this binary repetition linking strophes one and three, however, there is a triplet pattern—the anaphora of "über" ("über Kreide," "überwuchert," "überblickt")—knitting together strophes one, two and four. In addition to these inter-strophic repetitions one finds repetitions within the strophes themselves. Here, one finds lexical repetitions ("Du, du selbst") as well as semantic repetitions. With respect to the latter: in strophes one and three, the words "Kalk" ("limestone") and "Kreide" ("chalk") denote the same substance, while the third in the series, "Kiesel" ("pebble"), is a very proximate metonym. Most striking, however, are the repetitions of sound. Not only is the alliterative string K-K-K in "über Kreide und Kalk./ Kiesel" the poem's most conspicuous (and most traditional) literary device, but this formal structure is itself repeated in the second strophe's chain of W's: "wild/ überwuchert von Worten." "Naturally," the brittle and lifeless landscape evoked by "Kalk ist und Kreide./ Und Kiesel" contrasats with the rank fertility of "wild/ überwuchert von Worten." "Underneath" this apparent difference, however, is a formal equivalence which reproduces itself across the whole structure. Both phrases are propelled by the same iterative mechanisms; each recycles its own consonants, turning over itself, "abgrundhin rollend." As Roman Jakobson would say, a poem "happens" when the principle of equivalence is projected from the axis of selection into the axis of combination, at which point: alliteration=alliteration, K-K-K=W-W-W.[584]

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opened up by Walter Benjamin in his early essay on Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* ("Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften," 181. On Benjamin's early readings of Hölderlin, see Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky's extraordinary rich *Der frühe Walter Benjamin und Hermann Cohen*, esp. 104-105.

[582] The word "Flügelaug" appears in the third strophe of "Heute und Morgen" ["Today and Tomorrow"], a poem written in 1955 and published in Celan's subsequent collection, *Sprachgitter*. Celan, *KG*, 95.Celan, 95.

[583] On the relationship between such a "counter-rhythmic interruption" and the Freudian notion of "afterwardness," see Nägele, "Spurlos: Spürbar," 150. Nägele's analysis here reworks his earlier reading of Hölderlin's river hymns. See *Hölderlins Kritik der poetischen Vernunft*, esp. 34.

[584] See Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics."

And yet, if the sonorous triad "wild/ überwuchert von Worten" recalls the triad "über Kreide und Kalk./ Kiesel" that preceded it and anticipates the triad "Kalk ist und Kiesel./ Und Kreide" that will follow, it does so with an crucial difference. Whereas both "K" alliterations span two end-stopped lines, the string of W's winds through a syntactic unit that is sharply disarticulated by the line break. This enjambment, like the line break at "dies," is a manifestation of "Flügelnacht's" second rhythmic principle, a polyrhythmic counter-current that moves against the flow of the repetitions. The enjambments are forceful: in both instances, Celan butts the strong stress of a masculine ending (line eight: | ˘ ´| ˘ ´| ˘ ´| ˘ ˘ ´|, line fifteen: | ´ ˘ ˘|´ ˘ ˘| ´|) against the strong stress of a trochaic opening (line nine: | ´ ˘| ´ ˘ ˘|´ ˘|, line sixteen: |´ ˘ | ´|). In the first case, the break literally cleaves the adverb "wild" from "überwuchert von Worten," as though checking the poem's own impulse to regenerate itself mechanically out of its own sonic material.[585] In this respect, the enjambment at "wild" is a critical reflection on the "literariness" of "Flügelnacht's" construction. As Pound might say, Celan's counter-rhythmic gesture "taxes" the poem's tropological Wucher.[586] It cuts back the poem-weed, lances the poem-cancer, interrupts the poem-machine. Most importantly, however, the enjambment upsets the dominant poetic economy. It undermines the poem's investment in its own tropes, and it suspends, if only for the turn of a breath, the cycle of self-valuation through repetition.

If "wuchern" names language's capacity to autonomously reproduce itself, then "Flügelnacht's" compounding repetitions thematize this possibility by conspicuously putting it to work. "Wuchern," you could say, is the poem's first rhythmic principle. Counterpointed against this rhythmic principle are the poem's two enjambments. Although the enjambment "dies/ überblickt" repeats the enjambment "wild/ überwuchert," this repetition articulates a different scansion and a different "economy." What is being rhymed here is not a word or a sound but a pause or a gap. The repetition concerns what's not said rather than what is. The down beats of this counter-rhythm fall in the poem's negative space. This means that if the first rhythmic principle traces the movement of the reader's "eye" as it surveys the poem's "positive" features—its topography of refrains, alliterations, anaphora, etc.—the second tracks the mounting consciousness of the addressee as he or she awakens to what his or her eye had overlooked and what the "Wuchern von Worten" covered over. The "you," backpedaling through the poem's primary rhythms in a counter-scansion that moves from enjambment to enjambment, interruption to interruption, break to break, not only deconstructs the series of formal equivalences upon which "Flügelnacht's" signifying economy is "grounded," the "you" also historicizes the literary value accumulating in the poem's repetitions by systematically referring such trans-historical literariness to the historical specificity of the poem's address to *you*, *hic et nunc*. If the Wuchern-rhythm is mechanical, autonomous, and monologic, then the counter-rhythm is critical, historical, and dialogic. Or, to rephrase the difference in the terms Celan choses for the opening of *The Meridian*: if Wuchern names the drive by which the poem "endlos fortgesetzt werden könnte, wenn nichts dazwischenkäme," then the counter-rhythm is the interruption that—palpably—"kommt […] dazwischen."[587]

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[585] Remember, it was precisely for its "senseless," "banal," and "mechanical" use of "*flores rhetoricales*" like alliteration that Günter Steinbrinker faulted *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*—the volume that contains "Flügelnacht." See "Kritsche Zwischenbilanz," 4–5.

[586] "The Individual in His Milieu," esp. 277. Andrew Parker was one of the first to elucidate the parallel between Pound's ideas about a "tax on usury" and the ideogram as a means of expression. See "Ezra Pound and the 'Economy' of Anti-Semitism," 108–9; 115.

[587] Celan, *Der Meridian*, 2.

Chapter 4: Commonplace, Common Grave

I. Into German

"All of Celan's own poetry," George Steiner wrote in 1975, "is translated *into* German."[588] Steiner drops this sentence casually in a discussion that is moving elsewhere and leaves it all but unexplained. But occasionally an apparent non-sequitur points to something that more elaborate discussions miss. And Steiner's sentence is this kind of insight. Many readers of Celan's German will recognize parts of their own experience in Steiner's observation. The knots of Celan's syntax, the density of his composite words, and the strangeness proper to his use of even the most common German nouns, taken together, read less as stylistic figures and poetic motifs than as eruptions of another linguistic reality within a language that one thought one already knew. Such dislocations would make more sense if one could refer them back to a non-German precedent that Celan had translated into German—that is, if "all of Celan's own poetry" were in fact the translation of poems written in another language. Although certain commentators have insinuated as much (Claire Goll and Hans Egon Holthusen, especially), this is manifestly not the case. Nor, however, is it the case that Steiner's "into German" refers to a theoretical discourse coming out of German Romanticism in which, "in the end, all poetry is translation."[589] There is something historically specific about the German into which Celan translates, and the transference that Steiner stresses in the expression "*into* German" is a movement necessitated by the traumatic dislocation of German as Celan's mother language and the language of his mother's murderers.[590]

Acknowledging the historical rupture of the genocide means guarding ourselves against reading Steiner's "translated into German" too "metaphorically." The strength of Steiner's formulation is that it insists that this transfer takes place in between *languages*. Thus, while it is true that the dislocation occurs "within" the German language, it is also true that the force of the dislocation cleaves German from itself. The irreconcilability of Celan's mother tongue with the common tongue is a difference that German itself cannot master.[591] The translation of Celan's poetry into German is therefore not just a matter of tropological displacement or "Übertragung"—which is to say, the kind of transfer where "literal" denotation of one word becomes the figurative signification of another. The deeper point is that such figurative moves and "intralingual translations" are no longer credible in German.[592] The genocide breaks German's coherence, such that its capacity for meaning has to be rethought, the displacement of one German *word* onto another German *word*, but the movement between one German *language* and another.

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588 Steiner, *After Babel*, 409.

589 See Berman, *L'épreuve de l'étranger*.

590 On the impossible coexistence of these two Germans, the "Muttersprache" and the "Mördersprache," see Buck, *Muttersprache, Mördersprache*.

591 Or, as Celan puts it in a letter to his wife written during a 1955 visit to Germany, "If there is something that this trip has once again taught me, it is certainly this: the language in which I make my poems does (*dont je fais mes poèmes*) not depend in any way on the language that one speaks here or elsewhere, my anxieties on this regard, nurtured by my troubles as a translator (*ennuis de traducteur*), are without an object. If there are still wells from which new poems (or prose) could spring, it is in myself that I will find them and not in the conversations that could have in German, with Germans, in Germany." Celan and Celan-Lestrange, *Correspondance*, 2001, I:83.

592 On intralingual translation, see Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation." See also, Eco, *Dire quasi la stessa cosa*, 225–53.

Do Celan's poems, then, translate from a pre-Auschwitz German into a post-Auschwitz German? It is precisely on this question that Steiner's own discussion stumbles.

> All of Celan's poetry is translated into German. In the process the receptor-language becomes unhoused, broken, idiosyncratic almost to the point of non-communication. It becomes a 'meta-German' cleansed of historical-political dirt and thus, alone, usable by a profoundly Jewish voice after the holocaust.[593]

Here, Steiner errs. A Jewish voice yes, but, in part for this reason, Celan's poetry is by no means a cleansing of German. (Indeed, the purification trope is one of the dirtiest of them all.) It seems that Steiner errs by mapping the task of translation onto a chronological difference between a before and an after, a timeline which draws Celan's work on the language into a misleading analogy with the other massive efforts post-War reconstruction, from reeducation to currency reform. But the difference between before and after is less evident in the case of language. Unlike the bombed-out cities or the virtually worthless Reichsmark, the German language had not been destroyed by dictatorship, war, and genocide. Celan's point was in fact that, whereas everything else had been lost, the German language *remained,* and it remained seemingly as it had been before, as if nothing had happened.[594]

In the first post-War decades, the idea that German had been profoundly altered by its recent history was a thesis to be demonstrated. To produce this demonstration was the explicit "task" of early "sprachkritsche" interventions like *From the Dictionary of the Inhuman* ("[German] is—sadly—not a foreign language, but this dictionary has the task […] to make this language foreign to us");[595] but it was also the task of the German poet as translator. The disarticulation of German into a before and an after is a linguistic and historical difference that Celan's poetry brings to speech, precisely by pointing to what is 'lost in translation' once German is made contemporary with its past. Steiner acknowledges that the German into which Celan translates loses (or risks losing) its "capacity for meaning,"[596] but his reference about cleansed historical-political dirt makes this loss sound like a triumph of aesthetic rarefaction. Nothing could be further from the truth. Although Steiner is a much more careful reader of Celan, on this issue it is in fact Primo Levi who, objecting to the "disarticulated stuttering" (*disarticolato balbettio*) of Celan's late poems,[597] actually seems to grasp the status of these texts' "receptor-language":

> [I]t is not a communication, it is not a language (*non è un linguaggio*), or at most it's a dark and truncated language (*un linguaggio buio e monco*), the language, in fact, of someone about to die, and alone (*solo*), as we are all alone at the point of death.[598]

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[593] Steiner, *After Babel*, 409.
[594] See Celan, "Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der freien Hansestadt Bremen," 185.
[595] Sternberger, Storz, and Süskind, *Aus dem Wörterbuch des Unmenschen: Neue erweiterte Ausgabe mit Zeugnissen des Streites über die Sprachkritik*, 9–10. In the 1957 preface to the lexicon, Dorf Sternberger rues that his dictionary had yet to adequately estrange Germans from the language of Nazism. "The dictionary of the inhuman," he writes, "has remained the dictionary of prevailing German speech (*der geltenden deutschen Sprache*), of written as well as colloquial language, particularly as it resounds in the mouth of organizers, of advertisers and merchants, of functionaries of associations and collectives of all sorts." Sternberger, Storz, and Süskind, 11.
[596] Steiner, *After Babel*, 409.
[597] Levi, "Dello scrivere oscuro," 680.
[598] Levi, "About Obscure Writing," 2065.

Rather than a purified meta-language, it is into *such* a German—a German that "is not a language, or at most […] a dark and truncated language," a mother tongue insupportably contemporary with the death of the mother—that Celan translates his poetry.

When I follow Levi and ask us to consider the possibility that the German into which Celan translates "non è un linguaggio," my intention is not to discredit Celan's achievement but to further specify the linguistic dislocation that the phrase "translated into German" gestures at. One has to proceed extremely carefully: first, because the explicit or implicit refusal to admit that Celan wrote in German was a common way for his readers to avoid admitting the historical rupture traced in his poetry. And second, because the flight into other literary traditions, whether through translation, bi- and polylingualism, or loudly disclaimed internationalism, represented another popular way of avoiding or deferring the task of reckoning with the legacy the Third Reich bequeathed to the German language. Therefore, if the language of Celan's poetry "non è un linguaggio," this is not because the poem does not speak (*aber das Gedicht spricht ja!*), but because there is no assurance that its *Sprache* (speech) belongs to a *Sprache* (language) that its reader shares. Mutual intelligibility, and therefore the possibility of what Levi calls "comunicazione," can no longer be taken for granted. Celan would agree with Levi that his poems are indeed "alone" (*solo*): as he says, "alone and underway" (*einsam und unterwegs*). But this journey to the addressee is accomplished in the conscious abnegation of a shared language to mediate the exchange. The poem knowingly withdraws itself from the common tongue, with the consequence that it speaks ever more narrowly on its own behalf (*in seiner eigenen, allereigensten Sache*).[599]

This withdrawal and turn toward the other traces a difference within German, a kind of German speaking (*Sprache*) that is no longer a German language (*Sprache*). In the poetological scheme of the *Meridian*, such radical individuation is what distinguishes "poetry" (*Dichtung*) from "art" (*Kunst*). In less poetological terms, however, we could see this as the confrontation of two Germans, where the one "Sprache" interrupts the other. Here "poetry" designates *neither* the "source-language" (in this case: German) *nor* the "receptor-language" (also German) but rather the difference between the two. And the incommensurability that this dislocation produces warrants the claim "translated into German." Although some critics have faulted his readings for minimizing the historical specificity of the rupture that Celan's poetry traverses,[600] Jacques Derrida understood that the German of Celan's poetry was "plus d'une langue"—which is to say, *no longer a language* but also *more than one language*.[601] As Derrida writes in *Schibboleth: pour Paul Celan*: "Multiplicity and migration of

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[599] Celan, *Der Meridian*, 9–10.

[600] See, in particular, the objection voiced by Jean Bollack in *Sens contre sens*, 103–4, as well as the criticisms of Denis Thouard in *Pourquoi ce poète?*, 79. More sympathetic to Derrida, the editors of the collection *Exophonie: Anders-Sprachigkeit in (der) Literatur* summarize a major sticking point of this debate with reference to the treatment of colonialism in *Le Monolinguisme de l'autre*, which moves between general propositions and specific histories without theorizing the transitions. "On the one hand," they write, "Derrida describes insistently and in detail the specific linguistic situation of a Jew in French Algeria during the Second World War; on the other hand, he ventures (*riskiert*) general propositions about the colonial structure of *every* culture, and *every* language (with the necessarily accompanying language politics): "Toute culture est originalement coloniale […] Toute culture s'institute par l'imposition unilatérale de quelque 'politique' de la langue." (*"Every culture is originally colonial […] Every culture establishes itself by the unilateral imposition of a certain 'politics' of language."*) Nonetheless, the gap between the very specific and the very general propositions is hardly reflected upon as such (*als solche kaum reflektiert*), but rather bypassed with the pledge (*Beteuerung*) that the generalization will be carried out "in a careful and differentiated manner." Arndt, Stockhammer, and Naguschewski, "Einleitung: Die Unselbstversändlichkeit der Sprache," 22.

[601] Derrida, *Mémoires: pour Paul de Man*, 38. For a thorough exposition, see Michaud, *Derrida, Celan: juste le poème, peut-être*.

languages, certainly, and in language itself, Babel in *a single* language."[602] The singular, common tongue disintegrates into Babel, and the uniqueness of the poem's speech relocates to that ambiguous "place" (*lieu*) or internecine "border" (*frontière*) where 'more than one language' confront each in time and space. Or, as Derrida says of Celan: "Each poem has its own language, it is on one sole occasion (*une seule fois*) its own language, even and especially if several languages *may* traverse it (peuvent *s'y croiser*)."[603]

This chapter will argue that Steiner's phrase "translated into German" refers to the incommensurability of Celan's poetry with the *language* in which it is written. Contrary to usual practice, I am reading the expression "translated into" not as the assertion of semantic correspondence across languages, but as a reminder of non-correspondence—even within one and the same language. The following sections will trace this non-correspondence across several sites of transmission, exchange, and commensuration: the artwork with its commonplaces, the market with its equivalences, and the common language with its "comunicazioni." At the time he was drafting his major statement on poetics, Celan was particularly interested in what was then being promoted as "world language of modern poetry" (*Weltsprache der modernen Poesie*), a kind of shared formal idiom in whose image certain post-War poets hoped to shape their own literary dialects.[604] Punning on the (non)correspondence of the Greek κοινή and the English "coin," Celan maintained that such a "lyric koine" (*lyrische Koinè*) was the quintessential language of commensurability, the common denominator of the artwork, the market, and the lingua franca.[605] With the fraught analogy of "koine" and "coin," Celan proposes a homology between linguistic translation and monetary exchange. Explicating this analogy will allow me to contrast the poem as a site of incommensurability, where memory emerges through the mother tongue's internal dislocation, with the marketplace as a scene of disavowal, where the "historical-political dirt" that sullies German is laundered through its exchange with other languages.

II. An Affair of Translation

It is admittedly counter-intuitive to argue that the poem becomes singular in translation. All the same, when the topic is translation—and the translation of poetry above all—the conversation has a tendency to devolve into a running list of all the things that are not or cannot be translated. Whether or not the itemization is motivated by indignation, at such moments it often feels as though one were tallying up a list of unhappy trade-offs and unpaid debts in order to inform the translator of their outstanding balance. In this way too one approaches the original's singularity—what Celan calls "das schicksalhaft Einmalige der Sprache" (*the fateful singularity of speech / language*)[606]—but "in the negative," through an ever-growing attention to what cannot be alienated and what is lost in translation. Here, the singular is disclosed through the perception that something is missing.

It is important to note that Celan himself would be unlikely to pose the question of poetic singularity in these terms. If anything, Celan saw translation being employed not as an animus to historical memory, as I have just suggested, but as its antithesis: a form of disavowal. Celan had

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602 Derrida, *Schibboleth pour Paul Celan*, 54.
603 Derrida, 56. Derrida's italics.
604 Most famously in Hans Magnus Enzensberger's 1960 analogy of modern verse. *Museum of Modern Poetry*. See Enzensberger, "Weltsprache der modernen Poesie."
605 See, for example, Celan, *Der Meridian*, 170.
606 Celan, "Antwort auf eine Umfrage der Librairie Flinker," 175.

specific reasons for his suspicions, the most powerful of which were rooted in his early experience translating Yvan Goll and the plagiarism accusation which ensued afterward. As Barbara Wiedemann has noted, the so-called Goll Affair originated in Goll's request that Celan translate certain French poems into German. It began, as she puts it, as an "Übersetzungsaffäre" (*affair of translation*).[607] The light this dirty business of translation throws on the forms of memory and oblivion transacted in the movement of texts between languages makes these events worth retracing in some detail.

The basic facts are these: Celan met the Jewish-Alsatian poet Yvan Goll (1891-1950) in Paris in 1949, when Yvan was terminally ill with leukemia. Bilingual from an early age, Yvan wrote his poems and plays in German, but, after the First World War, Yvan began publishing principally in French. When Celan met him in 1949, Yvan asked the much younger poet to translate his French poems from the collection *Élégie d'Ihpétonga* into German, an informal contract which, in conversation with Yvan's wife and testamentary executor, Claire, expanded after Yvan's death to include two more of Yvan's French volumes. Celan wrote the translations, but, when he submitted them in 1951 to Claire's chosen publisher, the Swiss publishing house Plugverlag, they were rejected. The reason, delivered by the publisher but likely originating with Claire herself, was that the translations bore too many traces of Celan's own poetic style. As the publisher, Franz Vetter, put it in a December 1951 letter to Celan:

> [S]ince it is a question of a translation (*Übersetzung*), I would like to publish Yvan Goll and not an excessively far-off adaption (*eine zu entfernte Nachdichtung*) by Paul Celan. By my assessment, you have allowed yourself too many liberties (*Freiheiten*). […] As a publisher I cannot be responsible for bringing Yvan Goll to German readers in a translation that is not entirely of kindred spirit (*wahlverwandt*).[608]

Vetter's rejection letter draws a line between the "liberties" (*Freiheiten*) of creative adaptations—so-called "Nachdichtungen"—and the "fidelity" (*Treue*) of a translation that remains faithful to the word (*eine wortgetreue Übertragung*). Only the latter, Vetter implies, maintain a "kindred spirit" or "elective affinity" with the original.
Celan's translations, with their excessive "Freiheiten," repudiate this kindship and thereby disqualify themselves as proper executors of Yvan Goll's legacy. That's why Celan's translations do not belong to Yvan's legacy, but rather to Celan's. As Vetter summarizes: "I would like to publish Yvan Goll and not an excessively far-off adaptation by Paul Celan."

After receiving the rejection letter, Celan resigned himself to losing the contract. Claire took charge of the translations herself and Celan cut off relations. The story could have ended here, were it not that in the following year (1953) Claire circulated an open letter among the most prominent publishers, editors, critics, and writers of the German literary scene accusing Celan of having plagiarized Yvan's work. Following on the heels of the Pflugverlag's rejection of Celan's translations, for Claire to accuse Celan of plagiarism is bitterly ironic. On Claire's request, after all, Vetter had turned down Celan's German versions of Goll's poems for being too remote from their originals (*dem Original weit entfernt*) and for attesting all-too-conspicuously to the translator's own "poetic

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607 Wiedemann, "Wörtlichkeiten," 62. See also, Wiedemann's essay "'Es ist eine lange, unglaubliche, bitter-wahre Geschichte': Glaire Golls Angriffe auf Paul Celan: Gründe und Folgen" in *Die Goll-Affäre*, 849.
608 Quoted in Wiedemann, *Die Goll-Affäre*, 178.

talent" (*Dichterbegabung*).[609] Nor does Claire's accusation hold up in any other respect. The open letter's many argumentative flaws and factual misrepresentations need not be rehearsed here. Nonetheless, it is useful to highlight one of its more prominent inconsistencies, as it bears on the matter of translation. In her open letter, Claire specifies that Celan plagiarized above all from Yvan's *French* poetry. "As a matter of fact," she writes, "it was principally from Yvan's French works, for the time being unknown in Germany, that entire lines were taken (*entnommen*)."[610] Since Celan published in German, however, this implies that Celan's so-called "borrowing" (*Anliehe*) was also a translating.

It is important for Celan and for us that Claire's argument rests on the effacement of the difference between Yvan's French and Celan's German. Rather than bear witness to the difference between French and German, for Claire translation is evidence of their commensurability. This is the exact opposite of the sense of translation that I excavated in Steiner's claim, "all of Celan's own poetry is translated into German." The complicity of the discourse of translation in the disavowal of the historical rupture of the genocide is evident in Claire's choice of an example. According to Claire, Celan plagiarized the very line from "Spät and Tief" discussed in detail in the last chapter: "Ihr mahlt in den Mühlen des Todes das weiße Mehl der Verheißung…"). Claire claims that this line, which Celan wrote before coming to Paris and first published in Vienna in 1948,[611] is "a nearly word-for-word transcription" (*eine fast wörtliche Abschrift*) of Yvan's poem "Le Moulin de la Mort," likely written in Paris shortly after the war and only published in 1951.[612] Chronological incoherence aside, it is not clear what verse in "Le Moulin de la Mort" could possibly qualify as the original for which "Ihr mahlt in den Mühlen des Todes…" would be the "word-for-word transcription." Nor does it matter. What is important to note is not its "fidelity," but the pretension that "Spät und Tief" could be a transcription of "Le Moulin de la Mort." Claire's open letter officially launches the Goll Affair. But the same gesture—indeed, the same sentence—that dispossesses Celan of his words is also one that explicitly suppresses the linguistic difference separating Celan's German from Yvan's French.

Historically, much hangs on this linguistic difference. As I noted in the last chapter, the German expression "Mühlen des Todes" recalls not only what Hannah Arendt called the "mass production of corpses" in the camps,[613] but, more precisely, the 1945 film *Die Todesmühlen,* produced by the U.S. Department of War and screened throughout occupied Germany and Austria, which documented this factory-style killing in detail. *Die Todesmühlen* constitutes a milestone not only for the documentation of genocide but for the history of cinema more generally, as it was one of the first films to include footage of the inside of the camps.[614] It was released in a German and—with the editorial supervision of Billy Wilder—an English version (*Death Mills*), but not in a French version, and, with no official version to work from, French translations of its title have since hesitated between the nouns "moulins" (*mills*) and "usines" (*factories*). The film is referred to both as *Les Moulins de la Mort* and *Les Usines de la Mort.*

But it is not just the missing lexical echo that distinguishes Goll's "Moulin" from Celan's "Mühlen," it is also the number. *Die Todesmühlen* featured footage from several camps, including

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[609] Quoted in Wiedemann, 178.
[610] Quoted in Wiedemann, 187.
[611] Celan, *Gesammelte Werke*, 1983, III:58.
[612] Wiedemann, *Die Goll-Affäre*, 187.
[613] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 441.
[614] Gladstone, "Separate Intentions: The Allied Screening of Concentration Camp Documentaries in Defeated Germany in 1945-46: Death Mills and Memory of the Camps."

Auschwitz, Dachau, and Buchenwald. In the singular, "Le Moulin de la Mort" does not reflect the industrial scale of the Nazi enterprise and cleaves more closely to traditional allegories in which Death (in the singular) is figured as a watermill—as in Alexandre Boudan's 1650 engraving *Le Moulin de la mort*. This allegorical tradition was already dear to the Romantics,[615] before being energetically revived in the twentieth century by surrealists like Vincente Huidobro.[616] Goll belonged to this circle, which is not to say that "Le moulin de la mort" is a pre-Auschwitz poem. Goll himself fled the Nazis in 1939, and the scattered ashes of the crematoria haunt lines like these:

Les rosiers de ma frénésie
Les paupières de mon délire
Au vent au vent
Ma tellurienne va les fender
En pure écume en pure perte[617]

[The climbing roses of my frenzy
The eyelids of my delirium
To the wind to the wind
My tellurian will crack them
Into pure foam into pure loss]

If Goll's poem opens itself up to recent history at such moments, the titular image of the "moulin" remains stubbornly conventional. Precisely because the mill is a figure for the steady passage of the speaker's days, it is hard to read it as the engine behind the "mass production of corpses":

Belle meunière tu travailles
Au moulin de mes heures lentes
Tu mouds mes os
Tu mouds mes mots
Sous une trompeuse évidence.[618]

[Beautiful miller you work
At the mill of my slow hours
You mill my bones
You mill my words
Under a deceptive certainty.]

The addressee here is at once the beautiful miller (*O ma meunière*), the speaker's spouse (*O ma mariée*), his earthy goddess (*ma tellurienne*), and his death (*O ma mort*). This is a different miller than the collective subject whose hypocritical moralizing is painted in "Spät und Tief":

Ihr mahlt in den Mühlen des Todes das weiße Mehl der Verheißung,

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615 See, for example, *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs* in Novalis, *Gesammelte Werke*, 175.
616 As in Vincente Huidobro's calligramme of a windmill, "Moulin" (1922). Cf. Huidobro, "Salle XIV y otras ilustraciones."
617 Goll, *Les cercles magiques: Avec Six dessins de Fernand Léger*, 32.
618 Goll, 32.

ihr setzt es vor unsern Brüder und Schwestern –[619]

[You grind in the mills of death the white meal of promise
you set it before our brothers and sisters –]

The plural "you" (*ihr*) of "Spät und Tief" interpellates the reader into a group of millers whose collective labor opposes them to another collective, an extended family of "brothers and sisters." This scene of address resonates more powerfully with the cinematic construction of *Die Todesmühlen*, whose images were selected to force the reality of the crime upon the perpetrator society as a whole.[620] The difference in rhetorical situation is evident in a review of the film published by Erich Kästner, a German writer whose willingness to confront the Nazi past Celan commended. What one notices above all is the breakdown the film images provoke in the language of the celebrated children's book author:

> It's night. – I have to write about the film *Die Todesmühlen,* which was assembled out of footage that gathered when they occupied *three hundred* German concentration camps. […] It's night. – I can't manage to write a coherent article about this unthinkable, infernal madness. Thoughts scatter as soon as they approach the memory of the film images. What happened in the camps is so terrible that neither can one speak about it, nor may one remain silent. […] It's night. – The film played for a week in all Bavarian cinemas. Luckily, children were not allowed. Now prints are circulating in the western, American zone. The cinemas are full of people. What do they say when they leave? / Most are silent. They walk mutely back home. Others step pale outside, look at the sky and say, "Look, it's snowing." Still others mutter, "Propaganda! American propaganda! Propaganda then, propaganda now!" […] It's night. – I can't write a coherent article about this horrifying topic. I pace the room in agitation. […] It's night.[621]

In a certain sense—but only in a certain sense—*Die Todesmühlen* is an import, a foreign production for German audiences whose intention is to force a shared history to speech and whose effect was a kind of collective stuttering. It is the stutter that is most significant, the double bind that Kästner describes as a moral obligation to bear witness but the absence of a language in which to do so (*Was in den Lagern geschah, ist so fürchterlich, daß man darüber nicht schweigen darf und nicht sprechen kann*). It is for this reason that Kästner is particularly preoccupied with what other Germans could *say* after having watched the film and is so struck by the mixture of silence, disavowal, and utter banality. When a public word is forthcoming, it speaks either of conspiracy or the weather. Either the traumatic images are rejected as the foreign aggression of an occupying power (*Amerikanische Propaganda!*), or they insinuate themselves into the "native" language, which then becomes strange (*fremd*). As Steiner might say, Kästner's pale movie-goers "test [their] own capacity for meaning" on the simplest of empirical truth claims: "Schau, es schneit" (*Look, it is snowing*).[622] It is as though they were relearning their mother tongue.

What Kästner is tracing here is the horizon of Celan's poetry, where "wounded by reality and searching for reality," the poet "goes with his Dasein *to* language."[623] To write German poetry

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619 Celan, *KG*, 38.
620 Cf. Wiedemann, "Welcher Daten eingedenk?"
621 Kästner, "Wert und Unwert des Menschen," 164–66. My italics.
622 Steiner, *After Babel*, 409.
623 Celan, "Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der freien Hansestadt Bremen," 186.

after Auschwitz—to write poetry that admits that history into its speech—is to inhabit the bind of having to speak and not having the language in which to do so. The Goll Affair takes Celan's German out of historic conditions that necessitate it and recasts its "foreignness" as a literary effect borrowed from another poet and another language. For Claire, Steiner's claim that "all of Celan's own poetry is translated *into* German" only means that Celan's poetry could just as well have been written in French…and by Yvan Goll. But a *French* poem—even a post-War poem by a Jewish poet—does not respond to the impasse faced by the German poet, who to write poetry after the genocide must turn against the language he requires for his poem.

This impossible situation is effaced by the Affair. Celan is therefore not unjustified when, in what he concedes to be the bitterest of jokes, he suggests that he is being "liquidated" by the scandal and even refers to an "Endlösung."[624] What warrants such extreme formulations is less the fact that the plagiarism charge contests Celan's status as the original author of his original works, than the fact that the Affair suppresses the historical and linguistic rupture from which the poetry *originates*. The problem is less the violation of intellectual property, than the disavowal of "historical-linguistic dirt" carried by words like "liquidieren," "Endlösung," and "Mühlen des Todes." The foreignness of such words originates in German's own dislocation and not in their having been translated from another language. For his part, Adolf Eichmann notoriously denied the testimony of witnesses who claimed to have heard him threaten the representatives of the Jewish community of Budapest with "die Mühle von Auschwitz": "The 'Mühle von Auschwitz', I heard this expression for the first time in 19…I think it was 1947… when a film was shot on the heath of Lüneburg. If someone accuses me of having threatened people with the "Mühle von Auschwitz"…then I would know already that that is an untruth (*eine Unwahrheit*)."[625] Eichmann's real or feigned non-recognition is part of this story, as are the larger disavowals of responsibility of which this particular denial is a part. The point is that, after Auschwitz, a foreignness enters German which even the authors of the genocide disown.

III. Übertragung

I demonstrated in a previous chapter how the critic Hans Egon Holthusen, a former S.S. officer like Eichmann, made a similar disclaimer about the "historical-political dirt" sedimented in the German language. Like Eichmann would when confronted with the expression "die Mühle von Auschwitz" in Jerusalem, Holthusen 'said no' to Celan's poem "Spät und Tief" in a review for the April 1954 *Merkur*. As Holthusen explained in those pages, the reader "can withdraw his participation" (*seine Teilnahme verweigern können*) on the grounds that he finds "die Mühlen des Todes" to be a "trivial" metaphor.[626] Here too the discourse of translation plays an important role. Holthusen had in fact received the open letter Claire circulated in 1953 and 1954, and its claim that Celan's phrase "die Mühlen des Todes" was "an almost word-for-word transcription" of "Le Moulin de la Mort" may have informed his judgment that Celan's verse "seems to translate (*übertragt*) certain principles of modern French poetry into the German language."[627] In both Claire's and Holthusen's texts

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[624] "…man [ging] dazu über, mich völlig zu liquidieren bzw. suspendieren" (one moved on to liquidating or suspending me completely). Quoted from a letter to Siegfried Lenz in Wiedemann, *Die Goll-Affäre*, 557. The reference to the "Endlosung" or "Final Solution" is carried over from Celan's previous letter to Lenz. See 554.
[625] Eichmann, *Das Eichmann-Protokoll*, 192.
[626] Holthusen, "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954, 157. This comparison between Eichmann and Holthusen goes back to Peter Szondi. See his May 1964 letter to Rolf Michaelis of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung in *Briefe*, 167.
[627] Holthusen, "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954, 154.

translation enters to reframe the ruptured history of the German language in terms of a literary continuity across languages. Where I argue that the appearance of having been translated into German indexes historical dislocation and broken transmission, they both see translation as an unproblematic transfer—for Claire, of her husband's "images and turns of speech" (*Wendungen und Bildern*);[628] for Holthusen of "a poetic idiom (*Dichterscprache*) that's been current in France for decades"[629]—and therefore as evidence that tradition continues to be accessible.

Holthusen's use of the verb "übertragen" points to this disavowal of loss and to the gulf that separates his understanding of the translator's task from Celan's practice of translation. In German "übertragen" (lit. *to carry over or across*) has a significantly larger set of applications than the word "translate" does in English. German has several words that denote the practice of translation (*übersetzen, übertragen, verdeutschen, dolmetschen*…), and "übertragen" is a particularly resonant one, signifying not only the transfer of sense between languages but also the transfer of a patrimonial property between generations. This latter usage is certainly part of what Holthusen's means when he says that Celan "transfers" French Surrealism into German, and it is the implicit stake of rumor that Celan had defrauded Yvan of his legacy.[630] But "übertragen" and its substantive, "Übertragung," also has other literary usages which overlap with the English terms "figure," "metaphor," and "trope."[631] August Wilhelm Schlegel's *Ein Sommernachtstraum* is a "Übertragung aus dem Englischen" but, in German, one also refers to a word's "übertragener Sinn" in the same way that in English one speaks of its "figurative meaning." An "Übertragung" can thus name the product or process of inter-lingual translation as well as any number of intra-lingual displacements, puns, and figures of repetition. In classical rhetoric, all of these figures fall under the category "traductio" (eng. *traduction*), an umbrella term whose shared characteristic cannot be specified any further than "transferences of meaning with witty intent" (*Bedeutungsübertragungen mit witziger Absicht*).[632]

The fact that "Übertragung" names both *inter*-lingual as well as *intra*-lingual displacements places the term at the heart not just of theories of translation but also of semiotics and literary criticism.[633] The commonality of Übertragung to all three domains promotes a certain blurring of the boundaries, such that when Claire says that Yvan possessed a more developed "Übertragungskunst" than Celan, it is unclear whether she is talking about Yvan's skill at coining metaphors or translating poems, or whether such a distinction needs to be taken into account.[634] For Celan, of course, it did, and he perceived this confusion of *inter*-lingual and *intra*-lingual displacements, whereby the disruption of intelligibility became one figure among many, as a mechanism of historical disavowal. Indeed, it is *against* this understanding of literature as a site of generalized "Übertragung" that Celan pits his understanding of poetry (*Dichtung*). As Claire's plagiarism charge was picked up by the press and Holthusen's stylistic objection to genitive metaphors like "Mühlen des Todes" became a critical refrain, Celan concluded that those who saw in his poems nothing but literal or figurative "Übertragungen"—those who reconstructed the texts from which they allegedly translated or

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628 Wiedemann, *Die Goll-Affäre*, 189.
629 Holthusen, "Fünf Junge Lyriker," 1954, 156.
630 On the trope of Celan's purported "Erbschleicherei" (*inheritance fraud*) see Günter Grass's draft satire about the scandal. Grass, *Das Rundschreiben der Claire Goll.*
631 Drux, "Tropus."
632 Groddeck, *Reden über Rhetorik*, 148.
633 Cf. Müller Nielaba, *Rhetorik der Übertragung*. There is a semiotic basis to the polysemy of "Übertragung," though not all semioticians would accept that all forms of "Übertragung" trade in the same kind of transfer. Umberto Eco, for example, devotes a chapter to challenging maximalist readings of the Peircean proposition that meaning is the translation of a sign into another system of signs. Cf. *Dire Quasi la Stessa Cosa*, 225–54.
634 Wiedemann, *Die Goll-Affäre*, 189.

borrowed, but also those who dissected them into metaphors, figures, and tropes—were willfully not reading him. As he put it in a December 1961 letter to Peter Szondi:

> Auch dieser ganze Metaphern-Trend* kommt aus dieser Richtung: man überträgt…um fort- und abzutragen, man verbildlicht, was man nicht wahrnehmen, nicht wahrhaben will. *Datum* und *Ort* werden…zum "topos" zerschwätzt. Nun, Auschwitz war ja auch tatsächlich ein Gemein und Tausendplatz.[635]
>
> But even this metaphor-trend* comes from this direction: one carries over…in order to carry off and away, one turns into an image what one does not want to see, does not want to accept. *Datum* and *location* are jabbered away into the "topos." Well, even Auschwitz was a common and thousand-place.[636]

As a footnote Celan appended to this letter makes clear, the "metaphoricity" intended by "dieser ganze Metaphern-Trend" is to be understood as implicating both intra-lingual "Übertragung" (*metaphor*) and inter-lingual "Übertragung" (*translation*). Referring to the title of his 1946 poem "Aschenkraut" (lit. *ash-herb*)—a title which Claire had traced back to Yvan's "Masques de cendres" (*masques of ash*)—Celan notes how the writer and critic Walter Jens had analogously disposed of his poem by maintaining that its title was a translation of "cineraria," which is a genus of flower in the asteraceae family.

> *) Ich hatte Walter Jens geschrieben, "Aschenkraut," sei der *Name* der Cineraria. In seinem Aufsatz nennt er dieses *Wort* eine "Übersetzung"… ("weil nicht sein kann, was nicht sein darf"…)
>
> [*) I wrote Walter Jens that "Aschenkraut" was the *name* of the cineraria. In his essay he calls this *word* a "translation" … ("because what should not be, cannot be"…)]

Celan, in other words, had defended his poem from Claire's attack by telling Jens that "Aschenkraut" was not a metaphor; it is the name of the cineraria, and so something thoroughly concrete (*durchaus konkretes*)."[637] Jens had not understood, and his claim that "Aschenkraut" was a translation of "cineraria" effaced the history remembered in Celan's confrontation of Jewish "Aschen" (*ashes*) and the German "Kraut" (*herb*).[638] In both of these cases, the rupture of Auschwitz (sein *Datum und Ort*) is carted off and away ('fort- und abgetragen') as the specificity of Celan's German is dis-owned and Celan's German readers are directed elsewhere: to Yvan Goll's "Masques de cendres," to Linneaus' taxonomies, to the "Aschenkraut" as an image one can summon before the mind's eye, to the "Aschenkraut" as a "Gemeinplatz"—all things one can "perceive"

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635 Celan and Szondi, *Paul Celan, Peter Szondi*, 40.

636 Celan's pun "Tausendplaz" (lit. thousand-place) is particularly hard to translate. On one hand, Celan's neologism alludes to the millenarianism of the "Tausendjähriges Reich." On the other, it refers to the death camp: Auschwitz as a place where thousands (in fact millions) of human beings were actually (*tatsächlich*) reduced to their chemical common denominator, bone ash, or else anonymously carted off to a common grave. With "Tausendplatz," Celan is not misrepresenting the number of the Nazi's victims. In certain composite words (e.g. *Tausendkünstler*), "Tausend-" functions as a euphemism for the devil. Hence: Auschwitz, "place of the devil."

637 *Paul Celan, Peter Szondi*, 182 n12.

638 See Christoph König's commentary in 124.

(*wahrnehmen*) without truly taking them in (*ohne sie wahr-zu-nehmen*), without truly "acknowledging" them (*ohne sie wahrzuhaben*).[639]

The common grave to which Celan sees his poetry carted off has a specific literary-historical provenance and an acute contemporary relevance. He calls it a "topos" (Gk: "place") and explicitly alludes thereby to the relatively new discipline of "Toposforschung" that had been developed by the philologist and comparatist Ernst Robert Curtius. Curtius's magnum opus, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1948), offered a far-reaching and immensely influential account of the transnational unity of European literature by studying—"forschen"—the migration of insistently recycled *topoi* across Europe's various vernacular literary traditions. With *topos*, Curtius understands recurrent formulas of thought, expression, and perception. For example, "praise of forebears and their deeds" is a *topos* that Curtius associates with panegyric, and the archetype of the "puer senex" (*aged youth*) is a *topos* with roots in Late Antiquity.[640] As these examples show, however, Curtius's use of the term "topos" combines two different kinds of topicality, a distinction sometimes schematized as a difference between a "formal topics" and a "material topics."[641] On the formal side, classical rhetoric understands a *topos* as a place where writers and orators store the tools of their trade. It is a reservoir in which a particular type of argument is stowed and from which it can be retrieved for later use. In contrast to such a formal topic, what Curtius calls "historical topics" deals with the "contents" of such reservoirs—which is to say, not the fact of having a catalogue but the motif-like elements that *are* catalogued. The task of the Toposforscher is to (re)construct these archives by identifying, compiling, and tracking the historical manifestations of "'concrete' form-constants" (*'konkrete' Formkonstanten*) like "puer senex."[642]

This blurring of "formal" and "material," of the rhetorical "container" with its typological "contents" is a conceptual confusion for which Curtius was harshly criticized but which is necessary for his vision of a pan-European literary heritage. Returning to the terminology used above, we could say that Curtius's notion of tradition requires that *topos* designate *both* what is "überträgt" (*transferred*) *and* the form of its "Übertragung" (*transference*). A *topos,* in other words, is both the "thing" as well as the availability of the thing: its appurtenance to a "commons" that renders it accessible to future generations. Once an image, a trope, or an argument is deposited in a *topos*—once it is "zum 'topos' zerschwätzt"—that image, trope, or argument becomes "übertragbar" (*transmissible*). "Übertragbarkeit" (*transmissibility*) is a constitutive feature of *topoi* and the point of articulation between Curtius's theory of literary tradition and the classical understanding of rhetoric. As the literary historian Hans Georg Coenen writes of Cicero's *De inventione*, a major source for *Toposforschung*:

> *Topoi* are always transferable (*übertragbar*) to similar cases. It belongs to the nature of the *topos* that it provides arguments not for a unique situation but for many different situations, and that it can underlie many different arguments. A *topos* is, in this sense, always "communis"—that is, common to many arguments. […] The recyclability of *loci communes* owes to the abstractness of their content. A *locus communis* can be disassociated from the single case because it does not respond to the single case's individual particularities but rather to the typical characteristics of an entire group of similar cases.[643]

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639 On Celan's pun on "wahrnehmen," see chapter 4.
640 Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 70; 98f.
641 Cf. Till, "Rhetorik und Poetik," 443f.
642 Curtius, "Zum Begriff Einer Historischen Topik."
643 Coenen, "Locus communis," 402.

For Curtius, the true "place" of poetry is the tendential commonality produced by and sustained through transmission or "Übertragung." For a work to secure a place in this commons implies alienation. The price of canonicity is the loss of the historical conditions under which a work was produced. As one reads in the opening chapter of *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, the time and place of the poem do not, "in an essential sense" (*wesenmäßig*), refer to the poet's own historical moment, but rather to the "timeless present" (*zeitlose Gegenwart*) constituted by the accumulation of inherited *topoi* in his or her text. European literature is simply the continuum of such places outside time. This "boundless domain" is Curtius's rejoinder to what Celan calls "Ort," just the "timeless present" of the tradition answers to what Celan calls "Datum." The negation of the *poem's* particular time and space is of a piece with the affirmation of *literature* as essentially "Übertragung," as the transfer of old *topoi* into new contexts and different languages. Thus, Homer is translated in Virgil, Virgil in Dante, Dante in T. S. Eliot…and Yvan Goll in Paul Celan.[644]

As I will show in the next chapter, the version of canonicity and inter-generational transmission that *Toposforschung* articulated in the immediate post-War period pointed to its own subversion, and Celan's *Meridian* can be read as a critical reappropriation of Curtius's concept. But the felt necessity to turn *Toposforschung* against itself also registers how deeply the version of tradition advanced by Curtius and his students resonated with the restorative agenda of post-War German culture. As Curtius insisted in a widely-read polemic with Karl Jaspers after the war, the twelve years of the Nazi dictatorship—what Curtius called "the German catastrophe"—did not represent a definitive break in the pan-European tradition whose continuity *Toposforschung* traced. Therefore, the conservative understanding of history that he articulated before Hitler continued to hold after Auschwitz.[645] As Curtius wrote in 1932,

> World history realizes itself in a periodic cycle of consecutive shocks (*Erschütterungen*) that reach back into pre-history. If one overlooks all of this and sees in the cultural crisis of present a caesura without precedent (*eine präzendenzlose Zäsur*), that betrays an insufficient critical distance from the object of inquiry and a lack of basic knowledge about history. The assumption that our present belongs to a process that is without analogy emerges as an expression of a natural, naïve, pre-scientific way of thinking in *all* historical crises.[646]

Curtius is a natural antagonist for Celan because, for Curtius, literature *is* the articulation of the continuity of European culture.[647] As Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht has suggested, there is quite literally no "place" in Curtius's *Toposforschung* from which to think the "collapse" (*Scheitern*) of that tradition.[648] Indeed, passages like these suggest that Curtius was prone to seeing "the German

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[644] The relevant passage reads: "The "timeless present" (*zeitlose Gegenwart*) that belongs to the essence of literature means that the literature of the past can always contribute to that of the present. So Homer in Virgil, Virgil in Dante, Plutarch and Seneca in Shakespeare, Shakespeare in Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*, Euripides in Racine's and Goethe's *Iphigenie*. Or in our time: *The Thousand and One Nights* and Calderón in Hofmannsthal; the *Odyssey* in Joyce; Aeschylus, Petronius, Dante, Tristan Corbière, Spanish mysticism in T.S. Eliot. Here one has an inexhaustible quantity of possible interrelationships. In addition, there is the garden of literary forms: be they the genres […], the metrical and strophic forms, the fixed formulas or narrative motifs or linguistic devices. It is a boundless domain. Finally, there is the quantity of figures that poetry has established, which are always capable of passing into new bodies: Achilles, Oedipus, Semiramis, Faust, Don Juan. The last and most mature work by André Gide is a *Theseus* (1946)" in Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 25.

[645] See, for example, Curtius and Uken, "Goethe, Jaspers, Curtius: Ein Schlußwort in Eigener Sache."

[646] Curtius, *Deutscher Geist in Gefahr*, 89f.

[647] On Celan's reception of Curtius, see Selbmann, *Die Wirklichkeit der Literatur*, 40–45. as well as Otto Pöggeler's recollections in "Die Mittagslinie: Paul Celan und Martin Heidegger" and Pöggeler, *Der Stein hinterm Aug*, 10f.

[648] Gumbrecht, *Vom Leben und Sterben der grossen Romanisten*, 67.

catastrophe" not as a break in tradition, but as the continuation of a tradition of breakages: a caesura *with* a precedent.

No wonder, then, that Celan linked Curtius's notion of a "topos" to other ways in which "man überträgt…um fort- und abzutragen"—in which translation serves repression. The version of transmissibility that *Toposforschung* presumes denies the historical rupture from which Celan's poetry emerges, and therefore, like Claire Goll's letter and Hans Egon Holthusen's review, contributes to the disavowal of the catastrophe. With varying degrees of premeditation, the texts of Curtius, Claire, and Holthusen, replot the linguistic and historic coordinates of Celan's speech and suppress the trauma that is constitutive of its "Datum und Ort." All three writers mobilize a version of "Übertragung," each in his or her own fashion, and each time at a higher degree of abstraction. Thus, Claire maintained that "die Mühlen des Todes" was an unauthorized "Übertragung" of her husband's verse, Holthusen claimed that it was a trivial "Übertragung" of "certain principles of modern French poetry," and Curtius suggested it was *topos* like any other, one link in a far-reaching chain of "Übertragungen." The tendential convergence of all these discourses of "Übertragung" explains why, in Celan's notes and correspondence, references to the Goll Affair are often filed under the heading "topoi":

> Topoi:
> Mühlen des Todes – Todesmühlen – es zeugt allerdings von ganz anderem, wenn man die Todesmühlen zur bloßen Metapher verharmlosen will. Das ist ein wichtiger Punkt. –[649]
>
> [Topoi:
> Mills of death – death mills – though it is evidence of something else entirely if one would like to trivialize the death mills as a mere metaphor. That is an important point. –][650]

By polemically drawing Curtius's concept of literature together with Holthusen's dismissal of the "Mühlen des Todes" as a "trivial" metaphor and Claire's contention that it is a borrowed one, notes like these show how the true significance and real threat Goll Affair does not lie in Claire's bogus plagiarism charge, but rather in the uncritical version of "Übertragung" that consolidated itself in the debate over the controversy. Recast as a translation or transfer from another literary work, the expression "Mühlen des Todes" no longer cites the historical lexicon of mass murder; rather, it bears witness (*zeugt*) to something infinitely less disturbing (*harmlos*)—"literature."[651]

But in this action of carting off and away, such "Übertragungen" point to something "entirely different" (*ganz andere[s]*); they testify to the presence of repression. In "Zur Dynamik der Übertragung" (*On the Dynamics of the Transference*), an article on technique from 1912, Freud explained the psychoanalytic transference (*Übertragung*) as the displacement onto the analyst of attachments whose loss the analysand had not, or not fully, worked through. The often-noted "literariness" of

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649 Wiedemann, *Die Goll-Affäre*, 461.

650 Similar passages can be found in the *Meridian* notes. Referring to Büchner's line, "Danton, your lips have eyes" (*Danton, deine Lippen haben Augen*), for example, Celan writes: "Not a seminar-ready metaphor furthering this or that Toposforschung, but a knowledge (*Wissen*) and a vision (*Sehen*) of the ~~blood~~ most naked evidence.—" Celan, *The Meridian*, 128. Translation slightly modified.

651 Were Curtius to have actually cited "Mühlen des Todes" as one the *topoi* or recurrent metaphors that attest the continuity of European literature, his point would not be, as Celan suggests, that the expression is a "mere metaphor." For the *Toposforscher*, if the death mills are a *topos*, that means they are not "merely" a metaphor, since they are always also the articulation of the tradition.

analysis itself—with its hysterical dramas and family romances—is the direct complement of this repression. Pushing this language a bit, one could say that a given analysis can be qualified as "literary" to the precise degree that a history of loss is withheld from consciousness. Freud himself describes the operation of the transference as the production of a "cliché" (*Klischee*) through which the person of the analyst is enlisted as new effigy of an old archetype (*Vorbild*, imago), the "Übertragung" of an "original" lost long ago.[652] Although there are limits to how far one can push the analogy, it does seem like Celan's experience of the psychopathology of post-War literary culture: its conscious and unconscious refusals not just to accept Celan's poetry but also to acknowledge the "collapse of the European cultural tradition."[653] By drafting Celan into the very literary tradition whose currency his work contests, German commentators mask the loss for which Celan tries to find a language and transform his poems into a clichéd version of the kind of poetic speech they mourn. Rather than a "Datum and Ort" commemorating the rupture of the genocide, "die Mühle des Todes" becomes an image of continuity. *Man verbildlicht, was man nicht wahrnehmen, nicht wahrhaben will.*

IV. Medusa Topos

One of the things that Celan objected to most vigorously in this version of literature as "Übertragung" is the way that it dismissed the poet and effaced whatever traces his or her life and death may have left on the poetry. For Celan, the image of the poet cultivated by Claire, Holthusen, and Curtius is a persona or "death mask," a bit of artifice that confers a degree of immortality precisely by masking the rupture of death. The human animal, in his or her "creatureliness" (*Kreatürlichkeit*), may suffer the whims of fate, is subject to persecution, exile, war, even genocide.[654] The factory-style murder that took place in the death mills of Auschwitz makes attending to the fragility of the poet's being a political and ethical imperative.[655] It is therefore reprehensible to displace the poets from the spatial and temporal coordinates of their speech, to imagine them "living on" as their own literary legacy.[656]

Claire Goll did not invent this version of literature as "Übertragung," nor, for that matter, did Ernst Robert Curtius, but, from Celan's perspective, the Goll Affair was its perverse realization. At the center of the Affair, Claire stood like a gorgon, transforming life into its deathly effigy, turning it, as Celan said, "into literature." This is how Celan recounted the origins of the Affair to his friend and fellow writer Hermann Lenz. In a 1956 letter postmarked "Le Moulin" (*The Mill*), [657] Celan reviews what happened,

> You know the prehistory: I met Goll a few months prior to his death (and additionally I presented him with a copy of my book *Der Sand aus den Urnen,* which had been published in Vienna and was later pulped, and which contained two sections from *Mohn und Gedächtnis*). I also visited Goll often in the American hospital in Neuilly (where he died), and not out of

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652 Freud, "Zur Dynamik der Übertragung."
653 Gumbrecht, *Vom Leben und Sterben der grossen Romanisten*, 67.
654 On Celan's use of the term "creature" (*Kreatur*), see Lozinski-Veach, "Embodied Nothings."
655 "Due to the attention given to things and beings (*von den Dingen und der Kreatur gewidmeten Aufmerksamkeit her*), we also came close to something open and free. And finally, close to utopia." Celan, *The Meridian*, 11.
656 Cf. Graubner, *Unter dem Neigungswinkel*, esp. 35-37.
657 Here too, "Le Moulin" is not a literary commonplace but a property in Rochefort-en-Yvelines belonging to Celan's mother-in-law where the Celans would spend their summer holidays. The vacation house was indeed an old mill, complete with a mill-race and a canal. Cf. Celan et al., *Paul Celan, Hanne und Hermann Lenz: Briefwechsel*, 33.

> some kind of admiration for the poet (*den Dichter*), but because he was a dying man (*ein Sterbender*), who was afraid of death, with hardly anyone to keep him company, and desperately clung to everything that belonged to life. [*The poet*] Klaus Demus visited him with me in those days, and it is certainly no exaggeration when I say that it is thanks to this situation that in the end Goll wrote *German* poems. Back then I had also translated several French poems by Goll into German, to relieve Goll of the feeling of intellectual isolation; he had only words of praise for these translations, I had to promise to translate more. I did so, although Goll's—and especially Claire Goll's—effort (*Bestreben*) to turn everything into literature, made me uneasy (*mich […] befremdete*). As for Claire G., I had long known what I was dealing with—just like Klaus Demus did. I must have told you that, in her concern for fame (*Nachruhm*), she let the sculptress Chanah Orloff come to have the "death mask" (*Totenmaske*) taken – from the still living [*Yvan*]…[658]

What is so striking about this passage is not just how Celan links the practice of translation to the "effort to turn everything into literature." What is truly alarming (*befremdend*) is what Celan describes as the mortifying effect of Claire's attention to Yvan's literary fame (*Nachruhm*). For the sake of this legacy—for the sake of Yvan's canonization—Claire calls for Orloff, as if to mask the isolated, despairing (*verzweifelt*), creaturely countenance of the dying man (*der Sterbender*). Viewed from this angle, the institution of literature is a death mask, a bit of "cardboard" (*Pappendeckel*) screening the reader from the mortality of the poet.

The opposition between creature and the death-mask, outlined here in the letter to Lenz, becomes a core feature of the poetics of the *Meridian*, where Celan develops the antithesis of the "Sterblicher" and the "Totenmaske" into an argument for poetry (*Dichtung*) "against" (*gegen*) literature and art (*Kunst*). Indeed, as Bernhard Böschenstein has maintained, "the basic polarity (*Grundpolarität*) of the speech—poetry versus art—is unthinkable without the Goll Affair."[659] There is a tremendous irony in the fact that Celan chose his acceptance speech for the Georg Büchner Prize to drive a wedge between poetry and literature. The Büchner prize is the highest literary honor in the German-speaking world, and the award marked Celan's own canonization within German literature.[660] The ambivalence of this induction ceremony was certainly not lost on Celan. The text's repetitive use of the apostrophe "meine Damen und Herren," strikes a dissonant note. The highly affected formality mocks the pomp of the occasion and, at least on the surface, could not be more at odds with the dialogic encounter that Celan claims for the poem.[661] Celan had in fact contemplated refusing the prize on the grounds that apologists for Claire Goll counted among the members of the awarding institution, the *Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung*. As the draft letters in which he rejects or returns the award suggest,[662] when Celan mounted the stage in Darmstadt in 1960, he was speaking as much against his audience as he was speaking to them. From Celan's perspective, the *literature* they had come to honor was the antithesis of the *poetry* he wrote.

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658 Celan et al., 54–55.

659 Böschenstein, "Der Meridian," 168. For a thorough discussion of this polarity, see Gellhaus, "Die Polarisierung von 'Poesie' Und 'Kunst' Bei Paul Celan."

660 Cf. Boos, *Speaking the Unspeakable in Postwar Germany*, 52–69.

661 For a different reading of the *Meridian's* rhetorical gestures, one which sees such tropes opening onto "an other rhetoric" closer to Celan's own poetry, see Mendicino, "An Other Rhetoric."

662 See the draft of a September 1960 letter to Hermann Kasack, the president of the *Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung* printed in Wiedemann, *Die Goll-Affäre*, 513f.

The *Meridian* has been called Celan's "poetological testament" (*poetologisch[es] Vermächtnis*),[663] and given its centrality within that enduring legacy, it is all the more significant that the text returns to the *topos* of the 1956 letter to Lenz, the mythical template Claire evokes when she casts the face of her still-living husband in lifeless plaster: the Medusa. Of course, if the *Meridian's* Medusa is a *topos*, it is literary commonplace that Celan carefully distinguishes from what he calls the "place of poetry" (*Ort[ ] der Dichtung*).[664] The Medusa *topos* is a place that Celan places in quotation marks. He cites it from Georg Büchner's story-fragment, *Lenz*, where the ancient *topos* is self-consciously woven into the first-person narration of Lenz, a young man traveling in the mountains. In Büchner's story, Lenz recalls,

> Yesterday as I was walking along above the valley, I saw two girls sitting on a rock: one was putting up her hair, the other helping her; and the golden hair was hanging free, and a pale, solemn face, and yet so young, and the black peasant dress, and the other one so absorbed in her task. The finest, our heartfelt paintings of the Old German School scarcely convey an inkling of this. At times one wishes one were a Medusa's head (*Medusenhaupt*) in order to turn a group like this into stone, and call everybody over to have a look.[665]

This is the longest citation in the *Meridian*, a speech that abounds with citations, and it merits pointing out the many layers of mediation it navigates. It is important for Celan's opposition between poetry and literature that the subject who says "I" here is not Celan and not Büchner, but Lenz. And yet Büchner's Lenz is himself a fictional portrait (a kind of mask) of the eighteenth-century playwright Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz, a friend of Goethe's who died under mysterious circumstances in Moscow in 1792. Inspired by the recollections of Goethe and others who knew him, Büchner's *Lenz* takes up the mystery of the historical Lenz's disappearance.

Büchner's story takes up this fate as literature, but the manifestly fragmentary character of the narration suggests that something interrupts the translation of Lenz's life into art (*die Übertragung auf die Kunst*). This interruption is what interests Celan. And he locates it not simply in the seeming incompleteness of Büchner's text (whether or not it is a fragment is fiercely debated), but in the vicissitudes of narrative voice. Referring back to Lenz's use of the Medusa *topos*, Celan calls attention to the shift in subject of the verb: "Ladies and gentlemen, please, take note: "One wishes one were a Medusa's head" in order to… grasp the natural as the natural with the help of art! *One* wishes to does of course not mean here: *I* wish to."[666] The desire of the Medusa—the desire that realizes itself as art (*Kunst*)—is a desire that cannot be spoken in the first person but only in the third and only by means of an indefinite pronoun (*man*). In Celan's reading, the art of literature is in its very nature "medusa-like" (*medusenhaft*).[667] This is because the "work" of the artwork *is* depersonalizing abstraction. As Celan puts it, "art creates I-distance (*Ich-Ferne*)."[668] Even where the transposition is not marked grammatically, literature converts first person speech into indefinite, third person speech. From this perspective, the space of literature coincides with the field of the Medusa's

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663 Schäfer, "Weg des Unmöglichen Celans Gespräch mit Heidegger im Meridian," 114.
664 Celan, *Der Meridian*, 6.
665 Celan, *The Meridian*, 5.
666 Celan, 5.
667 "Medusa-like = the same Büchner, letter <to the> bride, complains of the hippoc.<ratic> face – For he sees it! He sees the abyss" (the "hippocratic face" is the human face as it appears before death, with sunken eyes, a pinched nose, and taut skin). Celan, 179.
668 Celan, 5.

vision.[669] Here, "creatureliness" is displaced by "literariness," the mortal (*der Sterblicher)* is displaced by the death mask, and '*das Ich' wird in 'das Man' übertragen*. For Celan, Büchner's *Lenz* is about this ambivalence. As he writes in a note, "[Büchner] complains of the hippocratic face – For he sees it! He sees the abyss!"[670] *Lenz* is a literary "Übertragung" of Lenz, but it is also the inverse, a form of writing that literally turns this "Übertragung" on its head. From *this* perspective, the text dislocates the "Übertragung." It is the caesura that opens up the "abyss" separating Lenz from *Lenz*, the creature from the Medusa, and the "I" from the "one" (*das Man*) And this hiatus is what Celan calls "poetry" (*Dichtung*).

Given his forceful objection to the discourse of "Übertragung" coming out of the Goll Affair, one better understands why Celan might hesitate to identify the writing of poetry with the practice of translation, and why he might decline to endorse a statement like Novalis's, namely that "am Ende ist alle Poesie Übersetzung" (*in the end, all poetry is translation*).[671] In a certain sense, what Celan calls "Kunst" represents the frightening realization of that kind of translation.[672] Once one sees the debate about the Goll translations, the polemic about "dead metaphors," and the figuration of literature as poetry's "death mask" as all part of the same "*Übertragungs*-affäre," one can appreciate what is at stake in Celan's most provocative and confusing statement about translation. This is a short written response to a 1961 survey conducted by the Flinker bookstore in Paris. The survey asked writers to comment on the "problem of bilingualism" (*Problem der Zweisprachigkeit*). Celan's answer is mercilessly blunt:

> I don't believe in bilingualism in poetry. Two-facedness (lit. two-tonguedness*, Zweizüngigkeit*) – yes, there's that, in various contemporary word-arts and -artworks, especially in those that, in happy compliance with current consumer culture, know to establish themselves as equally polyglot and polychromatic (*genauso polyglott wie polychrom*).
>
> Poetry – that is the fateful singularity of speech (*das schicksalhaft Einmalige der Sprache*). So not – permit me this bromide (lit. reed-truth, *Binsenwahrheit*): only all too often today does poetry, like truth, see itself go to pot (lit. go to the reeds, *in die Binsen gehen*) – so not something done twice.

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669 Maurice Blanchot, an avid reader of Celan, develops an analogous reading of literary space, one that turns precisely on the *œuvre's* "désœuvrement," and whose relation to Celan has been the object of many studies. Blanchot, *L'espace Littéraire*. Blanchot, *L'espace littéraire.* For a reading of the *Meridian* that draws heavily on Blanchot, Fynsk, *Language and Relation: ...That There Is Language*, 135–59.

670 Similarly, "Poems pull a hypocritic face." Celan, *The Meridian*, 60.

671 From a 1797 letter to A. W. Schlegel. Quoted in Huyssen, *Die frühromantische Konzeption von Übersetzung und Aneignung*, 132.

672 Nor, in fact, is such an interpretation of the Romantic legacy unwarranted. Antoine Berman, in his magisterial work on the theories of translation of the Frühromantiker, located one of the principal tendencies of the period in the use of translation to produce what Novalis called a "Kunstsprache" (*artificial language/language of art*). More recently, Marc Nichanian has radicalized Berman's reading, steering it in a more "celanian" direction. As Nichanian explains, "the fascination that drew the Romantics to translation did not pertain to the relationship of languages to each other, but rather referred to what, in every translation, amounts to 'the putting to death of the natural language' (*mise à mort du langage naturel*), to an approximation of the *Kunstsprache*, language of art and artificial language, by the elimination of the empirical surface that separates the work from its idea. If, Berman says, translation is what Novalis calls "potentialisation," then one can better understand how all poetry might itself be translation, the going beyond (*dépassement*) of natural language." Cf. Berman, *L'épreuve de l'étranger,* 212-13, and Nichanian, *Le sujet de l'histoire*, 178–79.

To be sure, to reject bilingualism in poetry is not the same as to repudiate translation in all its forms.[673] Nonetheless, it does suggest that the pretense to say the same thing in two different languages is pure hypocrisy and/or incompatible with the definition poetic speech. Poetry is, as Celan tells us, "the fateful singularity of (or the fatefully singular in) speech (or language)," and this seems to exclude the possibility of writing the same poem in two languages but of producing a translation that would meaningfully correspond to the poem it translates.

However apodictic this definition of poetry may appear, Celan's statement is also marked by its specific time and place. It responds not only to the European history of fascism and genocide, but also to the legacy of literature as a mortification of life (Büchner) and, as the allusion to contemporary consumer culture makes clear, the massive expansion of the market for world literature. On one hand, Celan distinguishes himself from Yvan Goll, who wrote in both French and German and who, alongside Saint-John Perse, represented the "poète bilingue" *par excellence*.[674] On the other hand, Celan takes aim at the intellectual life of the post-War economic boom and reproaches the new global culture that emerged with the dissemination of American-style capitalism across Western Europe. Like the colorful advertisements for American Coca-Cola and German cars that saturated the Federal Republic, the language of this culture is vibrant, electric, seemingly polyglot. The U.S. Army brought Elvis and, as I noted in the previous chapter, Pound brought Chinese. Drawing in part on Pound's example, Eugen Gomringer, one of the chief practitioners and theoreticians of "konkrete Poesie," presented ideogrammatic poetry as a language of global commerce. The ideogram or "konstellation," as Gomringer remarks in a 1954 manifesto, "is inter- and supranational. an english word can be attached to a spanish one. the constellation is very compatible with an airport!"[675] As Bettina Their emphasizes in her study of the post-War avant-garde, for Gomringer, concrete poetry was rooted in the flows of transnational capital. Its "effortless polyglottism" was the expression of the "universale Gemeinschaftssprache" (*universal communal language*) that accompanied "new economic developments," of which the airport is both an example and an emblem.[676] Of course, such diversity is only the phenomenal appearance of a more capacious and totalizing structure of universal translatability—the stuff that, more than any other, passes back and forth across borders, transferred (*übertragen*) from my account into yours: money, the general

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673 Celan's note on bilingualism might be reconciled with theories of translation that are not grounded in notions of correspondence, adequation, or mimesis. Benjamin offers a famous example of one such theory. Cf. Benjamin, "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers."

674 Of course, the indictment of bilingualism would seem to target Claire above all. Claire not only conflated Yvan's "Moulin de la mort" with Celan's "Mühlen des Todes," but, in her capacity as the editor and the German translator of Yvan's complete works, she took extreme liberties with the language of Yvan's poems, both in the original and in translation. Given her alterations of and emendations to the texts of Yvan's *Dichtungen*, Celan is justified in speaking of a *literal* "two-tongued-ness" with regard to that *œuvre*. Nonetheless, if "the problem of bilingualism" is inseparable from Claire's various falsifications, Celan does not spare Yvan a share of the responsibility for the affair. A few weeks after his 1956 letter to Hermann Lenz, Celan wrote Klaus Demus, with whom he had visited Yvan in the hospital. "One more thing, Klaus," he writes, "I cannot spare Yvan Goll. I have done so until now, but I can no longer do so in this degree. For the fact that he—regrettably—was no honorable man, I have also experienced. I have to remind you of something, Klaus: you were there when, among the "posthumous" poems, one translated by me (I believe 'Death Dog' ['*Todeshund*']) also appeared; a couple words were changed (though not for the better), and underneath stood … Yvan Goll …" Celan et al., *Paul Celan, Klaus und Nani Demus*, 209.

675 Thiers, *Experimentelle Poetik als Engagement*, 392. The "Kleinschreibung" of passages like these, where the rules of German capitalization are ignored, is recognizable feature of concrete poetry's transnational idiom.

676 Thiers, 392.

equivalent of all commodities.[677] From Celan's perspective, the emergence of such a fungible, communal language meant that the apocalypse in which "in the end all poetry is translation" was at hand. Just as the avowedly "grayer language" of his poetry revolts against the polychromatic packaging of such "word-art," so too does Celan's definition of "Dichtung" as the "fateful singularity of speech" refuse the modish "bilingualism" of contemporary world poetry, the kind of literature that *pays*.[678]

V. Topos koinos

The Noigandres group, the Brazilian hub of concrete poetry, borrowed their name from Canto XX, so it should not come as too much of a surprise that Celan's critique of the post-War avant-gardes should distill itself into a confrontation with Ezra Pound. Pound was all too convenient a target: an anti-Semite *and* a globalist, whose polyglottism seemed tailor-made for a German market demanding literary forms that sidestepped a reckoning with the ruptured history of the German language. Plus, Pound's name "mocked the guinea stamp" (£), a convergence of the poet and the coin that made him a ready figure for the fungibility Celan saw underwriting world literature (*Mit diesem Pfunde wuchern sie gerne*…).

In chapter three, I noted how Celan turns Pound's monetary figures against their coiner, and here I would like to return to some of those puns to explain how the post-War literary market place, as faux commons and ersatz common ground, contributed to the disavowal of the genocide. In addition to prompting Celan's puns on usury (*Mit diesem Pfunde wuchern sie gerne*…), the fact that Pound's name rhymed with the Pound Sterling made him a metonymy for what, at the time of *The Meridian*, Celan began to theorize as a "lyric Koine." If "the unique language of the poem" (*die einmalige Sprache des Gedichts*) is incompatible with literature's two faces and two tongues, neither is it convertible into the shared formal idiom of post-War poetry: the Koine. As Celan puts it in the draft materials to the *Meridian*:

> There is, (in small and smallest coin,) ~~well-covered~~ lyric Koine; {A}and there is the unique language of the poem (*die einmalige Sprache des Gedichts*)—[679]

Or again:

> There is a lyric koine. And there is the poem as singular (*einmalige*), breath-carried, heart- and sky-grey language in time.[680]

Or again:

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[677] Many thinkers have proposed a homology between monetary exchange and linguistic translation, including Marx himself in an important passage from the *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, 162–63. For more recent developments of this point, see Liu, "The Question of Meaning-Value in the Political Economy of the Sign," as well as Lezra, *Untranslating Machines*.

[678] On the tension between Celan and the post-War avant-gardes, see the recollections of Celan's Romanian friend Petre Solomon, Solomon, *Paul Celan: L'Adolescence d'un adieu*, 217–18.

[679] Celan, *The Meridian*, 171.

[680] Celan, 55.

> The language- and responsibility-weary (*sprach- und verantwortungsüberdrüssige*) lyric Koine of our times[681]

Or again:

> the lyric hotchpotch (*Allerlei*) of our days
> the Koiné[682]

"Koinē" (κοινός) is the Greek word for "common" or "shared by the community." It connotes less the joint possession of an in-group than an exoteric commons produced through contact and exchange. As Celan's reference to "the lyric hotchpotch" suggests, what he calls the lyric Koine is related to the polychromatic cosmopolitanism and Janus-faced bilingualism that Celan observed in his contemporaries. Thus, like those who referred Celan's poetry back to French precedents and traditional *topoi*, the Koine is "sick of" or "fed up with" (*überdrüssig*) with the responsibility (*Verantwortung*) incumbent upon German poetry after Auschwitz. The koine is *not* contemporary with this history and makes no effort to respond to unanswerable questions (*Antwortlosigkeiten*) posed by that culture of "death-bringing speech" (*todbringend[e] Rede*),[683] but it continues to be accepted although its currency has lapsed.

Nonetheless, the lyric Koine does not negate the singularity that Celan identifies with poetic speech in the same way that *bi*-lingualism opposes *mono*-lingualism. With the Koine, the effacement of such singularity is of a different order. The Koine negates the "unique language of the poem" as the general negates the particular. Historically, the Koine refers to the dialect of Greek which became the "common" language of politics, commerce, and culture throughout Hellenistic world from the Classical to the Byzantine era.[684] Though often spoken as a second language, the Koine was above all a language of writing—of laws, contracts, letters, and, importantly, the New Testament. Its wide use throughout the Mediterranean Basin—like the "currency" of any *lingua franca*—is one of several attributes that motivates the Koine's habitual association with "real" coins (*Münzen*), which similarly facilitate exchange between peoples of different cultures and regions.[685] Today, a koine can designate "any language or dialect in regular use over a wide area in which different languages or dialects are, or were, in use locally."[686] Global English is the most immediate, contemporary example of a Koine, but High German, which is the standard language of the German-speaking world, has also been labelled a Koine.[687]

But the connection Celan draws between *koinai* and coins is more than a formal analogy of two different media of exchange. The pun has an intellectual genealogy that is entwined with political sovereignty, and, in the context of post-War reconstruction, opens a critical perspective on the public space constructed by the "world republic of letters" or even the Federal Republic of Germany (a country which was a monetary union before it was a political union). This perspective is deeply Aristotelian. For Aristotle, the *koinonia* names the "community of interests" that forms the

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681 Celan, 170.
682 Celan, 171.
683 Celan, "Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der freien Hansestadt Bremen," 186.
684 Glück and Schmöe, "Koine."
685 Herrenschmidt, *Les Trois Écritures*, 303–4.
686 "Koine, n."
687 Siegel, "Koines and Koineization."

basis of the *polis*.[688] If these communities do not necessarily consolidate themselves around a common language, they are nonetheless constituted through the establishment of a common measure, a standard according to which goods possessed by one member of the community can be expressed in terms of goods possessed by another member of the community. In the *polis*, money (*nomisma*) was the incarnation of this principle of ethical and economic commensurability.[689] In this respect, money was closely tied to political authority, all the more so since *koinon*, in the sense of "public," also designated to the right to mint coins.[690] What Celan calls "the lyric Koine," therefore, is not only opposed to local, idiosyncratic, *un*common speech as the Greek word "koinos" is opposed to "idios" ("particular," "distinct"). Like an ancient mint or a modern central bank, it lends against such authoritative speech, its function being to increase poetic liquidity. Following Celan, one might say that the Koine poem "monetizes" the "wealth" of literary culture in the form of freely circulating literary *topoi*, a "hodgepodge" (*Allerlei*) of citations, pastiches, parodies, allusions, and translations.[691]

In the West German post-War literary field, the lyric Koine existed in both a conservative and a leftist version. There was, as Celan joked, a "Pound Chinese" and a "party Chinese," and Celan rejected both.[692] The "party Chinese" to which Celan objected was the left internationalism promoted by the poet and critic Hans Magnus Enzensberger in the early 1960s. In 1960, Enzensberger published the *Museum of Modern Poetry*, a literary anthology that presents itself as a curated retrospective of the lasting, formal achievements of international modernism. Building on concepts of world literature inherited from Goethe and Marx, Enzensberger describes the project as an attempt to reveal the tacit "agreement" or "understanding" (*Einverständnis*) that united the major protagonists of modern poetry, a mutual comprehensibility that Enzensberger attributes to the modernists' common language.[693] As he explains in the anthology's influential afterword, modernism is above all a shared formal idiom, a historical *lingua franca* that transcends the multiplicity of national, linguistic, and political differences that divided its "speakers." "The process of modern poetry as shown by the texts of this museum," he writes, "leads to results in at least thirty-five countries that provoke comparison after comparison: in a word, it leads to the emergence of a poetic world language (*einer poetischen Weltsprache*)."[694] As it happened, Celan actually contributed translations to Enzensberger's project. Allusions to the *Museum* in his notes and correspondence amply indicate, however, that he harbored serious reservations about its theoretical ambitions and even the integrity of its editor.[695]

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[688] The "koinon" was also a kind of regional, federated state comprised of multiple poleis or other forms of political community. See Cabanes, "États Fédéraux et Koina en Grèce du Nord et en Illyrie Méridionale."
[689] Hénaff, *Le prix de la vérité*, 426–29. See also, Vogl, *Das Gespenst des Kapitals*, 121–22.
[690] Cf. Mackil, "The Greek Polis and Koinon." See also, Braun, "Gefühltes Geld: Literatur und Finanzmarkt," 27.
[691] On the relationship between a linguistic *koine* and the poetic *koinai* whose norms regulate the production of literary works within a given tradition (epic language, tragic language, etc.), see Colvin, "The Greek Koine and the Logic of a Standard Language," 37.
[692] Celan, *The Meridian*, 170.
[693] On Enzensberger's appropriation of Goethean world literature, see Melin, *Poetic Maneuvers*, 43f.
[694] Enzensberger, "Weltsprache der modernen Poesie," 773. See also, Lamping, "Gibt es eine Weltsprache der modernen Poesie? Über W.C. Williams' deutsche Rezeption."
[695] Referencing an article that Enzensberger wrote to publicize his translations of William Carlos Williams, "Ein Gedicht ist eine Maschine" (1962), Celan noted that the polyglot Enzensberger was also the translator of Yvan Goll and René Char—two highly dubious characters in Celan's estimation. Celan concludes his note with a reminder-to-self: "Write down one day all the details about Enzensberger, who, very clearly, takes pleasure in supporting a large number of people who helped Claire Goll." Celan and Char, *Correspondance 1954-1968*, 291.

If Enzensberger stood for the 'left commons,' the "right commons" refers to the immensely influential, synoptic reading of modernist poetry offered by Hugo Friedrich.[696] Unlike his intellectual mentor and sometimes rival Curtius, Friedrich joined the Nazi party in 1938 and made a name for himself in Romance Philology as a specialist in French reactions to Romanticism. Building on Gottfried Benn's 1951 *Probleme der Lyrik*, his 1956 book *Structure of Modern Lyric* provides a thorough revision of the paradigm of lyric expressivity, making the case for an eponymous "structure of modern lyric" which Friedrich describes as a "foundational matrix" (*Grundgefüge*) undergirding modern poetry's manifest historical, linguistic, and formal diversity. Friedrich's structure is "common" (*gemeinsam*) to the poems of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé as it is to those of Celan's latest volume and permits Friedrich to situate all of these poets—and many more besides—in the same methodological space of comparison.[697]

Enzensberger's "language of modern poetry" competes with Friedrich's "structure" as a name for this common ground. In fact, the *Museum* to which Celan submitted translations of Robert Desnos, Marianne Moore, Sergei Yesenin, and Osip Mandelstam presented itself as a more-or-less explicit critique of the dehistoricizing aspects of Friedrich's methodology.[698] All the same, Celan tended to equate the two discourses and to oppose their mutual preoccupation with a commons or a Koine to the direction (*Richtung*) of his own poetry, which sought utopia through a radical individuation. Both projects, as he saw them, were hostile to the "singularity of the poem" and their declared internationalism directed attention away from the foreignness that had penetrated German itself. It was as though, no longer acceptable as a *national* language, German had to reconsolidate itself as a *global* language—a language of Romance philologists, comparatists, and translators.[699] Professed cosmopolitanism notwithstanding, this German discourse was not necessarily receptive to the "otherness" that Celan's *German* represented. As Celan put it in a polemical aphorism (likely written in 1961): "I've been reading various things in a new language that is quite different from my mother language: total German (*Gesamtdeutsch*). To be read and spoken from left to right or from right to left, as one sees fit."[700]

The fact that internationalism could be declaimed from both the left and the right owes much to the two reactionary modernists whose poetry Enzensberger published in the *Museum*: Gottfried Benn and Ezra Pound. Both Benn and Pound were internationalists who, as Enzensberger notes obliquely in the afterword to the *Museum*, "participated provisionally and confusedly in barbarism" (*haben […] sich vorübergehend und konfus mit der Barbarei eingelassen*").[701] Benn's complicity in the Nazi regime is very different from Pound's cheerleading for Mussolini, and the presence of these two collaborators in Enzensberger's anthology tells us little except that poetic modernism's legacy is politically ambivalent. But that ambivalence is not nothing, especially since Benn was by far the most

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696 In this context, Camilla Miglio speaks of a "Friedrich function" in Celan's poetics. Cf. Miglio, "La Funzione-Friedrich nella Poetologia antilirica di Paul Celan."

697 Friedrich, *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik*, 9. On the conscription of Celan's poetry into Friedrich's structure, see Lampart, *Nachkriegsmoderne*, 380.

698 Cf. Schultz, "Lyrik und Engagement."

699 In this regard, Celan's polemic can be put in relation to Jürgen Trabant's similar description of the post-War turn to a "Globalsprache." See Trabant, "Sprach-Passion: Derrdia und die Anderssprachigkeit des Einsprachigen," 56.

700 Celan, *Mikrolithen sinds, Steinchen*, 28. The editors of the critical edition of Celan's posthumous prose, Bertrand Badiou and Barbara Wiedemann, connect this particular aphorism to the resurgence of anti-Semitic attacks in the Federal Republic starting in early 1960 and originating at both ends of the political spectrum. This is no doubt true, though Celan would be the first to link the resurgence of anti-Semitism with a "poetic world language" that neglects the particular history to which the German language gives voice. See Celan, *Mikrolithen sinds, Steinchen*, 326-27.

701 Enzensberger, *Museum der modernen Poesie*, II: 779.

important transmitter of poetic modernism's legacy in the young Federal Republic. It just so happened that most of what the poets who came of age in the 1950s knew about poetic modernism they had learned either directly or indirectly from Benn. Benn's reading of French symbolism and Anglo-American modernism in *Probleme der Lyrik* is an obvious inspiration for the "poetic world language" and transnational "structure" that Enzensberger and Friedrich postulate, and Benn's own poetry was one of those rare patrimonies to which acolytes of T. S. Eliot (Holthusen) and students of Brecht (Enzensberger, Rühmkorf) simultaneously laid claim. For these reasons, Rémy Colombat has argued that Celan's recurrent references to a "lyric Koine"—a common language spoken on the right and the left of the German poetry scene—target Benn and his disciples.[702]

Colombat is certainly right about Benn, but the more interesting precedent is the other reactionary modernist whose work is selected for Enzensberger's *Museum*: Pound. Pound makes for a more interesting comparison because, unlike Benn, Pound takes the tendential homology between koines and coins as one of his explicit themes. Pound's interest in finding a common measure dates back to his early call for a "literary scholarship" capable of weighing "Theocritus and Yeats with one balance,"[703] and only grows more eccentric as he delves into classical Chinese, numismatic history, and Social Credit. If various poets could be suspected of monetizing lyric in "small and smallest coin," no poet had developed the relationship between metric quantity and coinage to the degree Pound did. As a matter of fact, just two years prior to publication of *The Meridian*, Pound's poetic economy had reached an unprecedented degree of numismatic literalism, or, Pound he puts it, "a grammar/ nummulary moving toward prosody":

> a gold Bacchus on your abacus,
> Henry Third's second massacre, wheat 12 pence a quarter
> that 6 4/5ths pund of bread be a farden
> Act 51, Henry Three. If a penny of land be a perch
> that is grammar
> nummulary moving toward prosody
> πρόσοδος φόρων ἡ ἐπέτειος..
> μεταθεμένων after Dandolo got into Byzance
> & worsened AND …
>
> (Canto XCVII, 691)

This passage comically (and, indeed, perhaps ironically) dramatizes the various meanings that Celan packs into the word "Koine." The possibility of finding the "unwobbling pivot" in the form of a just exchange rate is these cantos' avowed subject.[704]

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[702] Colombat, "Symbolismus als 'lyrische koiné': Zur Wirkungsgeschichte eines Literaturtheoretischen Konzepts," esp. 82.

[703] Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, 6.

[704] David Murray has drawn attention to the overdetermination of money in Pound's poetics, as well as to its limitations. "To insist that Pound's concern is with the *un*changing may seem perverse, given both the mass of historical material from different periods and the theme of metamorphosis in *The Cantos*, but metamorphosis implies both something that changes and something that doesn't […] What [Pound] wants money to be in his system of values, is the fixed element in a series of transformations of value. Otherwise the pivot wobbles, the fixed point of certainty disappears. The trouble is, that monex has been more usually treated as itself a repository of value, and an agent of transformation rather than a sign, and Pound's historical materials involve many different types of money." Murray, "Pound-Signs: Money and Representation in Ezra Pound," 178–79.

At this point in *Thrones*, Pound is detailing the consequences of the fall of Constantinople, which, according to Pound's sources, upset the longstanding exchange rate of gold to silver and set in motion a new era of currency manipulation (i.e. modernity).[705] That Celan might object to the form and content of *Thrones* is no surprise at all. Nor is this the point. What's important, instead, is that rather than deriving his common measure by synthesizing the "results" (*Ergebnissen*) of *formal* comparison, as both Friedrich and Enzensberger do, Pound focuses on the *material* basis of commensurability by digging through the *history* of coinage.[706] His Koine, in other words, is not that of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé in other words, but Aristotle, Henry III, and the currency reform carried out by Enrico Dandolo, doge of Venice.

In fact, to the degree that *Thrones* imagines a kind of common measure, Pound expressly opposes that standard to the sort of lyric that Koine Enzensberger and Friedrich have in mind—which is to say, "poetry after Whitman and Baudelaire, after Rimbaud and Mallarmé."[707] That kind of lyricism does occasionally surface in *Thrones*, as it does here in Pound's allusion to Yeats's "Sailing for Byzantium," but its aesthetic values are only cited in the mode of parody. Such is Pound's historic method in action: we are invited to watch Yeats's old gods be melted down to bullion and recast as Henry III's golden penny, with Pound's poem stepping in to keep the books (*a gold Bacchus on your abacus*). This materialist inversion of the older idealism distinguishes the language of the *Cantos* from other versions of poetic koineization.[708] While the alliterative anapests of "If a penny of land be a perch" certainly sound like the metaphorical whimsy of nonsense verse, the point is that this particular substitution of land and sea (*perch*) rests on a thirteenth-century accounting identity that fixed the price of land at 1 acre to 160 pence (a "perch" of land is $1/160^{th}$ of an acre). What mediates the exchange is indeed *Pound*, or rather "pund"—not the "scriptor cantilenae" but the unit of account (£) that translates into 240 pennies or into 240 perches… Pound's wager with the *Cantos*—a gamble which he loses—is that it is not the poet's private fancy that coordinates the poem's historical materials. The measure is somehow immanent to archive itself; the poem's prosody just teases them out. That Ezra should become fascinated with historical rates of exchange is understandable, as is his obsession with a general equivalent of commercial exchanges, money. As a poet and a translator, Pound envies money in that, as credit, money makes wealth *usable*; he loathes it to the degree that it stands in the way of such use, which is to say, to the degree that it becomes *usury*. Hence the difficulty of assessing the irony or absence of irony in Pound's tone. The fixing of exchange that *Thrones* describes belongs to a process of monetary reification that, by establishing money as the universal equivalent of *all* exchanges, will catalyze the great disaster and precipitate the age of usury. However, it is also evidence of the sovereign's power to redefine the standard and "rectify the names," and thus illuminates the relationship between coinage and the common interest of the political community, between the coin and the "koinonia."

What Celan says about the lyric Koine applies to the *Cantos* because it shows how Pound's project fails on Pound's own terms. With the *Cantos*, Pound's goal is not to reduce poetry to money, but to perform a totalitarian synthesis that relocates the adjudication of value from the market to the

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[705] Pound's source in this section is Alexander Del Mar's *History of Monetary Systems* (1895). See *History of Monetary Systems: A History of Actual Experiments in Money Made by Various States in the Ancient and Modern World*, esp. 257.

[706] Enzensberger, *Museum der modernen Poesie*, II:773.

[707] Enzensberger, II:765.

[708] On this point, see Rachel Galvin's article on the cannibalistic appropriation of literary capital within postcolonial and Latin American poetic traditions. Working with an archive quite different from the one Celan engages (though an archive that also contains Pound), Galvin argues differently that Celan: for her, modernist practices of copying, translating, forging and counterfeiting contest rather than disseminate the logic of global capitalism. Poetry is theft.

(fascist) state, where the rate of exchange is set by the judicious judgment and performative speech of beneficent rulers (and their equally wise poet-counsellors). "That a penny of land *be* a perch"—the subjunctive mood captures the fiat-power of the sovereign and the wishful thinking of the poet, and Pound's confusion of the two kinds of speech. For the intention behind the *Cantos*—the ruling intention of all of Pound's mature work—is precisely to develop a poetry in which, as Peter Nicholls has argued, writing would substitute for money and where translation, as an exchange that operates without a universal equivalent, would take precedence over the transactions of the market place.[709] In such a scheme, translation would do what money does: preserve value, extend credit, account for difference—but it would do so without *usura*, without the reifying abstraction that "rusteth the craft and the craftsman" (XLV 230). Pound's claim that "it can't be all in one language" (LXXXVI, 583) might refute Celan's notion of a lyric Koine in the narrow sense. Nonetheless, Pound's poem develops in terms of rhymes between languages that, as in these late cantos, provocatively slide towards equivalences stipulated by the monetary authority. Which is to say: from "pund" to "penny" to "farden"—as if in "in kleiner und kleinster Münze"—at this particular point Pound's Koine decisively and self-consciously moves towards a poetics of the coin.

VI: Common Market

Thrones is not among the books by Pound listed in Celan's personal library, and there is no evidence that Celan was familiar with this particular canto. Were he to have come across it, however, it might well have made an impression—and not merely for the chillingly flippant manner in which it alludes to the massacre of the Jews in 1264. As we saw in the last chapter, Celan generally regarded Pound as a kind of literary money changer, what canto 97 itself playfully refers to as a prosodic "nummulary." The *Cantos*, in this view, is a poetic clearing house, market place, or pawn shop, a place where quantities of individual meters are resolved into their lowest common denominators and exchanged one against the other. Thus, although Pound's epic spoke a multitude of languages, the poem's formal construction effectively reduced the babel to a single coin or Koine. As we also noted in the last chapter, however, Celan was sensitive to how such a dishonest trade in foreign poetries might appeal to his German-speaking peers. For the latter, the *Cantos* could only be a relief, as Pound's technique provided a pretext to elude the historic burden weighing on their own language.

The marketability of such meretricious polyglottism explains the differences that Celan noted in his and Pound's reception by German audiences. It made sense that German readers would have little patience for Celan's German but would welcome a "language and responsibility-weary lyric Koine" like Pound's. A perfect example of this tendency is the critic Günter Blöcker, who reviewed both Pound's *Pisan Cantos* in Eva Hesse's 1956 translation as well as Celan's 1959 volume *Sprachgitter*. Notoriously, Blöcker's *Sprachgitter* review questions Celan's command of German and denies Celan's poetry any "contact with reality" (*Fühlung […] mit der Wirklichkeit*).[710] His review of the *Pisan Cantos*, on the other hand, praises how Pound "translates and cites from Greek, Latin, Old Italian, Provençal, Spanish and Chinese poets." Blöcker glorifies Pound as "speaking mask" (*tönende Maske*), what he calls "a mouthpiece of a time above times."[711] For Blöcker, these two judgments can

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[709] Nicholls, *Ezra Pound: Politics, Economics and Writing,* 212-21 as well as Nicholls, "'2 Doits to a Boodle.'"
[710] Blöcker, "Gedichte Als Graphische Gebilde."
[711] "When Pound gives himself over to learned allusions, when he plays with archetypical images of memory, assembles fragments of culture, employs with associative stimuli, when he translates and cites from Greek, Latin, Old Italian, Provençal, Spanish and Chinese poets, then he becomes a sounding mask, a mouthpiece of a time above times (*einer Zeit*

be entertained *simultaneously*. One can defend Pound's controversial use of Chinese characters *and* fault Celan for neglecting the "communicative dimension" (*Kommunikationscharakter*) of German. Similarly, one can accept Pound's ideograms at face value *and* reject what Blöcker calls Celan's "graphic constructions" (*graphische Gebilde*) as the solipsistic agitations of an intellect that delights in the simple fact of combining disparate elements (*kombinationsfreudiges Intellekts*). And, one can apparently do so without risk of contradiction.

This irony, however, was not lost on Celan, and he did not hesitate to draw the connection between the anti-Semitic tropes and stereotypes that underwrite Blöcker's double standard to the outspoken anti-Semitism of Pound's own wartime propaganda. Like the Goll Affair, Pound's reception in the Federal Republic belongs to a more general culture of historical disavowal and unreconstructed prejudice. In this respect too, the Pound's poetry was timely. Newly published in mass market translation (Ullstein, 1956), Pound's *Dichtung und Prosa* 'war im Kurs': 'il avait cours,' being both current and currency. As Celan put it in a note from the time of Blöcker's *Sprachgitter* review:

> The boys [*Burschen*] had their [George] Forestier, because they couldn't get enough of their Benn, now they will soon find a new Forestier, this time a "completely authentic" one…Until then the correct quantum of Pound will be added to Benn. τὸ καλον [*beauty*] + a few Chinese written signs, that is at the moment what's right… to this also the section on Pound's broadcasts in the essay by Blöcker, "The Jews and the Plutocrats" — there Blöcker expresses himself, in accord with the times, more carefully…[712]

This note brings Blöcker, Pound, and Benn into an ignoble constellation that indicates what Celan sees to be the direction of the post-War West German poetry market. One need not unpack all of Celan's references to see which way he sees the market moving: an older modernism (Benn) and an older anti-Semitism (Blöcker) are reissued in exotic typefaces (Pound) and under new names (Forestier). All the same, the name "Forestier" stands for complicity and hypocrisy with a literalism that merits explication. At stake in this story is not only the post-War koine, but Forestier's own "coinage," the manner in which his persona monetized the history of war and genocide.

The German-language poet George Forestier illuminates the intersection of modernist poetics, the market, and historical disavowal. Largely forgotten today, Forestier was in the early-to-mid nineteen fifties an enormously popular and commercially successful poet, whose work was praised by Benn and was cited regularly in connection with Celan. What contributed to Forestier's success was his sensational backstory, a resumé that included service in the Waffen SS, a stint in American captivity, enlistment in French Foreign Legion, and a mysterious vanishing act in South East Asia.[713] As two young German-language poets, Celan and Forestier were often named in the press in a single breath, and it was not uncommon for Forestier's itinerary through the military ranks of modern fascism and colonialism to be compared with Celan's own passage from Jewish ghetto to Soviet labor camp to French exile. This, surely, would be alarming enough, but in 1955 it was

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über den Zeiten). [...] He steps out of human, temporal contexts; he becomes an im- and supra-personal authority (*[eine] un- und überpersönlichen Instanz*). Centuries gather together in him, cultures pass through him (who couldn't remember Gottfried Benn and his 'Letting pass through one the mist of the gods, the smoke of the Pythia…' (*Durch sich hindurchlassen den Dust der Götter, den Rauch der Pythia…*); he becomes the hero and the victim of a magnificent metamorphosis. Blöcker, *Die neuen Wirklichkeiten: Linien und Profile der modernen Literatur*, 175.

712 Celan, *Mikrolithen sinds, Steinchen*, 350.

713 Oels, "George Forestier: Ich schreibe mein Herz in den Staub der Straße."

discovered that Forestier's biography had been fashioned out of whole cloth by a certain Karl Emerich Krämer, the manager of a Düsseldorf publishing house, who had invented the name and the exotic details for the purpose of selling books of poetry to a younger generation (Celan's "Burschen").[714] Although less novelistic than his invented persona, Krämer too boasted of a "braune Vergangenheit." He had been a distinguished member and local director of the Hitler Youth as well as an artillery officer in the *Wehrmacht*, and he published in both capacities a series of fervently pro-Nazi works, for which he was duly awarded several state prizes and official commendations. Krämer's enthusiastic reception by the Nazi regime constitutes George Forestier's "true" backstory, since not only did Krämer recycle his old verse into Forestier's *œuvre*, but Krämer's status as a prized poet of the Third Reich had led to his being censored after the war. Forestier was only one of many pseudonyms that Krämer invented to circumvent the censor, though Forestier was certainly the most successful. This was in part because the Forestier persona, while having roots in Krämer's own wartime experience, was nonetheless very much the *product* of the post-War reality, a commodity designed to meet the demands of the new literary market.[715] As Celan puts it, Forestier was, like Pound, "just the right thing for the time." Recasting the war and its aftermath as a German *Saison en enfer*, the poems provided a romantic description of wartime complicity as a *personal* tragedy, a kind of myth-making with which many post-War Germans could identify.

Facilitating such repression was part of Krämer's business plan.[716] As Krämer told the Hamburg weekly *Der Spiegel* after his imposture came to light, the idea to return to his unpublished wartime poetry only occurred to him once he came upon a German translation of poems by Frederico García Lorca, a poet long banned by the Third Reich. It is one of the many ironies of this story that a German officer whose verse was celebrated by the Nazis should refashion himself in the image of a poet murdered by the fascists in Spain. But this, of course, is the point. In a similar manner, Krämer did not hesitate to borrow from the most popular of the American modernists, who also was on the "wrong side" of the Spanish Civil War (Krämer to *Der Spiegel*: "I was attempting a kind of Hemingway-style in verse").[717] As Krämer knew, the books of Hemingway and Lorca were what German readers were buying. The financial calculation that went into the Forestier-persona should not be understated. Reflecting back on the fraud in his interview with *Der Spiegel*, Krämer crassly boasted of using a Forestier volume as "starting capital" to found his own publishing house. Rarely has the personal and collective *investment* in the falsification of the past achieved such a concrete manifestation.[718]

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[714] Cf. "Forestier: Hinter Einer Frischen Leiche."

[715] Schmitt, "Der Fall George Forestier."

[716] See, for instance, Barbara Wiedemann's article on the demographic Forestier's work targeted. "The target readership are former the soldiers of the Wehrmacht and the Waffen-SS, men, who, after being released from prisoner-of-war camps, had to learn how to deal with their experiences as active participants in a war of aggression, which they had wanted to take as a war of self-defense." Former soldiers were eager to consume the image of the past that Forestier was selling. As Wiedemann writes, "The message of these poems […] legitimated the mechanisms of repression (*Verdrängnismechanismen*) of the generation of soldiers and reservists (*Kriegsteilnehmer- und Flakhelfer-Generation*) during the years immediately following the occupation by the western powers. In this fashion they [the poems] could satisfy a new need for identification: like Forestier, foreign women loved me without being forced; like him, I was not a solider of my own free will; like him, I didn't hurt anybody; and, above all, like him, I suffered." Wiedemann, "Warum der Erflog? Zu den Lesern von George Forestiers Gedichten," 240. See also the poet Christoph Meckel's recollection of the scandal in *Doppelleben*. "Strohfeuer: George Forestier: Ich schreieb mein Herz in den Staub der Straße," 40.

[717] "Forestier: Hinter Einer Frischen Leiche," 44.

[718] On the figure of 'investment' in Freudian accounts of the psyche, Breithaupt, *Der Ich-Effekt des Geldes*, 198.

Once Krämer's fraud surfaced, those critics who had praised Forestier's verse as well as the publisher who was eager protect his investment came forward to insist that the poet's biography and work had to be kept apart. "Forestier ist nicht Forestier," they conceded, but this is not news, for neither is Lorca "Lorca," nor Celan "Celan."[719] A poet always speaks through a mask. He or she always possesses "two tongues"—one of flesh and one of paper. Such reasoning is a variation on the "Zweizüngigkeit" treated above, one which excuses Forestier's dissimulation by referring to poetry's intrinsic Janus face.[720] Poetic form becomes the alibi for the marketability of repression. That Krämer invented a mysterious fate in Southeast Asia to match a composite style borrowed from Lorca and Hemingway is no doubt why Celan groups the popularity of his poetry with the *Cantos*, whose superficial incorporation of Greek citations and "Chinese written signs" constitute an analogous instance of "two-tonguedness." For Celan, Forestier is the quintessential "speaking mask" (*tönende Maske*). Those were Blöcker's words for Pound, but read through the *Meridian*, they apply just as well to Krämer's persona. When Krämer pretends to be Forestier, he steps out from under "the angle of inclination of his own Being, the angle of inclination of his creatureliness," and no longer speaks as an "I."[721] The poems are written in a poetic idiom synthesized in accordance with popular tastes to produce an image for mass consumption. Sustaining this masquerade was so important to Krämer that he dissimulated a plaster cast of his own face as the death mask of the vanished Forestier, a bizarre twist which drives home Celan's poetological distinction between the "creature" and the "medusa's head."[722]

Krämer is the vulgar apotheosis of the "word-artist" (*Wortkünstler*) that Celan describes and an example of what *Meridian* calls "the self-forgotten one, the one concerned with art, the artist" (*den Selbstvergessenen, den mit Kunst Beschäftigten, den Künstler*).[723] What reconstructing the context that warrants impounding Benn, Blöcker, Krämer alongside Ezra also shows is that Celan's portrait of 'the artist who forgets himself' is really the inverse of what Celan theorizes in preparatory materials for the *Meridian* as "the language and responsibility-weary lyric Koine of our times." The lyric Koine, in Celan's understanding, cultivates oblivion. Whereas Celan's Büchner Prize speech turns Büchner against literature, Krämer's ironically-named *Büchner*-Verlag was founded with Forestier's verse as starting capital and banks on the marketability of the Koine that comes out of its prized "speaking mask." Krämer's, then, is a common language in several senses. On one hand, it dissociates first-person speech from personal history and individual fate. On the other hand, it appeals to a widely-shared desire to efface the scars that twelve-years of dictatorship, war and genocide left on the German language by laundering this language in the aesthetic idiom of international modernism—be it Lorca's, Hemingway's, or Pound's. As Celan presents it, the lyric Koine is the language of disavowal. Once they have been translated into the Koine, all linguistic signs, from the "lyric hotchpotch" of the *Cantos'* Greek phrases and Chinese characters to the details of Forestier's counterfeit backstory, necessarily trade at face value, because the "koinonia," the community united by the Koine, refuses to accept the human face behind the words as anything other than a mask—which is to say, as anything other than a depthless effigy to ornament a coin. More to the point, the community is constituted by this shared language of disavowal—this unacknowledged common past.

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[719] This reasoning ominously anticipates Claire Goll's suggestion in a widely circulated 1960 letter that the murder of Celan's parents by the Nazis was a "legend" Celan had invented for self-serving ends.
[720] One understands therefore why Celan consistently linked Forestier to the Goll Affair. See, for instance, the letter to Walter Jens from May 16, 1961. Wiedemann, *Die Goll-Affäre*, 528–30.
[721] Celan, *The Meridian*, 9. On the "angle of inclination," see Graubner, *Unter dem Neigungswinkel*, 35–46.
[722] "Forestier: Hinter Einer Frischen Leiche," 41.
[723] Celan, *The Meridian*, 6.

The disappearance of this past behind the speaking mask corresponds with the reappearance of a certain kind of modernism. Krämer's counterfeit backstory is quite different from the concept of "persona" that Pound develops in the teens. Pound's practice of speaking from the position of Cino da Pistoia or the River-Merchant's Wife is deeply rooted in Browning's monologues and represents a poetic genre opposed to the fabricated biography that Krämer circulated. Nonetheless, it is certainly true that, particularly after Krämer's imposture was disclosed, the high modernist poetics of Pound *et al.* became part of the argumentative arsenal of critics who, chastened by the fraud, insisted on the separation of biographical data and artistic achievement, of person and persona. Pound was inevitably taken to stand for such a principle. As Hugo Friedrich writes in the *Structure of Modern Poetry*, "the allusions and citations [of modernist verse], especially those found in the work of Ezra Pound, are a medium to turn the poetic subject into a sort of collective subject who plays at a baffling exchange of masks."[724] Pound recycled these masks from the cultural treasury, which makes him protean–"a revolutionary and a conservative in a single person," a poet "who works with the preexisting coinage (*geprägte Münze*), gives himself over to pre-formed worlds, dives into primordial currents of language."[725]

For Blöcker, Friedrich and others, Pound's name was a metonym for a lyric economy predicated on the principle that language always trades at face value. From this perspective, it is no great surprise that one of post-War German literature's most famous charlatans, the modernist sculptor Anatol Ludwig Stiller, never sounds more modernist than when he seems to justify his imposture. Stiller works on the Pound standard, so much so that his observation, "one can't write oneself down, one can only shed one's skin [*sich häuten*]"[726] reads like a loose translation of Pound's 1912 confession—which itself can be read as one of Anglo-American modernism's own (non)origins:

> In the 'search for oneself,' in the search for 'sincere self-expression,' one gropes, one finds some seeming verity. One says "I am" this, that or the other, and with the words scarcely uttered one ceases to be that thing.
> I began this search for the real in a book called Personae, casting off, as it were, complete masks of the self in each poem. I continued in long [sic] series of translations, which were but more elaborate masks.[727]

Ironically, given his support for Gesell's *Schwundgeld* (lit. "shrinking money"), Pound himself functioned as a kind of Gold standard. Pound's authority, like the metal that substantially constitutes the coin, is what underwrites the various kinds of inscription made in the Koine—guaranteeing their value. Never mind that Pound cried out against precisely this kind of fetishism. The project of the *Cantos* is premised on the notion that some such ground is possible. This ground, of course, is not actualized in any single *lingua franca* (after all, "it can't be all in one language"). It is instead realized by the *Cantos'* form and by the "rhythmic law" that coordinates the rhymes between the epic's countless personae, histories, and languages. Whether Pound liked it or not, this practice of translation—this "baffling exchange of masks" and repurposing of "preexisting coin"—could be read as pure, unbounded exchange. Such readings transform the *Cantos* into what it protests most loudly: *usura*.

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[724] Allusions and citations, Friedrich writes, "sind, wie man das insbesondere bei Ezra Pound bemerken kann, Mittel, um das dichterische Subjekt zu einer Art Kollektivsubjekt zu machen, das im verblüffenden Maskenwechsel spielt." Friedrich, *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik*, 168.
[725] Blöcker, *Die neuen Wirklichkeiten: Linien und Profile der modernen Literatur*, 170.
[726] Frisch, *Stiller*, 330.
[727] Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska*, 85.

Rather than a translation including history, the poem became an ahistorical structure, a world language of poetry, a Koine.

V. Common Equivalent

Having surveyed the series of literary, political, and paronomastic associations by which Ezra Pound comes to represent "the lyric Koine of our days," we can return to the problem of poetry and translation as it is raised by the special "strangeness" (*Fremdheit*) of Celan's German in the context of an increasingly globalized literary marketplace. It bears repeating that, for Celan, Pound is more than a figure for the Koine; he is its monetary authority, its *central bank*. Even locked up in a hospital for the criminally insane, Pound possessed sufficient symbolic capital to issue new denominations of the Koine one canto after another, and, having become a principal reference point of international modernism, Pound's poetics was sufficiently credited to provide the Koine with all the requisite signs of legitimacy**.** Of course, given Pound's public disgrace, to speak of Pound's legitimacy might seem paradoxical. But the point is that Pound the Koine has a wider circulation than Pound the poet—so much wider that even those who like Enzensberger expressly repudiate Pound's politics can nonetheless be said to "speak" his language. And this, in effect, is what Celan claims:

> Wir haben, inmitten des allgemeinen Sprachverlusts, eine lyrische Koinē, die, sich durch Spaltung vermehrend, eine "Kette" lyrische Falschmünzer in die Welt setzt. Sie verkehren in Partei- bis Pound-Chinesisch miteinander –
>
> We have, amidst the general loss of language, a lyric Koinē which, multiplying by fission, brings a "chain" of lyric counterfeiters into the world. They converse with each other in party- to Pound-Chinese –

To follow this particular line of thought, one does not need to unpack all of Celan's references to contemporary politics, whether to the anti-nuclear debate or to the Maoist wing of the German Left (though both, curiously, implicate Enzensberger).[728] In bare outline, the note correlates two observations: a general loss of language (*Sprachverlust*), on the one hand; and the explosion of the lyric Koine, on the other. That said, Celan leaves the precise relationship between these two events undetermined. Is the Koine the fission bomb that destroys language? Or is it, like Claire's falsifications (*Fälschungen*), a counterfeiting racket that invades the space that language has vacated? Does the Koine, in other words, belong to the order of causes or effects? Celan does not provide a clear answer, perhaps because no such answer is possible. Indeed, the historic failure of a conventional language of causation—allegorized by the "chain of lyric counterfeiters"—might be part of the problem. In this note, discourse itself acquires agency: "it"—Pound the Koine and not Pound the poet—brings counterfeiters into the world.[729] As with counterfeiting operations generally, it is the Koine's capacity not only to represent but also to intervene "in the world" that makes narrating the chain of causation so difficult. This is why Celan's description of his historical moment seems to be characterized precisely by the *coexistence* of silence and speech, of life-destroying nuclear fission and life-giving cell division, of unspeakable loss and "wild wuchernde" growth.[730] The wide and widening circulation of the "common language" can be said to confirm, compound, and conceal

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[728] See Lau, *Hans Magnus Enzensberger*.
[729] Importantly, the inflation of the Koine is figured as both life-giving (cell division) and life-destroying (nuclear fission).
[730] On Celan's use of the verb "wuchern" (*to grow rampantly*, *to practice usury*) see chapter 3.

an even more "general"—an even more "common" (*allgemein*)—absence of language. Put differently: the Koine produces an illusion of universal communicability that "falsifies" (*fälscht*) the reality of silence. And here one additional translation is highly instructive, for money and, more narrowly, coins are what Marx calls an "allgemeine Äquivalent," habitually translated as "universal equivalent" but just as well (and perhaps more accurately given the historical variety of coinage systems) the "common equivalent."

In Celan's reading, Goll, Forestier, and Pound—these three lyric coiners on the world market—all corroborate Novalis's judgment that "in the end all poetry is translation," but they do so under the sign of betrayal, as in the dictum *tradutorre, traditore* (Italian: "translator, traitor"). Here, Novalis's "in the end" does not signal a logical inference, but the historical culmination of Goethe's conjunction of poetry and markets: once the market consumes poetry, all poetry is translation. In this nightmarish realization of Romanticism, "all poetry is translation" not because it is critical (as the Romantics would have it), but because all poetry is "counterfeit," something "made in opposition" (Latin: *contra-facere*) to the mother tongue, a Koine that usurps and falsifies "genuine" speech.

This, however, prompts the question to which we must now turn. In a world of masks, how does the poet mark the difference between the persona and the person? One might want to read Celan's forceful opposition of the "unique language of the poem" and "the lyric Koine of our days" as implying the mutual exclusivity of these two "Sprachen," but that would be too simple. As Celan's friend Yves Bonnefoy has noted, what so alarmed Paul Celan was that this distinction—so self-evident to him—was, by the combined action of the literary marketplace and the post-War culture of disavowal, in the process of being effaced.[731] This means that the received wisdom that Celan's poetry is untranslatable actually misses the point. It affirms Celan's linguistic difference but it generally refrains from thinking that difference "poetically," as the turning of the breath *against* the common language, as "counter-word" and a "calling-into-question," and ultimately as a disruptive translation *into* German, where the "into" carries the transferential punch of railroad spike forcefully driven into plate glass. To ground Celan's act of resistance in his poetry's untranslatability is unacceptable if it means attributing the breakdown in communication to Celan's difference rather than to the common language's amnesia and not seeing how the rupture implicates German's translatability *tout court*.

The managing editor of Celan's French correspondence, Maurice Olender, is particularly sensitive to how Celan's "Sprache" implicates the common tongue and sheds light on the nature of the opposition between poetry and the Koine. In a 2006 essay titled "Mot, monnaie et démocratie: lieux communs de l'intime" (*Word, Coinage and Democracy: Intimacy's Common Places*), Olender explains what it means to conceive of language as a site of exchange and concludes with a reading of a few lines from Celan's 1963 poem "La Contrescarpe." Without directly citing Celan's remarks about the lyric Koine, he casts Celan's relationship to the German language as a relationship to a falsified, counterfeit coin. He figures "linguistic injury" (*la blessure linguistique*) dealt by the Third Reich as a monetary one (*une blessure monétaire*), and he argues that the monetary metaphor opens up the political dimension of Celan's poetry and helps us see the "commons" at stake in its experience or experiment. As Olender writes,

> It is important to underline the political aspect of Celan's relationship to language. Connected above all with the disappearance of the mother's tongue (*la langue de la mère*), this relationship must not be reduced to a chance occurrence (*une aventure*) of a singular, mystical

[731] Bonnefoy, *Ce qui alarma Paul Celan.*

> sort, since, as the monetary wound (*blessure monétaire*) could indicate, it is undoubtedly just as much a political experiment (*une expérience politique*) linked to a poetics of a common humanity.[732]

In his text, Olender offers an account of the politics of coinage and a history of monetary metaphors that parallels my earlier discussion of the ties between the Koine and the coin, the "koinonia" and the political community. "Counterfeit coins, like lying words, injure everyone and jam the experiential mechanisms (*méchaniques sensibles*) of social intercourse."[733] Mendacious coins like debased koines render everyone complicit in the destruction of a common measure underwriting exchange. "The sharing of values presumes that 'the common people' (*vulgus*) can distinguish between good and bad coin. From invisible lies to the revelation of fraud, from the false word to the false coin, public violation (*le viol public*) undermines the confidence of each citizen. When social usages are transgressed, the bonds of the commons break to pieces."[734]

Beneath this argument, then, is less a strict homology between words and coins than one between linguistic systems and monetary systems. Both systems, language and money, allow for exchange between people and this "social property" expresses itself as a value, an *exchange* value.[735] Within both systems, value is a correlative to substitution and, as Saussure already suggested, such substitutions are particularly manifest in the case of inter-lingual translation.[736] In many (though certainly not all) cases, German "Brot" can be exchanged for English "bread" which can be exchanged for "pain." For Saussure especially, such substitutions produce meaning. Without the possibility of substitution and therefore the presupposition of value, the words "Brot," "bread," and "pain" would be utterly enigmatic. One can argue over definitions the way one haggles over prices, but, in the structuralist account, for these words to possess meaning, an exchange value must nonetheless be presumed. In this sense, a bilingual dictionary is a table of values much in the way that the list of rates at an exchange desk is. The dollar price of the Euro might fluctuate, it is susceptible to crises and manipulations, but, for the sake of international commerce, one counts on the fact that some ratio exists.[737]

Olender sees Celan's poetry as redressing this "monetary injury" to the German language. What Olender calls Celan's "poetics of a common humanity" is therefore a kind of currency reform, and in a companion piece he suggests that poetic rhythm might be read as a potential corrective to a bankrupt Koine, recalibrating the linguistic values that public lies and counterfeiting have corrupted.[738] This kind of "civic" rhythm does not explicitly enter Olender's discussion of Celan, but he does mention a "vital breath" (*souffle vital*), which, particularly when it infuses monetary metaphors, seems to be doing a similar kind of corrective work, restoring the phenomenological ground to a debased token of exchange.

> With Celan, one again finds monetary insignia (*de la marque monétaire*). Particularly to speak the vital breath of language in the *Niemandsrose*, where one reads:
>
> Brich dir die Atemmünze heraus

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[732] Olender, "Mot, monnaie et démocratie: Lieux communs de l'intime," 541.
[733] Olender, 523.
[734] Olender, 532.
[735] Goux, *Symbolic Economies*, 9f.
[736] Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, 60.
[737] See Liu, "The Question of Meaning-Value in the Political Economy of the Sign."
[738] Olender, "Ce que le politique doit au poétique."

aus der Luft um dich und den Baum:[739]

[Break yourself off the breath-coin
from the air around you and the tree:]

What draws Olender to this distich is the uncommon word "Atemmünze" (*breath-coin*), which is an obvious site—and perhaps even a proto-"common place" (*lieu commun*)—from which to think the articulation of the "unique language of the poem" and the Koine, now available "in small and smallest coin." But, in addition to figuring the breath issuing from the mouth as a coin, "Atemmünze" is a word that Celan mints himself, a neologism that recalls one of his preferred terms for the poem, namely "Atemwende" or "breath-turn." Olender's reading emphasizes this continuity of performative speech. He draws the "souffle vital" of the poet who mints breath (*der den Atem münzt*) into dialogue with the Book of Genesis, citing Lorenzo da Brindisi's commentary of Adam's act of naming. As Lorenzo puts it, "the voice is the material (*materia*) of signification (*significationis*) like silver is for the coin."[740] Olender does not elaborate, but the arc of his essay implies that Celan's poem mints "Atem" as Adam once minted the *flatus vocis*, with his breath serving as the material support and existential backing of a reissued Koine. If this is true, then the poet would indeed breath life back into the broken language by re-grounding the word in the breath and restoring a symmetry between the tokens exchange and the bodies that exchange them.

Olender only offers the barest sketch of a reading of "La Contrescarpe," and my summary of that reading takes a significant risk in making explicit several argumentative moves that Olender chooses to leave implicit. Nonetheless, Olender's argument provides an occasion for testing a possible continuity between the "unique language of the poem" and, if not "the lyric Koine of our time," then perhaps a lyric Koine of the future. I argue, however, that "La Contrescarpe" suggests no such continuity. The modernist ambition to "rectify the names" or "purify the language of the tribe," even when undertaken for the sake of the "common good" (as, for example, with Pound), is itself part of the "structure of modern poetry" that Celan's poetry does not share. The "Atemmünze" that Olender relates to "poetics of a common humanity" is, in "Le Contrescarpe," moving in the opposite direction. The breath-coin is "broken off" from the commons, individuating itself, becoming incomprehensible, withdrawing from contemporary usage (words as they are "in the air") as well as etymology (words as part of a "tree"). Indeed, what is so striking about the first line of "La Contrescarpe" is not only "la marque monétaire," but also the violence with which the "Atemmünze" is "struck" from the commons. In the same gesture, the "breath-coin" enters *into* circulation and withdraws *from* circulation, at once an enigmatic memento as a valid unit of exchange. The disjunction is constitutive and already alluded to by the poem's French title, a toponym that reminds us of this German-language poet's exilic condition west of the Rhine. "La Contrescarpe" is a square in Paris Celan is known to have liked. It is not far from l'École Normale Supérieure where he taught German language and literature. Celan would read the newspaper there, in the shade of Paulownia trees, with ambient conversations all around him.[741] The poem seems to refer to that quotidian sociability, while at the same time urging its addressee to extract himself (an

[739] Olender, "Mot, monnaie et démocratie: Lieux communs de l'intime," 541.
[740] Olender, 543 n10.
[741] See, for example, Jean Daive's recollections in *Under the Dome*, 62.

"escarpe" refers to a cut and cutting edge),[742] to break himself free from those trees—the Paul-ownias—and that chatter.[743]

In several important respects, the "message" (*Botschaft*) that the poem carries is inseparable from this experience of excision, exile, and even excommunication from a wider community. In particular, the long poem recounts a 1938 journey from Czernowitz in Romania to Tours in France in which Celan traversed the breadth of the German-speaking world by train. Celan boarded the train on November 9. The massive pogrom known as the "Night of the Broken Glass" (*Reichskristallnacht*) took place that evening, and, when Celan's train stopped briefly in Berlin on November 10, he witnessed smoke rising from the still-burning synagogues from his berth.[744] The destruction of the German-speaking Jewish community cleaves the language of the poem, which is racked with questions of what, at the time, could and could not be foretold and what, looking back, can and cannot be said about those signs. The breaking which produces the "Atemmünze" alludes to the violence of these events. One might even say that the coin is "backed" by that history of destruction. But only in the most ambivalent senses. Coined in a Parisian square, Celan's neologism is foreign tender not just in French but also in German. Rather than facilitate exchange, Celan's "Münze" reclaims an older cultic sense of the Latin word "moneta," which connoted to a warning or portent of evil[745]—as when an augur looks to the sky and tries to decipher the flight of birds. The fifth stanza of "Le Contrescarpe" reads:

> Scherte die Brieftaube aus, war ihr Ring
> zu entziffern? (All das
> Gewölk um sie her – es war lesbar.) Litt es
> der Schwarm? Und verstand,
> und flog wie sie fortblieb?
>
> If the messenger pigeon sheered off, was its ring
> to be deciphered? (All the
> clouds around it – they were legible.) Did the
> flock abide? And understand,
> and flew when it stayed gone?

The "air" (*Luft*) out of which the "Atemmünze" is broken recalls the "clouds" (*Gewölk*) that surround the pigeon. While the messenger got away, the fate of the "flock" (*Schwarm*) is unknown, lost in clouds that suggest the billowing smoke of the 1938 pogrom and the chimneys of the crematoria. The ring which denotes the lost community, like the coin that stands for it, are exilic fragments of this broken social tie, as much a breath of the dead as a "souffle vital."

The necessary links between Celan's living breath and choking clouds of smoke—the memories that linger "in the air that we have to breathe"[746]—are what make it so difficult to assign a

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[742] *Dictionnaire de la langue française par Émile Littré*, s.v. "escarpe," accessed August 1, 2019.
[743] It is not just the pun on Paulownia that suggests that Celan's "du" is a form of self-address. The poem follows of sequence of memories of a manifestly autobiographical nature. Winkler, "Le Contrescarpe," 332.
[744] Rieder, Therstappen, and Celan, *"Opferstatt meiner Hände": Die Paris-Gedichte Paul Celans*, 91f.
[745] "Moneta" is also the Latin transposition of the Greek "mnemosyne," goddess of memory and the muses, which leads Olender to the conclusion: "*Moneta* is therefore a goddess with two faces: between the memory of the past and the foretelling of future dangers. A prescient coin…" See Olender, "Quelques images de la monnaie des langues," 325.
[746] Celan, *The Meridian*, 5.

value to Celan's "Atemmünze." Rather than restore "a reliable common measure,"[747] poems like "La Contrescarpe" assume the paradox of accurately communicating the destruction of the conditions for communicability—what Emannuelle Danblon, punning on the injustice of commensurability, calls a "juste formulation" for a break in the "sens commun."[748] "La Contrescarpe" questions the possibility of "sensing in common" (*sentir en commun*) and with it any version of justice grounded in such a "common sensation," "common sense," or what is commonly taken to be "good sense." "Atemmünze" is not in the dictionary. It has no "common signification." It is both "legible" (*lesbar*) and "illegible" (*[nicht] zu entziffern*). 'Man kann es verdeutschen,' of course, and reclaim it for the common tongue by parsing it according to the individual senses of "Atem" and "Münze." To divide it in this manner, however, would convert it into common German currency and reduce it to a fraction of the Koine. That would be neither an accurate (*juste*) nor a just (*juste*) reading. As the poem shows, doing justice to the past means breaking off from the commons.

VI. Common Loss

Another way of making the same point is to insist on the difference between *speaking* the loss in the common tongue, a use of language which presumes a distance between the language and the trauma, and *bringing* the loss to the common tongue, which collapses this distance. The task, therefore, is not "cleans[ing]" the tongue of the "historical-political dirt" so as to produce a "therapeutic distance,"[749] but to make the loss reverberate in the common language, to reveal the loss *of* the common language. When, on the occasion of receiving another literary honor (the Bremen Prize, 1958), Celan turned to his relationship to the language he shared with his German readers, he emphasized how strange it was that, after what had happened (*das was geschah*), this language had remained intact. More to the point: he specified that "our language" (*unsere Sprache*) was *the only thing* that—"in the midst of such losses" (*inmitten der Verluste*)—remained unlost.

> Erreichbar, nah und unverloren blieb inmitten der Verluste dies eine: die Sprache.
> Sie, die Sprache, blieb unverloren, ja, trotz allem.[750]
>
> Only one thing remained reachable, near and unlost in the midst of the losses: language.
> It, language, remained unlost, yes, despite everything.

The problem here is not the "general loss of language" (*allgemeine Sprachverlust*), as it is in Celan's comments about the lyric Koine several years later, but German's apparent immunity from the general destruction. Under the surface of this acknowledgment of continuity and availability is a tremendous suspicion about the nature of the language that has remained. Rather than point to a wholesome robustness, the survival of the common tongue suggests a more profound inability to admit the catastrophe. Rather than reassure, the language's unwavering nearness points to its deeper aloofness, its readiness to hand betrays its cold indifference to ends it serves. In other words, its presence masks its absence: "lost" and "unlost" are two sides of the same Koine.

Here and in the above-mentioned note about the lyric Koine, the word Celan uses for loss is "Verlust." In addition to denoting what is lost or the act of losing it, "Verlust" can refer to a deficit,

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747 Olender, "Mot, monnaie et démocratie: Lieux communs de l'intime," 526.
748 Cf. Danblon, *Mandorla de Paul Celan: ou l'épreuve de la prophétie*, 65.
749 Steiner, *After Babel*, 409.
750 Celan, "Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der freien Hansestadt Bremen," 185.

a loss as it appears on a balance sheet. Such economic connotations are not irrelevant, and neither is the issue of quantification, since it is precisely at this level of abstraction that Celan poses his barbed question is how the German language could "sustain" and whether German can "account for" the unprecedented losses "totaled up" in the camps. Such losses were literally "amassed," and together estimated at six million human beings. In the spirit of oblique provocation, the speech Celan delivered to a German audience in Bremen distills twelve years of state violence and genocide into a deeply troubling and darkly sarcastic figure of economic gain. The passage cited above continues,

> Aber sie [die Sprache] mußte nun hindurchgehen durch ihre eigenen Antwortlosigkeiten, hindurchgehen durch furchtbares Verstummen, hindurchgehen durch die tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede. Sie ging hindurch gab keine Worte her für das, was geschah; aber sie ging durch dieses Geschehen. Ging hindurch und durfte wieder zutage treten, 'angereichert' von all dem.[751]
>
> But now it [language] had to go through its own lack of answers, through its own terrifying muteness, through the thousand darknesses of death-bringing speech. It went through and offered up no words for that which happened; but it went through this happening. Went through and was permitted to come back to the surface, 'enriched' by all that.

The alarming thought that this passage provokes is of a system of valuation in which the murder of six million people could possibly count as a source of profit. Of course, the numerous, elaborate ways in which the Nazi state *did* profit from mass murder (from confiscated property and forced labor to gold extracted from dental fillings and soap made from human fat) is now well known. Such profit is real but is not Celan's main concern here. The "enrichment" that interests Celan here is linguistic: it is both *literal* and *literary*.

As the scare quotes alert us, the word Celan uses to denote this profit, "'angereichert"' (*enriched*), asks to be read in several registers and at least two "ledgers." Technically, "angereichert" is what rhetoricians call an "inorganic paronomasia," which is a trope that produces a confluence of meaning.[752] This is because "angereichert" (*an-ge-reich-ert*) is a past participle that contains at its center the German noun "Reich" (*kingdom*), and, with "Reich," an allusion to Hitler's *Drittes Reich*, whose policies were responsible for so much of German's ambivalent "enrichment." In other (the same?) words: "angereichert" is "'angereichert"' with "Reich." And this is Celan's main point. The German language, he contends, did indeed profit from the Third Reich, though not (or not just) in the form of an influx of new words and expressions.[753] Instead, Celan implies that German was "enriched" by the windfall of new, historical connotations that mutely accrued to its *old* words. Languages are constantly changing, but the situation of post-War German is unusual in that, with few exceptions,[754] the historic appreciation of its existing "Wortschatz" (*vocabulary*, lit. *word-treasure*) remained largely unspeakable. It was unfit for conversation, a taboo subject passed over in silence. As Celan insists, "Reich" is one example of a word thusly "'angereichert,"' though one can certainly list many others (*Raum, Heimat, Boden, Blut, Ehre, Volk, Opfer, Pflicht, Zucht, Lager*…).[755] All such words are implicated

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[751] Celan, 185–86.
[752] Groddeck, *Reden über Rhetorik*, 140f.
[753] Some famous examples: "Kristallnacht," "Endlosung," "Lebensraum"…
[754] See Klemperer, *LTI*.
[755] To this long list belong at least two colors: "Braun" (*brown*), as we saw in the last chapter, and "Gelb," the color of the Yellow Star.

in an ideological structure that, unlike the Nazi state itself, was never entirely dismantled and which remained coin of the realm long after the official end of the Reich.[756]

"Angereichert" is an exceptionally good pun: it does not merely describe German's newfound riches, it displays this "Reichtum" for all the world to see. But it is the pun's rhetorical and literary brilliance—its economy, its efficiency, and, above-all, its witty pay-off—that poses the problem. Celan's turn of speech commemorates abject loss, but, as a play on words, it produces a surplus of signification, enriching discourse in the noblest sense—not with tinsel ornaments (*Raushgold*) but with a substantial gold mine.[757]

"Angereichert" maps the convergence of "Sprachverlust" (*language loss*) and "Sprachgewinn" (*language gain*). Celan's pointed use of the pun implicates the literariness of his own discourse as that which figures the *loss* as a *gain*. The self-reflexive turn by which the "'angereichert"' hollows out its own expressive content makes the pun more than a devastatingly bitter joke about mass murder. More exactly: the "mise-en-abyme" makes the pun *less*, since the gesture functions precisely to interrupt the advance of Celan's talk, cutting the bottom out from under the speech so that genocide may reveal itself *not* as the historical ground that silently sustains Celan's use of language, but as that language's historical *ungrounding*, its "Abgrund" or "abyss."[758] The pun is therefore not a post-War variation on modernism's rejection of rhetorical ornament in the name of a more "grounded," less "speculative," more "realist" understanding of literary value—the sort of "marque monétaire" the holds in Olender's demos or, less democratically, in Pound's *Cantos*. Rather, the pun irremediably dislocates literary value. It contests the notion that language—and above all "unsere Sprache," the common language, German—is a place where history's losses might be transmuted into rhetorical gains; where abjection might be laundered into literary capital; and where, as though by some accounting trick, the "terrifying muteness" (*furchtbares Verstummen*) of the past securitizes the "klingende Münze" (*hard currency*, lit. *ringing coin*) of today's lyric Koine.

For Celan, to write poetry in German after the genocide is to insist on the irremediable dislocation of literary value. Translation is the name of dislocation as it is produced not only between languages but within a single language. This is the deeper meaning of George Steiner's statement that all of Celan's poetry is translated into German—from *German* into *German*. This movement emphasizes the rupture which not only cleaves the common tongue but also irreparably disarticulates the ground of literary value. Celan's poetry has to be both, familiar and foreign: it is both written "originally" in German, the language of his mother, and translated into German, the language of her murderers. These two languages are, in a truly unbearable sense, *the same*. One might be tempted to reach for a term like "foreignizing translation" to try to describe the intra-linguistic dislocation produced in a Celan poem. Although such a label may be useful in elaborating a phenomenological description of Celan's verse, one must be very careful not to assimilate Celan's poetry to the German Romantic legacy. For Schleiermacher, foreignizing translations insist on their foreignness precisely so that German readers could develop a sense where their own national linguistic wealth resided and how their literature could be augmented. Celan's poetry takes issue with

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[756] See Bogdal, "Literarischer Antisemitismus nach Auschwitz: Perspektiven der Forschung." Statistics pertaining to the persistence of Nazi culture in the Federal Republic can be found in Bergmann and Erb, *Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 57ff.

[757] This according to Celan's favorite Romantic writer, Jean Paul. "Angereichert" is an example of what Jean Paul would call the marriage between a "Wortspiel" and a "Sach-Witz," which means that in contrast to "Wortspiele" where the similarity presented exists only at the level of sound, the relationship "angereichert" figures reaches into the "Ähnlichkeiten der Sachen" (*similarity of the materials*). Cf. Menke, "Jean Pauls Witz."

[758] See Hamacher, *Entferntes Verstehen*, 324–68.

such "Reichtum." The language of Celan's poetry is not rich but abysmal: to read Celan in the original is already to come face to face with what has been lost in translation.

Chapter 5: Testament of Translation

FROM THE TESTAMENT OF YVAN GOLL:

If my wife should die before or at the same time as myself, I appoint as testamentary executor Mr. Charles Rosenberg, a lawyer living in Paris, who, with all the capital, property, and rights that I possess as well as those of Claire, will create a "Claire and Yvan Goll Foundation," which, deposited in a Bank, shall have the objective defined below.

[…]

The "Claire and Yvan Goll Foundation," directed and established by Mr. Rosenberg, will be composed of the following four people: 1) Mrs. Yanette Delétang-Tardiff, a poet living in Neuilly s/S 2) Robert Ganzo, poet in Paris 3) Paul Celan, poet, living in Paris 4) Alain Bosquet, poet, stationed in Berlin.

Their principal task will be to publish or reissue, in a definitive form, my poetic works as well as the works of Claire. If there remains a sufficient sum, the Foundation will create a "Claire and Yvan Goll Prize" awarded on an annual basis to the book of verse of a young poet of particular talent.

If one of the four technical consultants should pass away or recuse him or herself, the three remaining members, under the direction of the testamentary executor, will elect another.[759]

I. Exécuteur testamentaire

"Wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng"[760] – *We dig a grave in the air there one lies unconstrained*. So reads the fourth verse and recurrent refrain of Celan's most famous poem "Todesfuge." A programmatic image for his *œuvre* as a whole, the "Grab in der Luft" (l. 33) situates all of Celan's poetry in the shadow of the crematoria and the camps, charged with the memory of those who vanished into the emptiness of the sky or who, like Celan's own mother, disappeared into

[759] "Si ma femme venait à décéder avant ou en même temps que moi-même, j'institue comme Exécuteur Testamentaire Me Charles Rosenberg, avocat à Paris, qui avec tous les capitaux, biens et droits que je possède et ceux de Claire, créera un "Fonds Claire et Yvan Goll," déposé dans une Banque et dont le but sera défini ci-après. […] / Le "Fonds Claire et Yvan Goll," dirigé et constitué par Me Rosenberg, comprendra les quatre personnes suivantes: 1) Mme Yanette Delétang-Tardiff, poète habitant à Neuilly s/S 2) Robert Ganzo, poète à Paris 3) Paul Celan, poète, habitant à Paris 4) Alain Bosquet, poète, stationné à Berlin. / Leur principale tâche sera de publier ou de rééditer, sous forme definitive, mes œuvres poétiques ainsi que les œuvres de Claire. S'il reste une somme suffisante, le Fonds créera un "Prix Claire et Yvan Goll" destiné annuellement au recueil de vers d'un jeune poète particulièrement doué. / Si un des quatre conseillers techniques venait à disparaître ou à se récuser, les trois restants sous la présidence de l'exécuteur testamentaire en éliront un autre." Quoted in Wiedemann, *Die Goll-Affäre*, 20.

[760] Celan, *KG*, 40.

unmarked, common graves. As Celan wrote to Ingeborg Bachmann in 1959: "for me, Death Fugue is also this: an epigraph and a grave (*eine Grabschrift und ein Grab*). […] My mother as well has only *this* grave."[761]

Celan wrote "Death Fugue" in Bucharest in 1945, in the immediate aftermath of the Nazi genocide. Although this catastrophe is the essential—and the essentially missing—point of departure for Celan's work, there is another legacy with which Celan was charged as a young poet, an obligation to a dead man that seems to have nothing to do with his obligation to the victims of the genocide. Before he died of leukemia in Paris in 1950, Yvan Goll named Celan as one of three members of a future foundation which, following his death and the death of his wife Claire, would be entrusted with continuing Yvan's poetic legacy through the publication and reedition of his works as well as the financial support of gifted young poets. According to the provisions of Yvan's last will and testament, the Claire and Yvan Goll Foundation would be headed by a certain Charles Rosenberg, a Paris lawyer who would serve as Yvan's "testamentary executor" (*exécuteur testamentaire*). Celan and his fellow board members would operate under the legal supervision of the executor and, as per the stipulations of Yvan's will, would assume responsibility for "all the capital, property, and rights that I possess as well as those of Claire."[762]

Celan's break with Claire in 1952 meant that Celan never acted as partial executor of Yvan's testament, just as he never published the translations of Yvan's French poetry that he had written during those years. It is nonetheless significant that, for a period of roughly two years, Celan was doubly entrusted with Yvan's legacy—at once the German translator of Yvan's French poetry and, along with the other members named in Yvan's testament, the presumptive literary executor of Yvan's estate.

The task of a legal executor and the task of the translator are not as different as one might think. In German as in English, "translation" / "Übertragung" can denote the rendering of a word or work in a language different from the one in which it was first produced as well as the transfer of property to a beneficiary different from its previous owner.[763] The translator presides over the first kind of transfer, and the "exécuteur testamentaire" presides over the second. To think these uses of "translation" together is to draw attention to the conditions under which such transmissions are possible. To use a Benjaminian term, what grounds "transmissibility"? Is there in the case of inter-lingual translation a form, institution, or law which, analogously to estate law, ensures the "translatability" of texts? The fact that, for a time, Celan understood himself as being charged both with transmitting Yvan Goll's legacy and with bearing witness to the murder of millions asks that we situate these two burdens in relation to one another. And these considerations in turn force us to return to the conditions under which transmission after the genocide is possible.

As I demonstrated in previous chapters, both Ezra Pound and Ernst Robert Curtius applied themselves to the excavation of the conditions of transmission from the ruins of twentieth-century history. The *virtù* that Pound finds in Cavalcanti, like the *topoi* that Curtius salvages from the rhetorical treatises of the "Latin Middle Ages," are attempts to restore integrity to broken lines of transmission. Indeed, "virtù" and "topos" are names for the continuity that underwrites transmission, principles of translation so transparent that they require no translation themselves. What is Pound's law of rhythm but a guarantor of translatability—a translatability so robust that that it no longer purports to be translation but merely the same thing in its "perpetual effect"? As I showed in chapter three, what is so interesting about Celan's treatment of such fantasies is that he

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761 Celan to Bachmann, November 11, 1959. Bachmann et al., *Herzzeit*, 127.
762 Wiedemann, "'Es ist eine lange, unglaubliche, bitter-wahre Geschichte': Glaire Golls Angriffe auf Paul Celan: Gründe und Folgen," 20.
763 Willer, *Erbfälle*, 27.

does not reject them *in principle*. Rather, he insists on their *historical impossibility* in the wake of the genocide. Celan's famous reference to *Toposforschung* in the final sections of the *Meridian* actually makes a point of accepting Curtius's premise while also inverting its sign, transforming the search for the *topos* into the demonstration of its absence:

> Toposforschung?
> Gewiß! Aber im Lichte des zu Erforschenden: im Lichte der U-topie.
>
> Topos research?
> Certainly! But in the light of what is to be sought: in the light of u-topia.[764]

The following chapter explores this negation of the *topos* and the related dis-location of transmission in the context of Celan's translation of one of Curtius's classical authors, William Shakespeare. It attempts a *Toposforschung* "im Lichte der U-topie," tracing what happens to the bequest of Shakespeare's *topoi* when they are passed down to Celan. The first half of the chapter is devoted to a close reading of sonnet 4. One of the Young Man sonnets, sonnet 4 begins with the reproach, "Unthrifty loveliness why dost thou spend," and goes on to spell out the conditions under which that "loveliness" can be preserved and transmitted to posterity. The mechanics of this transfer, which Shakespeare figures as a testamentary bequest, has affinities to both Pound and Curtius's versions of transmission, even while Shakespeare seems more attentive to the bitter ironies entailed in the process, and particularly to the fact that it can only succeed over the Young Man's dead body. The second half of the chapter examines how Celan assumes Shakespeare's legacy, the legacy of Shakespeare's sonnet, as well as the legacy of various *topoi* (the inheritance, the will, the legacy, the executor, etc.) with which Shakespeare's poem figures its own translatability. It will show how these lines of transmission intersect the memory of the genocide born by Celan's German and explode into *double entendres*, provocative rhymes, and halting rhythms. These features "execute" Shakespeare's legacy with no hope of an afterlife and mark Celan's translation as situated after the possibility of transmission.

II. "Beauty's legacy"

Neither Curtius nor Celan deny that something is lost in translation. The stakes of their confrontation rather concern how it is possible for anything to be passed down at all. What is the ground of transmission? If something is remaindered, *where* does it remain? If something is carried forward, to *what* place is it carried? As I showed in the previous chapter, for Curtius the *topos* is the site for receiving and transmitting those bequests. But such transactions are often thematized by poems themselves. In some special cases, such economies of transmission are the subject of the poem to be translated. This is the case with Shakespeare's fourth sonnet, a poem which Celan translated in the early 1960s. Shakespeare's version reads,

> Unthrifty loveliness, why dost thou spend
> Upon thyself thy beauty's legacy?
> Nature's bequest gives nothing but doth lend,
> And being frank she lends to those are free.
> Then beauteous niggard why dost thou abuse

[764] Celan, *Der Meridian*, 10.

The bounteous lárgess given thee to give?
Profitless usurer, why dost thou use
So great a sum of sums yet canst not live?
For having traffic with thyself alone,
Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive.
Then how when nature calls thee to be gone,
What ácceptable audit canst thou leave?
Thy unused beauty must be tombed with thee,
Which usèd lives th'executor to be.[765]

Even in the original, this sonnet has much to teach those who are interested in how translations reckon with the losses that they also entail. Curtius describes the medieval *translatio* through a metaphor that mixes the stewardship of a legacy with the services of a bank—"the lesson of the Middle Ages is the reverent reception and faithful transmission of a precious deposit"[766]—and that is just how Shakespeare describes the transfer of beauty across generations. Drawing from the same topological well as Curtius himself, Shakespeare figures beauty as a "largess" that is deposited in a body to be recirculated in order to appreciate and be appreciated. Materializing at the point of articulation between the laws of kinship and the laws of property, beauty becomes a hereditary capital that accumulates as it cycles between *personal* property and personal *property*. If, on one level, Shakespeare presents this financial conceit as an older man's attempt to convince a younger man to beget an heir, on another level, it is no metaphor at all. Sexual procreation and financial profit may figure one another, but this does not mean that they belong to radically different domains. Here as elsewhere in Shakespeare, sexual intercourse is a kind of commercial traffic.[767] Far from playing vehicle to the tenor of organic reproduction, the language of banking and the forms of tenurial law are methods of accounting for the transfer of wealth in a nascent capitalist society.

Shakespeare's speaker presents himself as an accountant who "audits" the behavior of his addressee, the Young Man. This audit is accomplished through a sustained pun on the word "use." In Shakespeare's use of "use" two different economic logics intersect.[768] Simplifying slightly, we could say that one of these "uses" alludes to the eclipsed feudal order: it is associated with the seignorial system (*usufruct*) and the "use value" of land and reproductive sexuality (*sexual use*). The other "use" refers to the logic of the market, and, to the merchants of Shakespeare's London, "use" is a synonym for "exchange."[769] An extreme instance of "use" as "exchange" is the practice of "usury," in which money is given in exchange for more money later. The aristocratic and the financial senses of use have always coexisted, though they represent different understandings of value and different modes of evaluation. Thus, where the landlord realized the use value of his estate by prudently managing his domains, the usurer capitalized on the use value of his money by leasing it out, as though his debtors were tenants and the medium of exchange a means of production like land. The first mode of value creation belongs to what Aristotle called "household management" (*oikonomia*), while the second mode—which Aristotle maintains creates no *new* (use) value—is what is

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[765] This printing of the poem follows Stephen Booth's edition of the 1609 Quarto. Booth, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 7. It is not, however, the text from which Celan worked. On *that* text, more below.
[766] Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 596.
[767] See Hawkes, *Shakespeare and Economic Theory*. See also the essays collected in Linda Woodbridge's collection, *Money and the Age of Shakespeare: Essays in New Economic Criticism*.
[768] For an overview of Shakespeare's use of "use," see Hammond, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 479–81.
[769] Alford, *London's Triumph*, esp. 180-192.

called "wealth acquisition" (*chrematistics*). The *telos* of *oikonomia* is more utility, more use value; the *telos* of *chrematistics* is more money, more exchange value.[770]

From the Greeks to Shakespeare's time and beyond, this difference has often been the site of a moral critique of money lending. This is because, as David Hawkes argues, "money possesses no use value apart from its function as a representation, and the most egregious transgression committed by usury is to treat this symbolic exchange value as if it were use value."[771] Despite the fact that his business is lending, commentators from Aristotle to Aquinas have reproached the usurer as a hoarder and miser who accumulates money just for the sake of accumulating money—a practice Aristotle called "chrematistics."[772] Through conceptual and tropological connections with roots just as deep, usury has conventionally associated with compulsive, "concupiscent" desire and barren, non-reproductive sex, both of which were "contra naturam": "abuses" of sexuality's natural and God-ordained "use." Hence Dante's grouping of usurers and sodomites in the seventh circle of Hell.[773]

Although interest rates that Dante, Aquinas and others would have doubtlessly labeled usurious were no longer a crime in England by the middle of the sixteenth-century, popular prejudice against the practice was alive and well in Shakespeare's day.[774] Representations of ruthless creditors—most infamously Shylock—fill the pages of early modern plays, poems, and sermons. These representations, which associate the moneylender with the machinations of witches, alchemists, and sodomites and load him down with antisemitic tropes, channeled anxieties about the slackening of feudal social relations and the subordination of more and more aspects of life to a logic of exchange. From a Marxian perspective, to talk about usury during this period was to talk about the effects of a shift in the mode of production, in particular the growth of the domestic weaving industry, the chartering of trading companies, and the accompanying expansion of international trade. Moneylenders did not produce these changes, but the credit they extended sustained mercantilism and was indispensable to the operation the global markets of Bruges, Antwerp, Genoa, and Venice. London only joined the ranks of such cities in the sixteenth century, and the increase of commercial traffic had a transformative effect on the Tudor city.[775] As Marx writes in the third volume of *Capital*,

> The development of trade and commercial capital always gives production a growing orientation towards exchange-value, expands its scope, diversifies it and renders it cosmopolitan, developing money into world money. Trade always has, to a greater or lesser degree, a solvent effect on the pre-existing organizations of production, which in all their various forms are principally oriented to use-value.[776]

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[770] Spencer, "Taking Excess, Exceeding Account: Aristotle Meets *The Merchant of Venice*."
[771] Hawkes, *The Culture of Usury in Renaissance England*, 52.
[772] For summaries of this Greco-Christian critique by two leading authorities, see Le Goff, *Le Moyen Âge et l'argent*, 110f. Todeschini, *La ricchezza degli ebrei*, 155.
[773] See Le Goff, *Your Money or Your Life*.
[774] Henry VIII legalized interest rates of as high as 10 percent in 1545. In 1551 this decision was reversed. In 1571, when Shakespeare was seven years old, 10 percent was once again legal. It remained maximum legal rate throughout Shakespeare's life, and was only lowered to 8 percent in 1624, eight years after his death. Hawkes, *The Culture of Usury in Renaissance England*, 24.
[775] Alford, *London's Triumph*, 39–51.
[776] Marx, *Capital*, III: 441.

Capital is not a book about the revolutionary power of usury, and Marx, pulling from the same stock of clichés as Shakespeare, tends to regard the usurer as a "parasite" who clings on to the current mode of production and "sucks it dry."[777] Nonetheless, because the usurer centralizes monetary wealth—because the terms of his loans were a conspicuous instance of exchange dictating use—he captured the early modern imagination as the metonymy for the replacement of traditional "values" with the fungible and liquid money-based value system that we know today.[778]

With or without the intervention of the usurer, it was more and more common for Englishmen of Shakespeare's age to liquidate their real assets. Such sales were not always means of extinguishing debts; In an increasingly mercantile society, what Hawkes calls "the translation of land into money," and not the hereditary succession of title, represented the surest way to wealth and social status.[779] Shakespeare himself is an example of this transition. The commercial success of his plays allowed him to mount the social ladder of Stratford-upon-Avon. With his profits he was able to "translate" money back into land, acquiring a large family home and 107 acres of orchards and pasture lands relatively late in life not by inheritance but by purchase.[780] Shakespeare's is a middle-class story, not one of the aristocratic dramas he liked to depict onstage. Whereas Shakespeare bought his status, those characters often make a scene of repudiating what money could buy. [781] Timon of Athens is perhaps the most famous of these aristocrats who stand by Aristotle's distinction between noble *oikonomia* and ignoble *chrematistics*. A wealthy landowner brought low by debt, Timon is remembered above all for his screed against exchange in which he excoriates the usurers and curses the power of money to "*place* thieves/ And give them title, knee and approbation/ With the senators on the bench."[782] From a biographical perspective, lines like these are ironic. Shakespeare's father was himself a usurer, and the large house in downtown Stratford that Shakespeare purchased in 1597 was strategically situated across from the "benches" of the Guild Hall. For £120, in other words, Shakespeare, child of middle-class parents, acquired his estate—his so-called "New Place"—and installed his family at the center of his community's commercial and civic life.

By the time sonnet 4 was composed, the market had triumphed over the *ancien regime*. The distinction between *oikonomia* and *chrematistics* that Timon stands for had lost its material basis and persisted only as an ideological construct, a fiction written for the stage. But this legacy was extremely useful to writers like Shakespeare, since the clash of aristocratic and the financial mode of valuation spoke directly to popular anxieties about the autonomy of monetary representation. Ironically, this meant that there was much "use"—that is, much *profit*—in troping on the difference between use-value and exchange-value. This is what happens in the sonnet 4. The poem's "audit" is a metaphor. In a gesture that is as ingenious as it is maddening, Shakespeare employs one sense of "use" as a figure for the other.[783] Thus, when the poet addresses the young aristocrat as a "profitless usurer," he is not commenting on the Young Man's business of moneylending. Rather, he is

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[777] Marx, III: 731.
[778] Hawkes, *The Culture of Usury in Renaissance England*, 95–114.
[779] Hawkes, 100.
[780] Armitage, "Shakespeare's Properties."
[781] Hawkes, *Shakespeare and Economic Theory*, 139f.
[782] Timon of Athens, 4.3.37-38. See also, Smith, "'Verdammt Metall.'"
[783] Helen Vendler points to this tropological vertigo induced by Shakespeare's play with economic value and noble virtue in her own language: "Capitulating to paradox, Shakespeare produces a series of showy compound epithets characterizing the young man […]. We are hard put to know whether he is a beauteous niggard or a niggardly beauty, and the very uncertainty as to the essence and accident contributes to the confusion attending any definition of the Young Man's ethical status." Vendler, *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 62.

transcribing several different kinds of value production under the same heading, "using" (troping on) "use" (*chrematistics*) to talk about "use" (*oikonimia*).[784]

With these complexities in mind, it is possible to return to the questions of transfer and loss raised by sonnet 4 with a more precise sense of its system of accounting. I have already suggested that the poet delivers his ethical objection to the Young Man's behavior as a kind of economic wisdom. In effect, the beautiful young aristocrat has ignored the basic rule of asset management. He behaves like an incompetent usurer and squanders metaphorical riches by declining to lend them out. Were the Young Man to put his beautiful body to procreative "use"—where "use" implies both interest-bearing loans and infant-bearing intercourse—he could anticipate a handsome return on his investment. Aristotle called such a return *tokos*, a nicely polysemic word for the 'offspring' generated either by the sexual "traffic" of bodies or the commercial "traffic" of money.[785] The financial conceit provocatively runs these two kinds of reproduction together. It is a figurative accounting whose intention is to reveal how the Young Man is doubly in the red. He thus withholds his beauty at his own expense, and his masturbatory habit of trading exclusively with himself is a dead end from both the financial and reproductive point of view.

On several levels, the poem attempts to salvage this looming loss. Its evocation of "beauty's legacy," for example, is a metaphorical appeal with which the speaker hopes to reverse the direction of his companion's self-expending economy. The metaphor breaks open the closed circuit of the Young Man's willful reserve by contesting the assumption that his good looks are his "personal" property. Here, the poem introduces a legal reasoning and logical analysis whose cumulative effect is to dispossess the Young Man of his attributes. The word property entered the English language as a synonym for "quality," a meaning which is retained when one speaks of the "curative properties" of herbal remedies or, in a certain sense, the "chemical properties" of a compound.[786] Nonetheless, by the seventeenth century, "property's" principal acceptation had shifted from Aristotelian "predicable" to legal possession. One's personal property came to designate not the qualities of one's "own" self but, in the first instance, the things that one "owned."[787] Both of these meanings of property are relevant for sonnet 4's treatment of beauty, with one additional complication. In the context of patrilineal inheritance, property's legal acceptation conspires with its metaphysical sense to doubly dispossess the Young Man of his handsome endowment, for neither is such beauty is entirely his own nor entirely owned by him. Most importantly, he is not free to dispose of his beauty as he will. His beauty is rather a link in a chain of patrimonial succession, a legacy passed down *by* his parents and intended *for* his children. In truth, the Young Man is only an intermediary in this vaster, intergenerational transaction. As Stephen Booth has noted, the "beauty" mentioned in line two is both the grammatical subject of the "legacy" and its logical object.[788] By the rules of grammar and of

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[784] As we shall also see, the irony of Shaksepeare's "use" of "use" is rooted in early modern law. As Hawkes points out, "[u]nder the ironic restitution of Elizabethan law, it was the usurer who ended up paying the borrower, not the other way around. The borrower thus profited from the usurious transaction and became, in effect though not in law or in intention, a "usurer." It seems to me that this is what happens in the *Sonnets*, where the lady is ultimately revealed as the true "usurer." Hawkes, *Idols of the Marketplace*, 114.

[785] Aristotle, *The Politics, and the Constitution of Athens*, 125b.

[786] *OED Online*, s.v. "Koine," accessed August 1, 2019.

[787] Cf. Donahue, "The Future of the Concept of Property Predicated from Its Past." With the concept of "labor power," as Marx notes, the worker is said to "own" (in the second sense) their value-generating "property" (in the first sense). As Hawkes argues, a similar slippage from metaphysical and logical predication to legal possession can be found in Aristotle's treatment of slaves. For Aristotle, slaves are both "properties" and "properties" of their masters. Hawkes, *Shakespeare and Economic Theory*, 161ff. See also, Hawkes, "Shakespeare and the Performative Sign," 109–10.

[788] Booth, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 140.

kinship, the Young Man simply mediates the hereditary transfer of beauty by beauty. With one foot in biological succession and one foot in the patrimonial transmission, his body is the material repository by means of which beauty legates itself to itself. In accordance with the subordinate role he plays in beauty's reproduction, he possesses his fortune only provisionally and by provision.

In the poem, these provisions are figured as a *will*. In fact, one consequence of demoting the Young Man with respect to the beauty "given [him] to give" is that it reconceives agency as a testamentary intention. Although sonnet 4 does not explode into puns on Shakespeare's first name in the manner of poems from later in the sequence,[789] "will" nonetheless remains a key word that, in its semantic and self-referential complexity, literally and figuratively underwrites its form of property transfer.[790] Although its meanings ramify in multiple directions, the will of sonnet 4 is first of all a *last* will, which is to say *another* text that Shakespeare's poem alternately presumes, paraphrases, and projects before itself. Prosopopoeia like "beauty's legacy" and "nature's bequest" give the Young Man's current "loveliness" a prehistory by referring this attractive property *back* to a previous scene of testamentary provision. The final couplet, meanwhile, performs an opposite and equal movement, leaping *forward* in time to the Young Man's burial so that we may witness the execution of his own testament. These instances of analepsis and prolepsis bookend the description of how the Young Man has been violating the implicit conditions of his inheritance ("why dost thou abuse…"). All too conveniently perhaps, the poem's speaker—the stylized poet later referred to as "Will" (sonnet 136)—delegates to himself the task of reporting the provisions of the will to which the Young Man owes his fortune. The older poet makes for an odd gold-digger, but his attempt to dictate the Young Man's will recalls the tradition of *capitatio testamenti*, the "inheritance-hunting" *topos* famous from Roman satire and modern melodrama. In any case, this ambition transforms the sonnet into a contest of wills in several senses. From the very beginning, the poet "Will" challenges the Young Man (who may also be named "Will") by drawing on the legal authority of a fictive testament—yet another "will." Sonnet 4 does not presume to reproduce this other text, only to translate its terms faithfully. In other words, Will is the will's representative, the (literary) "executor" of "nature's bequest." In his capacity as delegate, the poet Will not only voices the intentions of the Young Man's hypothetical benefactor, he also contrasts these wishes with the Young Man's own behavior. What results is the unstable coincidence of prodigality and miserliness that so characterizes the sonnet's rhetoric: against the "lárgess" embodied by the Young Man revolts the self-will of his tight-fisted economizing.

Just this splitting of the will opens up the possibility of transmission. The Young Man's beauty will be conveyed "by will." For his beauty to carry on, his self-will must be left behind. The problem, therefore, runs far deeper than the alleged stinginess. No matter how he behaves, the Young Man would always stand at cross purposes with the legacy transmitted through his body.[791] Precisely to the degree that it is his own, his will clashes with the will he was born to carry out, that "original" intention which the poet mirrors back to him in the form of the poem. As I have already mentioned, however, this representation is also a kind of delegation. There is a performative aspect to the sonnet's appeal to this other, ancestral, and likely "paternal" will, a dimension which exceeds the poetic speaker's perlocutionary ambition to persuade the Young Man to change his ways. This is because, by speaking on behalf of the legacy, the poet effectively nominates himself as beauty's

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[789] On the punning on "will" across the sequence, see Fineman, *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye*, 289.
[790] On such one-word semiotic "matrices," see Riffaterre, "The Poem's Significance," 261.
[791] For a dramatic variation on this pun, see Gary Watt's reading of Laertes' warning to Ophelia, "his will is not his own." Watt, *Shakespeare's Acts of Will*, 184ff.

"executor." He "executes" not only in the generic sense of carrying out beauty's purpose but also in the legal sense of "executing" its testamentary provisions, an instance of what Curtius might call the "reading of the last will" *topos*,.[792] In inheritance law, an "executor" is someone invested with the legal authority to put the deceased's will into effect. Save in those special cases where they are also "executioner,"[793] "th'executor" does not intercede between the self and his personal properties; death alone effects that division. Nonetheless, the executor manages the space opened up by this disassociation, transferring to new owners the properties that once belonged to the testator. There is something supernatural about the performative force of the executor's action, which confers an afterlife in exchange for the literal and legal alienation of personal properties. In sonnet 4 in particular, such exchanges assume a metaphysical dimension: the Young Man's beauty becomes a property that can be predicated of another subject. As if by witchcraft, an "execution" of this sort takes special liberties with the basic attributes by which Aristotle qualifies being. Alienated from the things that they predicate, properties acquire a certain autonomy. It is not that the Young Man's beauty resembles that of his ancestors; it is that his beauty *was* theirs. The *same* property—his hereditary good looks—shuffles between *different* bearers. Although the executor's authority presupposes the testator's death, the very power to make such transfers has a tendency to obscure this loss. In one sense, the loss is attested; in another, it is repudiated. The poet acknowledges, for instance, that Young Man's testament will only be executable "when nature calls [him] to be *gone*." The sonnet's promise therefore is not that the executor will bring him *back*, but rather to secure the ongoing existence and "qualitative" continuity of the Young Man's beautiful property. In other words, it is a "formal" correspondence and not a "substantial" durability that preserves the one who *is* no more within the here-and-now that *is*. Not unlike the poet Will, the executor of the will administers a certain code, animating the laws of property or the rules of phonetics in such a way that their performance "rhymes" absence with presence, death with life:

> Thy unused beauty must be tombed with thee,
> Which usèd lives th'executor to be.

Grammatically and logically, the referent of the pronoun "thee" cannot be the subject of the infinitive "to be." Fortunately, the poem and inheritance law are there to circumvent the rules of syntax and the punctuation of life. In fact, in sonnet 4's account of the Young Man's life, it is literally true that living only takes place after his death.

The rhythm of life and death that the executor coordinates is essential to what sonnet 4 has to say about the transfer of value. If the poem makes room for a certain irony, it is nonetheless the case that the perspectives of the stylized poet and the imagined executor converge: the Young Man lives for the benefit of the legacy invested in him, and his death is a moment in the life cycle of capital that his investor—"nature"—has already reckoned in advance. For the eye that cares only for the return on investment, the Young Man's life is a fungible enterprise. "Beauty's legacy" may need the Young Man to reproduce itself, but, like the vampires that haunt the first volume of *Capital*, it needs him *only* to reproduce itself. In this economy of life and death, the executor plays the role of the broker and the testament the bill of exchange. Death is a prerequisite for exchange, so, though the poet may have saved the imagined execution of the Young Man's will for the final couplet, in

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[792] Although Curtius does not mention such a testamentary *topos* in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, the staged or recounted scene of a notary reading a last will and testament is a set-piece around which many so-called "inheritance plots" turn, particularly in Shakespeare. See Dowd, *The Dynamics of Inheritance on the Shakespearan Stage*, as well as Watt, *Shakespeare's Acts of Will*.

[793] For Shakespeare's use of "executor" with the meaning "executioner," see Henry V.I.ii.203.

reality, the grim specter of the "executor" really haunts the poem from the beginning. As overdetermined as they are, the sonnet's *last words* echo its first. The execution with which it closes returns us to the "legacy" with which it opens and to the poet's insistence that the Young Man's beauty is itself an inheritance, that it too was stipulated by a will and disbursed by means of an execution. While the sonnet may be secondary with respect to the Young Man's beauty, that beauty is itself secondary with respect to "nature's bequest"—which is a will that Will the poet represents more faithfully than its 'flesh-and-blood' beneficiary. The Young Man is one link among many within this longer chain of transmission, in which the poet's *polyptoton* "given thee to give" provides the most basic hortatory refrain. In a sense, the poet's self-appointed task is to oversee the movement of value along this chain, to coordinate the production and reproduction of beauty, and to thereby ensure a steady return on investment.

The iterative structure of this transmission helps explain the sonnet's *general* tendency towards recursion, in which each generation lives on as the previous generation's "executioner." More profoundly, however, it reflects the poem's conspicuous refusal to assign any value to the *particular* life the Young Man leads. Instead, the only life we *hear* of—and it merits stressing that "audit" comes from *audire*, to hear[794]—is the life of the *executor*. Life is "acceptable" only in relation to the value chain as a whole, which means that the Young Man has to wait for the executor's account to "hear" whether his life was, in fact, worth living: he "can[] not live," unless his beauty "lives th'executor to be."[795] One detects the enduring legacy of Neoplatonism in the will to disassociate the life of beauty from the life of bodies, but its figural matrix remains principally logical and legal. Once properties have become alienated from their owners, their "lives" need not coincide with the lives of those who bear them. Thus, in predicate logic, the kind of being the Young Man is and whether this mode of being "counts as" living are questions that can only be answered by recourse to predicating properties. But, as Marx already noted, such logical predications inhere within a legal structure of property relations, where to be "without property" signifies more than an absence of logical determination. For Marx, Shakespeare's plays show how, as exchange value penetrates into more and more domains of life, even a personal property like beauty, an attribute commonly associated with individuality (*Individualität*), in effect ceases to be a "property" in the sense of "quality" (*Eigenschaft*) and becomes a "property" in the sense of "transferable asset" (*Besitz*, *Vermögen*).[796] But this is also the social context of the *Sonnets*, and, as a literary figure, the executor's "audit" reckons with just this transition in the system of valuation. Whether the Young Man is appraised as living depends on how he manages that property that makes his life into an object of appreciation, his beauty. In this accounting, the transmission of beauty is the life of value and the value of his life. The Young Man must valorize his beauty for his life to be valuable.

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[794] *OED Online*, s.v. "audit," accessed August 1, 2019.

[795] On early modern representations of the "executor's accounting," see Clarkson and Warren, *The Law of Property in Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Drama*, 280f.

[796] According to Marx, Timon's speech in act 4, scene 3 of *Timon of Athens* demonstrates Shakespeare's firm grasp on the significance of money in a context where exchange value has been generalized. As he puts it, "Shakespeare excellently depicts the real nature of *money*. […] That which is for me through the medium of *money*—that for which I can pay (i.e., which money can buy)—that am *I*, the possessor (*Besitzer*) of the money. The extent of the power of money is the extent of my power. Money's properties (*Eigenschaften*) are my properties (*Eigenschaften*) and essential powers—the properties and powers of its possessor (*Besitzer*). Thus what I *am* and *am capable* of is by no means determined by my individuality. I am ugly, but I can buy for myself the most *beautiful* of women. Therefore I am not *ugly*, for the effect of *ugliness*—its deterrent power—is nullified by money. […] Do not I, who thanks to money am capable of *all* that the human heart longs for, possess (*besitzt*) all human properties (*Vermögen*)? Does not my money therefore transform my lack of means (*Unvermögen*) into its contrary?" Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 138, translation modified.

Where life has been subordinated to its exchangeability, we are not far from the plot lines of noir fiction. In fact, such assumptions about the life worthy and unworthy of living not only account for the poem's didactic tone. Seen in a more sinister light, they suggest why its speaker does not wait for nature to call his companion "to be gone" before "executing" his will. As the inheritance plots of the hardboiled genre amply demonstrate,[797] "death by natural causes" is often a figure of speech for ends authored by another will—particularly when a legacy of "bounteous largess" stands to payout. To the degree that the poet has an interest in ensuring that the beauty's "sums" continue to "sum," it makes sense that his poem should substitute itself for nature's "call" by preemptively calling in the Young Man's debt. Talk of nature here is a pretense: what matters is not the rhythm of creaturely existence but the timetable of capital. Strictly speaking, with its three quatrains and three vocative appeals, it is the *poem* that calls the Young Man *so that* he may be gone, so that it may execute his will *de son vivant*.

Lyric often figures the absent interlocutor as a kind of literary presence conjured in the vocative,[798] but this apostrophic exchange acquires a particularly morbid connotation in sonnet 4. It is not just that the speaker's hectoring questions leave no room for the Young Man to respond; it is that, in its selection (*inventio*) and ordering (*dispositio*) of tropes, the poem advances by pushing the Young Man to its margins, alienating him first from his physical properties ("thy beauty's legacy"), then dividing him from himself ("Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive"), before shuttling him prematurely to the grave ("must be tombed with thee"). As we have seen, the poet not only suggests that the Young Man's way of life falls short of living (l. 8), he presents "beauty's legacy" as the strict antithesis to his companion's self-will, so strictly opposed that "executing" the first also implies "executing" the second. It would therefore be a mistake to read the posthumous "life" of the Young Man's beauty, on whose promise the sonnet ends, as constituting the *Young Man's* afterlife. The Young Man does not live on. "*Beauty's* legacy" amounts to *his* negation.

III: Testamentary Translation

In a purely descriptive and almost banal sense, Shakespeare is quite right to say that the price of hereditary transmission is life. At this early point in the sonnet sequence, however, this descriptive claim is accompanied by a value judgment, borrowed from the discursive sphere of banking, and maintaining that the expenditure is worth the cost. By virtue of its figural accounting system, afterlife does not entail a loss but, providing the property is transferred, a continued return on nature's original investment. If "life" refers to the properties and not their owner, then death becomes a technical problem resolved by prudent management. This is a particular way of thinking about "beauty's legacy," but it is also a particular way of thinking about inter-lingual translation. On a certain level, this analogy between patrimonial succession and inter-lingual translation is anything but novel. In the European Middle Ages, political-legal and cultural-linguistic transfer, *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii*, have been mutually informing concepts. It is a historiographic commonplace that just as political authority was transmitted from Athens to Rome to Paris, so too was cultural authority transmitted from Greek and Latin texts to modern vernacular literatures. What is fascinating about Shakespeare's sonnet, by contrast, is how the motives and codes of patrimonial succession are themselves transposed into a legal language of bank capital and property transfer. Diffracted through the prism of these modern discourses, Shakespeare's testamentary *topos* figures

[797] According to Clarkson and Warren, an early modern example of such "noir" storyline can be found in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*. See Clarkson and Warren, *The Law of Property in Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Drama*, 230.
[798] Culler, "Apostrophe," in *ThePursuit of Signs*.

the patrimony as having always been alienated property, whose value always rested on the possibility of its exchange. In other words, the power of its properties to transfer their owner is a precondition of the original "bequest," a legal consequence of its testamentary intention.

When it comes to the practice of inter-lingual translation, this means that the original does not possess an immediate and "originary" relation to its various "properties" (to its message, say, or its emotion, or its meter), of which the translation would then be the recomposition. To the contrary, for such literary properties, life neither begins nor ends in the original's language. With Shakespeare, this is often literally true. The literary inheritance that accumulates in the *Sonnets* is so manifest that many of its poems—including sonnet 4—can be construed as patchworks of translations from earlier "source texts."[799] On a more general level, it is impossible to imagine the *Sonnets* independently of the vast Petrarchan patrimony that it inherits.[800] Sonnet 4 stands at the receiving end of this prized "Italian" tradition, a legacy of beauty whose forms its English author has adopted and adapted, "turning" them slightly to generate the added value of the "Shakespearean" sonnet.

Still, sonnet 4 does not merely lend itself as a model for translation. Lines like "nature's bequest gives nothing but doth lend" may practice translation, and tropes like "beauty's legacy" may allegorize it, but to consider the poem as either an example or an allegory does not yet reach the heart of the matter. My argument is that sonnet 4's subject *is* translation—not in a figurative sense but in a primary one. Translation, in other words, is not something that needs to be brought to Shakespeare's poem, nor is it a secret hidden behind Shakespeare's English text. On the contrary, sonnet 4 raises the question of translation in its own language and on its own terms. If one consults the *OED*, one sees that in the sixteenth century a "translation" could refer to "a transfer of property."[801] Uncommon though it may be today, this usage of "translation" is closer to the Latin *transferre* (to bear across, to transfer), from whose past participle the English word "translation" is derived. It is also more proximate to some of the earliest English uses of the word, where "translation" denoted the transportation of the body or relics of a saint from one church to another. (That the Middle Ages understood such displacements as property transfers in a non-trivial sense is attested by the scholastic debate over whether one could quantify the value of such deposits in monetary terms.)[802] Seeing that one of the early modern executor's principal tasks was to arrange for the burial of the testator,[803] the thought that the Young Man's once beautiful body would resemble a relic "tombed" in the ground is clearly germane to its accounting.

But there is an even more literal sense in which sonnet 4 addresses the problem of translation. One of the few contexts in which translation continues to denote the transfer of property is the field of inheritance law. Indeed, modern law dictionaries like *Blacks* file "translation" alongside the wider set of legal terms ("legacy," "bequest," "executor," etc.) with which sonnet 4 figures beauty's transmission.[804] Legally speaking, it is by means of a translation that a legacy bequeathed by a will is redirected from its original legatee to another beneficiary. In this usage,

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[799] The classicist Daniel West, for example, points out that the third line of Shakespeare's sonnet is "nearly a translation" from book three of *De Rerum Natura*, "vitaque mancipio nulli datur, omnibus usu" (*and life is given to none as possession, to all for use*). See Lucretius, 3.971 and West, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 26.

[800] Kennedy, "'Sweet Theefe': Shakespeare Reading Petrarch."

[801] *OED Online*, s.v. "translation," accessed August 1, 2019.

[802] On Christian *oikonomia*, see Todeschini, *La ricchezza degli ebrei.*

[803] Sokol and Sokol, "Shakespeare's Legal Language," 2004. Clarkson and Warren, *The Law of Property in Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Drama*, 265.

[804] Black, "Translation."

"translation" does not refer the physical conveyance of property from one beneficiary to the other; nor, in fact, does it necessarily denote a transfer of ultimate ownership.[805] Instead, in its most basic legal acceptation, testamentary translation transfers "use," meaning that the "profits and benefits" associated with a piece of property fall to a beneficiary different than the person previously named.[806]

Attestations of this sense of "translation" go quite far back. Thus, *A Treatise of Testaments and Last Willes* (1590), Henry Swinburne's standard work with which Shakespeare was likely familiar,[807] defines the "translation of a legacy" as "a bestowing of the same upon another."[808] Consider the example of the translation of freehold land in the hypothetical case of a landowner who dies without an immediate heir. Say the landowner's will initially designated his nephew as heir to this part of his estate but that he later reconsiders and decides to name his niece instead (an unlikely but not impossible scenario in early modern England). If the landowner expresses this intention under certain conditions, in writing or otherwise, the legacy is considered "translated," and, when the landowner dies, title will devolve to the niece and not to the nephew. In this case, and assuming he or she follows the testator's instructions, the executor of the testament will effect two related "translations": he or she will translate property in the general legal sense of "translation," distributing all bequeathed assets to their stipulated beneficiaries; but he or she will also translate property in the restricted legal sense of "translation," transferring the estate to the niece and *not* to the nephew. Minor though it may appear, this slight difference between the "general" and "restricted" legal acceptations of "translation" is significant for how sonnet 4 figures transmission. In his canonical work, Swinburne is adamant that there can be no translation without an "ademption," without taking the legacy away from the person to whom it was first bequeathed.[809] Strictly speaking, then, the niece's inheritance is called a "translation" only because that legacy was first bequeathed to her brother. But the fact that the niece was not originally named as heir also means that she was most likely not predestined by blood or kinship to receive the bequest. Legal translation inscribes a discretionary judgement into the customary lines of transmission.

Although the *de facto* or *de jure* translation of legacies is surely just as old a tradition as the practice of bequeathing them, when it happens, the fact of translation inevitably raises questions about the self-evidence of succession. In a historical context where the common-law doctrine of male primogeniture remained the ideal—and where property devolved to the eldest son in the absence of a will detailing otherwise—legal translation drew attention to the contractual nature of

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[805] A tricky question in early modern England, where, according to the feudal tradition, all "real" property originally belonged to the king, everyone else using it by some form of "tenure." These hierarchies of land ownership could be extraordinarily complex, and, until the Statute of Uses which banned the practice in 1535, most of the land in England was enfeoffed to someone (*cestui que use*) who had the benefit of but no legal title to the given property. When it came to personal property, the question of title was only superficially more straightforward. Although we assume that most people dispose over their personal property, in practice, even the most everyday "personalties" or "chattels" of Elizabethan life—clothing, jewelry, horses, etc.— could be the objects of various kinds of pawns, pledges and liens. For a detailed discussion, see Clarkson and Warren, *The Law of Property in Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Drama*. On the landholding chains of feudal tenure, see Wood, *Medieval Economic Thought*, 33–36.

[806] As the jurist John Cowell notes in *The Interpreter*, his 1607 legal dictionary, "Vse (vsus) is in the originalle signification plaine enough: but it hath a proper application in our common lawe, and that is *the profit or benefit of lands or tenements*." Quoted in Zurcher, *Shakespeare and Law*, 75. My italics.

[807] See Rushton, *Shakespeare's Testamentary Language*.

[808] Swinburne, *A Treatise of Testaments and Last Wills*, 551.

[809] Radin, "Translation."

transmission.[810] This was not necessarily a welcome insight. As Gary Watt explains in *Shakespeare's Acts of Will*, one of Richard II's outrages lies in treating Bolingbroke's inheritance "as if it were the common stuff of trade to be grabbed and handled and passed from person to person regardless of due descent."[811] Our example of a translated legacy proceeds with a similar "willfulness": the landowner arbitrarily substitutes his niece for his nephew, and, with a stroke of the pen, exposes his estate's "due descent" as a legal form rather than a pre-ordained sequence. A testator's beneficiaries, it turns out, can be fungible too, and a testament is more like a bill of sale than not.

In its restricted and general senses, the translation of property points to the resemblance between testaments and bills of sale, but it also raises another set of formal questions with implications for inter-lingual translation. For instance, when, in conformity with the norms of the "intellectual aristocracy" (*Geistesaristokratie*), Curtius cautions his English readers, "The best that the great classics hold in store for you will not pass into translations. You can use a common language for the purpose of bartering information, as we are doing here. But the message of the poet must be heard in his own tongue. If people are not prepared to do so, then they must do without the pearl of great price,"[812] he is mixing metaphors in a sense that Shakespeare anticipates. In sonnet 4's account, it is precisely because hereditary transfer is "barter," and a legacy "a commodity of bargain and exchange,"[813] that the translation is capable of preserving "the pearl of great *price*." If the pearl has an exchange value—even a great one—then, in theory, it can be exchanged and thus passed from one holder to another. What translation maintains is "property" (understood as both "quality" and "wealth")—even as it loses the original property "holder" (again in both senses). Read from perspective afforded by sonnet 4, Curtius's judgment that "you may read Dante in translations, but you will miss the heart and voice of Dante" is full of Shakespearean irony. Dante's physical organs may be lost—"tombed" with him, as it were—but, to the degree that they figure "properties" of his poetry, Dante's "heart and voice"—*these* translate. In other words, all of Dante's properties can be transferred; it is only the featureless heart and toneless voice of the "man without qualities" that cannot be carried forward.

But this understanding of translation has further conceptual consequence that bears specifically on the topic of "translatability." If the category of property implies a logical disassociability if not legal alienability from the property holder, then that bundle of properties that we call the "original" loses some of its mystique. As a property, "beauty" is not indissociably attached to the Young Man's substance. Rather, his substance simply serves as the fungible subject of beauty's predication—one translation among many. Once this legal and logical conceit is rendered *tropological*, as it is in sonnet 4, then a whole poetics of translation follows by consequence. Turning Curtius's language of Dante's untranslatable "heart and voice" against itself, we could say this model projects the distinction between the original and the translation back into the "heart" of Dante's original itself, which, subjected to a legal, logical, and tropological alienation, splits into a nontransferable, "nonpredicable" substance ("a heart without qualities") and a transferable set of predicates—bundle of forms, tropes, and topoi, which, like the flaming heart that Love feeds Beatrice in *La Vita Nova* can move from one body (or one poem) to another.[814] Although Dante's

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[810] Cf. Dowd, *The Dynamics of Inheritance on the Shakespearean Stage*, esp. 31-49.
[811] Watt, *Shakespeare's Acts of Will*, 54f.
[812] Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 596.
[813] In his discussion of the dispute between Richard II and Bolingbroke, Watt notes that "Richard effectively privatizes the public dignity of the nobility. Traditional inheritance becomes no better than the hollow subject matter of common trade, valued only as a commodity of bargain and exchange." Watt, *Shakespeare's Acts of Will*, 55.
[814] A troubadour commonplace that Dante's Italian text renders in Latin: "vide cor tuum." Dante, *Vita Nova*, 5.

own account of such transfers is gnoseological and theological where Shakespeare's is proprietary and economic, the dissociation of subjects and predicates that sonnet 4 operates comes strangely close to the *Commedia's* vision of the afterlife. The hereafter is full of translations with no substantial continuity with their former incarnations, where beauties and vices live on while originals rot away.[815] Indeed, Dante is a fine example. With inadvertent irony, Curtius admits that Dante had to undergo "a probation period of six hundred years" for his work to be appraised as equal to the legacies of Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Lucan and Horace. While Curtius reassures us that "posterity has fully, if tardily, *legalized* and homologated this parity,"[816] he fails to note that this probate coincided with a long history of translation that carried Dante's legacy far beyond the borders of his Tuscan isogloss. If, as Curtius insists, "the pearl of great price" is a property of Dante's original, it is nonetheless the case that the value of this property was determined through transmission and exchange.[817] In Curtius's own words, it was only once the Italian language gained "world currency" that Dante's achievement could be recognized as "transcend[ing] the horizon of one nation and one literature," and it was "only during the last fifty years" that the heart and voice of Dante's poetry, centuries removed from their creaturely body and historical moment, came to be heard in their "true greatness" and "full significance."[818] In Dante's case, the original's properties had to wait for translation before they could be "recognized," let alone valued and valorized.

Shakespeare understood this point. After all, the lesson that sonnet 4's speaker tries to teach the Young Man is that his prized property—his beauty—must circulate to be appreciated. The version of translation that the poem sketches for us is grounded in the translatability of the original's alienated properties. Translation preserves these, though not, necessarily, in the same bundle. Just like a landowner's estate may be translated to his niece, while his horse goes to his nephew, and his 'second best bed' to his wife, so may Dante's "message" be transferred to one translation, while his "heart" goes to another, and his "voice" to a third. The task of the translator is to retain these same properties, but as predicates of a different object.

Curiously, the more concretely one applies sonnet 4's model of translatability to inter-lingual translation, the closer one comes to the kind of approach Pound claims for his translations of Guido Cavalcanti. As Pound put it in the 1928 *Dial* article that accompanied his translation of "Donna mi prega,"

> I have not given an English "equivalent" for the *Donna mi prega*; at the utmost I have provided the reader, unfamiliar with old Italian, an instrument that may assist him in gauging *some* of the qualities of the original.[819]

A translation for Pound being, in any event, "a photograph, as exact as possible, of one side of the statue,"[820] Pound was less interested in reproducing the original's bundle of properties than in

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[815] See Saussy, *Translation as citation*, 32f.
[816] Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 595. My italics.
[817] Reading Dante "in his own language" is a more complicated question than it might seem. It is not just that there exists no version of the *Commedia* written Dante's hand, only conflicting transcriptions; it is that the unity of the Italian language is a construction that post-dates Dante. As any italianist will tell you, though based principally in the Florentine dialect, the *Commedia* is in fact an amalgam of many Italian vernaculars. Thus, to read Dante's *plurilinguismo* as his own, proprietary language is an anachronism, albeit one that "posterity has fully, if tardily, legalized and homologated." Cf. Ferroni, *Prima lezione di letteratura italiana*, 24--28; 64–66.
[818] Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 596.
[819] Pound, *Cavalcanti*, 221.
[820] Pound, 5.

redistributing them, predicating the original's translatability in new contexts. Hence the distributive economics of the *Cantos*: Pound nominated himself as chief executor of what he called the "cultural heritage": rather than conserve the originals intact, his ambition was to get as many of their properties as he could into circulation.[821]

Pound's multitudinous practices of translation never synthesized into a singular theory. To understand the kind of translation that Shakespeare implicitly theorizes it is useful to place the sonnet's legal conceit in dialogue with Benjamin's *Task of the Translator*, which, though working with a radically different Law, similarly conceives translatability as a feature of the original. The affinities between the two are instructive, as are the significant divergences. For one, the continuity effected by sonnet 4's executor, whose life is the afterlife of the Young Man's beauty, recalls the mixture of loss and continuance flagged by Benjaminian terms like "surviving" (*Überleben*) and "living after" (*Nachleben*)—as well as "the notion of the life and afterlife (*Fortleben*) of artworks" which Benjamin insists must be understood with "completely unmetaphorical objectivity" (*völlig unmetaphorischer Sachlichkeit*).[822] Benjamin's translator, whose task, in a sense, is to administer the work's unmetaphorical afterlife, is a kind of "executor." Benjamin might even have appreciated how, in Shakespeare's pun, the murder of the original coincides with its transmission.[823] At the same time, Benjamin allows the task of his translator-executor to resonate on a theological register (Benjamin's model translation, after all, is an interlinear version of the Scriptures). This backdrop of religious transcendence, however, is lampooned in Shakespeare's take on execution, where final judgment simply repeats secular accounting and the task of the executor recalls that of a broker far more than a priest. Shakespeare's executor knows the "law," but the law he follows is inheritance law, and the translatability he predicates inheres in the logical postulates of English property claims. *The Task of the Translator* will also resort to a legal register to explain what it means by "translatability," asserting, for example, that "[translation's] law" (*deren Gesetz*) is "stipulated" or "contained" (*beschlossen*) "in the [original's] translatability" (*in dessen Übersetzbarkeit*).[824] However, unlike the legal code to which the translation of property refers, the law that Benjamin sees governing inter-linguistic translation is no human institution but rather a metaphysical or even theological precept, an edict that stands out for being utterly indifferent to translation's possible beneficiaries ("No poem is intended [*gilt*] for the reader, no image for the spectator…").[825] Next to the theological austerity of Benjamin's law, the way Shakespeare handles "beauty's legacy" represents an incomparably more interested and mercenary form of translation.

The different status of the law in Benjamin and Shakespeare points to a topic around which the task of Benjamin's translator and the task of Shakespeare's executor converge and then diverge. As theorists of translation, neither writer has much use for the notion of authorial intention, though both appeal to a kind of authorizing intentionality that refers the differences translation negotiates—differences in language, differences in beneficiary—to an underlying sameness. What is unusual about both of their models, however, is that while translation is presented as the object of an intentional act, the intention that the translation realizes does not correspond to any familiar species of intending subject: it is neither the expression of a personal desire nor the directedness of an

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[821] On Pound's distributive economic program, see Stasi, "Ezra Pound and the Critique of Value," and Tratner, *Deficits and Desires*, 121–72.
[822] Benjamin, "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," 11.
[823] In the *Trauerspielbuch*, for instance, Benjamin speaks of the "mortification of [art]works." Benjamin, "Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels," 357.
[824] Benjamin, "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," 9.
[825] Benjamin, 9.

individual consciousness. Benjamin's version of intention is particularly challenging: the *intentio* that charges the space between languages is a complex synthesis of Kabbalistic teaching and scholastic doctrine.[826] What Benjamin calls the "intention towards language" (*Intention auf die Sprache*) is an intention that the original exhibits but only the translation discloses. Like translation's "law," this intentionality is emphatically non-human, belonging neither to the author nor to the translator but to the "pure language" (*reine Sprache*) said to "shine" through the translation.[827] This intentional structure has little in common with the referential function of mental states that we ordinarily associate with acts of will (I will disinherit my nephew),[828] but neither does the legal concept of intention that the executor enforces when he administers the Young Man's will in sonnet 4. While it is not obvious whether there exists in the intentional structure of testaments a noesis that might correspond to Benjamin's "pure language," it is certainly the case that such documents construe intention in a purely formal manner. To recycle a legal commonplace: intention follows the testator's "will"—that is, their "testament"—and not their "will"—that is, their "desire." To be named by a testament is not the same as to be named by a person.[829] Sonnet 4's executor bears witness to this difference. The mere intention of the testator is powerless to produce a bequest, which, to be binding, must in fact wait for this intending consciousness "to be gone."[830] Legally, what determines intention is not consciousness but probate; the testator's will is deduced retrospectively from the provisions of his "will."

The flip side of this disjunction between the intention of the testator and the intention of the testament is that the translatability of property is subject to a condition that Benjamin's concept of translatability is not. Legal translatability is only authorized within the finite window held open by the technical distinction between what I have called the "general" and the "restricted" sense of testamentary translation. To summarize: testamentary "translation" in the general legal sense denotes the transfer of property effected by the executor (thus, the uncle dies and the niece inherits). "Translation" in the narrow sense refers to the notary procedure by which the testator "transfers" this transfer to somebody else (the uncle disinherits the nephew and names the niece). Although the restricted sense of translation refers to the general sense of translation, it can never perfectly correspond to it. This is because, for a legacy to be translatable in the narrow sense, the testator must be both alive and of sound mind; for it to be translatable in the broad sense, however, he must be dead. While alienability may be a legal condition of all property, a testament can only transfer the properties of the dead. On a basic level, this is what distinguishes testamentary translation from other forms of property transfer. Unlike a normal contract, a testament is only valid once a testator dies.[831] But the death of the testator also closes the window of translation in the narrow sense: once

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826 Cf. Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction*.

827 Benjamin, "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," 18.

828 For an elaboration of the doctrine of intentionality found in Duns Scotus and other medieval thinkers that interested Benjamin, see Perler, *Théories de l'intentionnalité au moyen âge*.

829 For the legal context, see Llyod Bonfield's chapter "Of Sound and Disposing Mind and Memory," in *Devising, Dying and Dispute*, 81–107.

830 The testator's "will" (volition) is also distinct from his or her "will" (testament) in the case of mental illness, since, as Swinburne specifies, "Mad Folks and lunatic Persons, during the Time of their Furor or Insanity of Mind, cannot make a Testament, nor dispose of any Thing by Will." See Swinburne, *A Treatise of Testaments and Last Wills*, 76.

831 Testaments, Swinburne writes, "do receive their Strength all at one Moment, namely, at the Death of the Testator, and not before; at which Time the foresaid Embryo being now grown to a perfect Child, is brought into the World when the Testator did depart out of the World." Swinburne, 553–54.

the testament is sealed no new translations are possible.[832] Shakespeare was aware of this limit, redacting his own will in the weeks before his death to disinherit his new son-in-law.[833] In other words, when a legacy is translatable in the narrow sense, it is not yet translatable in the broad sense. And once a legacy is translatable in the broad sense, it can no longer be translated in the narrow sense.

The temporal interval framed by this legal chiasmus figures an important difference between Benjamin and Shakespeare's versions of translatability. This is because one implication that Benjamin deduces from law contained in the original's translatability is that the original remains translatable even if there is no one to translate it.[834] This is the occasion for Benjamin's famous analogy about "God's remembrance" (*ein Gedenken Gottes*): to say that a life or a moment is unforgettable is not to say that men will not forget it, but postulate, refer to, or insist upon another, transcendent domain where that memory resides. "Analogously," he continues, "the translatability of linguistic creations remains is still to be considered even when they are untranslatable for humans."[835] That thought that translation might "remain to be considered" (*bleibt…zu erwägen*) is a postulate of theological or mystical provenance, connected with the transmission of the name of God and the messianic promise contained therein, that is absent from the version of legal translatability Shakespeare develops. Unlike Benjamin's version, Shakespeare's legal conceit prescribes a timeframe for translation, inscribing the transfer of property with a historicity (the date of the testator's death) that in turn points to the historical specificity of the legal form that underwrites the bequest. In a sense, Shakespeare's executor is a messianic figure too, but only indirectly: to the degree his task rests on the legal forms of English inheritance law, his function is a negative image of the *utopia* where, property having been overcome, he would literally have nothing to translate.

In several senses, sonnet 4 positions itself within this this window where the testament remains open for amendment and beauty's legacy remains transmissible. But, as I have argued, the poem advances toward execution: the anticipation of death and with it the lapsing of translatability are what drives the poet's rhetoric. His declared purpose is to persuade the Young Man to "translate" his legacy, to bequeath to another the legacy he currently "spends/ upon [himself]." For this appeal to work both rhetorically and legally, it is essential that the poem not be read as elegiac. Although the poet makes a show of inviting the Young Man to his own burial, a dead addressee would be unable to authorize the genetic and legal transfers that his poem counsels. More profoundly, the various displacements of "will" that we discussed above can be read as attempts to "adempt" the Young Man's inherited beauty by cleverly translating this property out from under him. Thus, in lines nine and ten, the Young Man is described as defrauding beauty's rightful heir, who is not the "unthrifty loveliness" that the poem addresses but the "sweet self" that that "loveliness" "[doth] deceive." This process of translation is most explicit, however, in the poem's representation of the originary "bequest" from which the Young Man is said to have inherited his beauty. This happens in lines three and four, which read,

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[832] At least according to Swinburne, changes in a will's beneficiaries that take place during probate or after do not qualify as "translations." Should a particular beneficiary not be able to accept the bequest they were devised, whether because they are deemed incompetent or because they are dead, then the legacy is either extinguished or treated according to conditions stipulated in the will. Swinburne, 560f.

833 Honigmann, "Shakespeare's Will and Testamentary Traditions."

[834] Benjamin, "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," 9–10.

[835] Benjamin, 10.

Nature's bequest gives nothing but doth lend,
And, being frank, she lends to those are free.

This is as close as we get to the source of the Young Man's metaphorical riches and of the poem itself. And, given that they trace the origin of the starting capital for the entire aesthetic economy, it is important to keep in mind that these verses are themselves a direct allusion if not actual translation of a verse from the third book of *De Rerum Natura* (Lucretius 3.97): *vitaque mancipio nulli datur, omnibus usu*, which Dryden would translate as "For Life […] /'Tis giv'n to all for Use; to none for Property."[836] Beauty is thus not properly the Young Man's "Property" (*mancipio*), nor is he even named in nature's bequest. "Use" (*usu*) of nature's property is instead granted to "those are free." Nature's bequest does not entitle the Young Man singly as heir but, like the "nature as creditor" *topos* shared between Lucretius, Shakespeare, and Dryden, instead opens the patrimony up to others' use. The Young Man or the poet, or, in the same vein, Lucretius, Shakespeare, or Curtius: exactly who receives beauty's legacy does not matter so long they belong to "those are free."

IV. Free Trade

Whether the Young Man inherits beauty's *usufruct* or whether that use is "translated" out from under him depends on how one construes "those are free," so it is worth lingering for a moment on this line's cloudy sense and choppy syntax. With respect to the latter, most commentators recommend resolving the syntactical problem by inferring the elision of the relative pronoun (a not uncommon occurrence in Shakespeare): thus, nature "lends to those [who] are free."[837] With respect to the former, however, there is less consensus. The most ready meaning is of course "generous," but "free" also connotes sexual promiscuity, noblesse, and, particularly in commercial contexts, the absence of cost ("free trade") or tenurial service (a "freehold" estate). Clearly, all these meanings are germane to the poem's testamentary *topos*; the problem is that they fall on different sides of its tropological ledger. For one, Young Man is introduced as being all too "free" in his spending, and it is not until the second verse that generosity begins to morph into parsimony and we start to see how self-directed such "unthrifty" giving really is. The basic miserliness of such prodigal expenditures sets up a second irony: to compel the Young Man to use his beauty "freely," the speaker chooses to bind him, invoking the conditions of his inheritance and his obligations to posterity to commit him to a more "acceptable" balance sheet. For its part, the paradox of such compelled liberality points to a deeper puzzle still: namely, why does nature choose her debtors from "those are free"? Helen Vendler has explained this choice as being motivated by the "nature" of nature's own character.[838] The adjectives "frank" and "free" both mean "generous," and nature, so Vendler's reasoning goes, "naturally" prefers debtors whose "freedom" chimes alliteratively with her own "frankness." As Vendler puts it, nature "*gives* [the bequest] to the young man for him to *give* in turn."[839] But this is imprecise. Not only does the poem's overarching legal conceit systematically disassociate "properties" (beauty, frank[ness]) from their "owners" (the Young Man, nature) in a way that makes such an inference problematic, but, as the speaker himself stresses, "Nature's bequest *gives* nothing but doth *lend*." Generally speaking, to lend is to put a condition on a gift, a condition which makes

[836] Hammond, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 26.
[837] Shrank, "Shakespeare's Sonnets," 292. Hammond, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 116. West, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 112.
[838] Vendler, *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 62.
[839] Vendler, 62. Vendler's italics.

the act of giving less "free," both in the sense of less "generous" but also in the sense of imposing a debt on the recipient.

On a practical level, of course, the distinction between a gift and a loan is notoriously difficult to sustain;[840] legally, however, the two forms of transfer imply different forms of entitlement. This is true above all with respect to questions of inheritance. In sixteenth-century tenurial law, a lease should not be confused with what was called "free" or "frank gift." Whereas a lease transferred no hereditary claim upon the property, a free gift devised the estate in "fee simple," meaning that the "freeholder" or "franktenant" had the right to devise the holding to his successors in perpetuity.[841] Being "free" in this context means *not* holding a lease.[842] Unlike the contradiction between the Young Man's "unthriftiness" and his "niggardliness," which can be parsed once we understand the poem's figurative accounting (its use of "use"), "lend[ing] to those are free" presents a stubborn *legal* paradox that defies easy rationalization. If it is true that nature "lends" beauty to the Young Man, then it is also true that he is *not* "free" to pass it on. The trick to solving this riddle, as Adam Zurcher has shown, is reversing the order of predication.[843] One must think of nature's bequest as receiving its determination *retrospectively*. What the bequest "was" will be determined by how the Young Man *uses* it. Basically, if the Young Man does not produce an heir, then his beauty *will have been* what is known as a lease "for terme of lyfe." On the other hand, if he does produce a successor, then his beauty *will have been* a free gift—it will have been "*given*" (note the past participle)—since, in this corner of English common law, what distinguishes "lent" from "free" is the ability to transmit the property to an heir of one's choosing.[844] In other words: the demonstration that the estate was yours is that you passed it on to me.

Reconstructing the thorny legal precedent of Shakespeare's metaphor shows us what it means to translate property within the poem's accounting system. Unless the Young man prove that he possesses his beauty in freehold by transferring it to an heir—which is to say, unless he shows himself to be "free" in the same sense that nature is "frank"—then, by a kind of poetic probate delivered in the future anterior, it will have been true that the Young Man was never given the legacy to begin with—at least not in the full, legal sense of the word "given." In the sonnet's words, if the "audit" that he leaves is not deemed "acceptable," then the tenure under which he enjoyed beauty's "use" will be retroactively demoted from the status of frank-tenement to leasehold. Legally speaking, one would say that he had been "disen*franch*ised," his inheritance "adempted." To make sense of the metaphor, therefore, one must subordinate the connotations of generosity, nobility, and promiscuity associated with the adjectives "frank" and "free"[845] and focus instead on the words' legal acceptation, since it is these that assure the transfer of property. From this perspective, it does not matter whether nature or the Young Man are disposed to giving or not, but only that they are legally entitled to do so. The reason why nature can bequeath beauty is that she is frank—that is, holds the

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[840] On the difficulty of sustaining the difference in *The Sonnets*, see Hammond, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 458–62.

[841] *OED Online*, s.v. "Freehold," accessed August 1, 2019. See also Watt, *Shakespeare's Acts of Will*, 41f. White, *Commentaries on the Law in Shakespeare*, 235f.

[842] On the conditions under which a "lease for life" is nonetheless called a "freehold," see Zurcher, *Shakespeare and Law*, 77.

[843] Zurcher, 78ff.

[844] Sokol and Sokol, "Shakespeare's Legal Language," 2004. That said, the tenurial metaphor is not quite as clean as one might hope. As Zurcher points out, in sixteenth-century tenurial law, a lease "for terme of lyfe" is technically classified as a species of "freehold." Nonetheless, if the holder of this kind of lease is nominally a freehold, he is not free to devise his holding at will, which means that the legal opposition between "free" and "lent" still obtains at the level of transmission.

[845] *A Glossary of Shakespeare's Sexual Language*, s.v. "frank" and s.v. "free."

estate in frank-tenement. The same goes for the Young Man: for him to transmit the legacy, he too must be a legal freeholder.

Curiously, this legal identity is underwritten by a linguistic one that reflects the two principal "sources" of Shakespeare's lexical heritage: Old English and Norman French. "Frank-tenement" is undisguisedly "French," while "freehold" is its Germanic calque (*franc* = *frī*; *tenir* = *haldan*). More fundamentally, the adjectives "frank" and "free," before they were English synonyms, translated property relationships across two different linguistic communities. In Germanic, "free" has the same root "friend" and is thought to have been an epithet reserved for members of one's household in distinction to "unfree" slaves (*villaines*). In one way or another, modern senses of "unbound," "noble," "generous," etc. are properties of the "free-born," of those one calls "friend."[846] "Frank," by contrast, goes back to the Latin name (*francus*) for the Germanic peoples of Gaul. The word's more general sense of "free from restraint or obligation," which exists in English as well as modern French (*franc*) and Italian (*franco*), is a metonymic extension of its narrower, "ethnic" designation of an "uomo libero del popolo dei Franchi."[847] "Frank," as the *OED* explains, "acquired the sense free because in Frankish Gaul full freedom was only possessed by those belonging to, or adopted into, the dominant people."[848] Once we recognize the relations of class and kinship that set the terms of her loans, "nature's bequest" appears less generous than we may have thought. Indeed, if we push the point a little, we could say that far from figuring nature as "generous," sonnet 4 figures the hereditary transmission of property as "natural." Of course, "[nature] lends to those are free": "being frank" herself, she "naturally" extends credit to her "friends," which is to say, other "free-born" members of the Frankish people.

But this tendentiously "feudal" reading only gets us so far. Frank, after all, is a *Latin* word for the bearer of *German* freedom. Shakespeare's etymological pun shows that we have already crossed a border. Blood lines have ceded to alliterative rhymes, and patrilineal succession has given way to international translation. "Free" may be of Germanic descent, but Shakespeare accords it with English's Latin "legacy" (*legatia*) and thus figures the language of his poem as the proprietary confluence of these two tongues, the translative beneficiary of a dual heritage.[849] In the sixteenth century, the words "frank" and "free" often appeared together in discourse as a fixed figure of repetition (i.e. "he was franke & free borne").[850] Sonnet 4 dismantles the pleonasm and remotivates it as a literal and figurative "translation," as the transfer of the same (lexical) legacy upon a different (linguistic) beneficiary.[851] Just as the Young Man's inheritance is lent out to "those are free," so are the treasures of the Norman and Saxon lexicon reissued as the "loan" words that modern English speakers "use" every day. There are thus two coordinated translations occurring here in tandem: on one hand, "real" property transfers holders ("nature's bequest" → "those are free"); on the other hand, semantic properties transfer languages ("frank" → "free").

According to the poem's own system of accounting, both of these translations are "frank and free" in a sense that the close-fisted Young Man is not. The Young Man is not the free trader that nature took him for, and his investment strategy betrays how rooted he is an antiquated

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[846] See Benveniste, *Le Vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes: 1. economié, parenté, société*, I:321–33.
[847] *Treccani*, s.v. "franco," accessed August 1, 2019.
[848] *OED Online*, s.v. "frank," accessed August 1, 2019.
[849] In this respect, the German-Latin rhyme of "free" and "legacy" recalls the plot of *King John*, where the English king surrenders the crown to the papal legate and receives it back as "a holding of the pope" (*King John* 5.1.2-3)
[850] *OED Online*, s.v. "frank," accessed August 1, 2019.
[851] Ingram and Redpath have already noted the multilingual wordplay of line four's *synonymia*. See, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 12.

understanding of "free." Historically, one gave freely only to one's frank-born peers; it just so happens that, given the narcissistic dispensation of the Young Man's economy, in his case this circle of "friends" has contracted into a party of one ("why dost though spend/ Upon thyself…"). Opening the legacy to others outside his household (*oikos*) is what it means *not* to have "traffic with thyself alone." As we noted above, a "freer" traffic means above all "spending" his sexuality somewhere where it might produce offspring. But, as we have also seen, sexual intercourse does not preclude commercial exchange; in fact, the former is a sector of the latter.[852] So, a freer trade also opens the legacy to other forms of remunerative investment and even, via the pun on offspring and interest payment (*tokos*), the financial returns of the "profit[able] usurer." What line four's etymological pun on "frank's" "free" translation adds to these other instances of property transfer is a self-consciously linguistic dimension, an international traffic in "claims" in which a "proper" translation has nothing to do with a principle of equivalence. Nor is translation bound to a "proper" order of descent, whether patrilineal or etymological, according to which only a "Frank" son may inherit from a "Frank" lord. To the contrary, legal translation means that a "frank" lord is "free" not to give to the Franks.

Ultimately, beauty's legacy is far safer with the poet than with the Young Man, regardless of whether he is a Frank. In almost every respect, a poem makes for a better investment than a body. Unlike the beautiful bodies of the Young Man or his heirs, which are subject to a mortal business cycle of boom and bust, the beauty deposited in a poem—and a poem of Shakespeare's above all—achieves a seemingly immortal form of appreciation. Once transposed into poetic form and capitalized as a literary tradition, there are nearly no limits to beauty's "use." Through reedition, commentary, citation, and "translation," the Young Man's beauty acquires a life of its own. It is recirculated in one-thousand-and-one new uses, which realize its value in the form of one-thousand-and-one new returns. Or, as the poet himself predicts, in what are themselves among the most cited lines of the sequence:

> So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
> So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

"This" poem represents a way for the Young Man to finally make a decent living off of beauty's use. However, the price of this living is testamentary translation. The poet as executor translates creaturely life into a beautiful legacy, a transmissible property whose continued appreciation redeems the debt the Young Man owes nature. Young Man's body still rots in the tomb, but at last his life is paid for; properties continue to accumulate even after the heart is dust and the voice cannot carry a tune. While the voice of a legal heir could also carry the tune, a poem delivers the most "acceptable audit" of all. In the poem, the appreciation of beauty transcends the organic rhythms of the creature. Where creaturely beauty knows temporal and spatial limits, the beautiful poem audibly realizes the values of the past in a form anyone can hear, a literary legacy which, "being frank [it] lends to those are free."[853]

V. "Our Shakespeare"

Over the centuries, translations of sonnet 4 have carried beauty's legacy well beyond the English market. In the years since the publication of the 1609 Quarto, the English of *Shake-Speares Sonnets*—

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[852] See Fischer, *Econolingua*, 19.

[853] On the promise of immortality in the *Sonnets*, see, for instance, Garrison, *Shakespeare and the Afterlife*, 122–28.

like the Italian of Dante's *Commedia* before it—has "gained world currency"; its poetry has acquired such universal recognition that, writing in 1949, Ernst Robert Curtius could rebuke the provincialism of the few remaining European countries "where Shakespeare has not received the undivided homage that is due him."[854] First among Europe's dues-paying countries is Curtius's own Germany—a "country" which, when Curtius was preparing these reflections on "The Medieval Bases of Western Thought," was still divided among four occupying powers. Translations of Shakespeare into German both preceded and succeeded the unified German state—whether of 1871, 1949, or 1990—and represented a standard of value far more durable than any of Germany's national currencies. Shakespeare's German currency survived the Third Reich and the "Reichsmark," and represented a stability of cultural value across time which defied the rupture of what Curtius called the "German catastrophe." Both before and after Auschwitz, Curtius approached the circulation of Shakespeare's legacy in German as participating in the unbroken transmission of "Europe's intellectual heritage" (*Geisteserbe Europas*).[855] For Curtius, a good translator executed the task that Goethe had prescribed long ago and bequeathed their translation as a "living preservation of transhistorical spiritual values" (*die lebendige Bewahrung überzeitliche Geisteswerte*).[856]

Paul Celan is a German translator of Shakespeare who does not share this perspective and whose translations violently disarticulate the continuity of "transhistorical spiritual values" that Curtius's discipline of *Toposforschung* hoped to trace. Celan published his translation of Shakespeare's sonnet 4 in 1964 in the pages of the prestigious German literary magazine, the *Neue Rundschau*. By no means was he presenting German readers with a new work. Curtius was far from the only German admirer of Shakespeare. Indeed, one of the most tenacious commonplaces of German literary history is that there are only three "classic" German writers: Goethe, Schiller, and Shakespeare. Together with Luther's Bible translation, the so-called *Schlegel-Tieck Edition* of Shakespeare's plays ranks as a foundational moment in German literature. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that the language of modern German literature was invented to translate Shakespeare, and that, for more than two hundred years, the arc of German literary and political history has been studded with translations and interpretations of Shakespeare's works. A recurring theme in this literary and political history is the inversion by which the linguistic difference that at first seems to distance German readers from Shakespeare's English texts in fact only makes them better (read: more attentive, more reflexive, more conscious) heirs to his legacy.[857] Shakespeare, as A. W. Schlegel famously wrote, is "entirely ours" (*ganz unser*);[858] and the Nobel laureate Gerhart Hauptmann is only one of many modern literary figures to defend the German people's "title" ("[sein] Anrecht") to its Stratford-born patrimony. Characteristically, Hauptmann's claim on Shakespeare revisits the basic architecture of the testamentary conceit that we have been tracing. "There is no people (*Volk*)," he wrote at the height of the First World War,

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854 Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 596.
855 Cf. Curtius, "Goethe – Grundzüge seiner Welt," 77.
856 Curtius, *Deutscher Geist in Gefahr*, 7. For a more ample discussion, see Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's chapter on Curtius in *Vom Leben und Sterben der grossen Romanisten*.
857 On the *topos* of the German Shakespeare, see Dehrmann, "Urgermaisch oder eingebürgert? Wie Shakespeare im 19. Jahrhundert zum 'Deutschen' wird." For the history of German Shakespeare reception from the 17th century until World War I, see Paulin, *The Critical Reception of Shakespeare in Germany 1682-1914*. For Shakespeare's reception during Weimar and the Third Reich, see Freifrau von Ledebur, *Der Mythos vom deutschen Shakespeare*.
858 Quoted in Müller, "Formen der Aneignung Shakespeares in der deutschen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte," 124.

> not even the English, that has secured for itself a title (*sich einen Anrecht erwerben*) to Shakespeare like the Germans have. Shakespeare's figures (*Gestalten*) are a part of our world, his soul (*Seele*) has become one with ours, and, even if he was born and buried in England, Germany is the country where he truly lives (*wahrhaft lebt*).[859]

In some of its earliest English attestations, "translation" retains the sense of a medieval Latin *translatio*, a practice which denoted the conveyance of a saint's body from one burial site to another. Such cult acceptations swirl around Hauptmann's oft-quoted speech, combining with the legal and literary senses of the word "translation" (or rather "Übertragung") to cast Germany not merely as the destination Shakespeare's 'geistiges Eigentum' (*intellectual property*), but as the Bard's 'geistige Heimat' (*spiritual homeland*) and, depending on how one reads Hauptmann's "geistige Kommunikation" (*spiritual communication*),[860] the displaced tabernacle of what the Lutheran catechism might call Shakespeare's "wahrhaftigen, wesentlichen, lebendigen Leib[ ]"(*true, essential, living body*).[861]

Hauptmann defends the translation of Shakespeare's spiritual body from England to Germany as a way to safeguard an inheritance common to all cultures, but the German claim to Shakespeare's legacy did not always assume such cosmopolitan tones. A quarter century later, at the height of another war, the celebrated Nazi author Hermann Burte more or less drafted Shakespeare into the German military effort and went so far as to cast the Battle of Britain as heir to Shakespeare's genius. This "Verdeutschung" recycles the principal conceits of Schlegel and Hauptmann and, with the allusion to the Jewish conspiracy behind George VI, enlists the inheritance *topos* for the cause of racialized nationalism.

> Shakespeare belongs to us (*ist ein Unserer*) just as much as he does to the English; indeed, we know and perform him better than they do and can safely maintain that as Germans from 1940 we truly stand closer to the spirit (*Geist*) of the Elizabethan English and of their genius William than do the English of today, since hiding behind their throne there rules the very Shylock that Shakespeare identified – and expelled![862]

Of course, not every version of "unser Shakespeare" is a racist conspiracy theory. As a rule, the Nazis were not particularly dedicated Shakespeareans, and for every Burte there was a Brecht who turned Shakespeare's patrimony against Hitler's regime.[863] Rather, what is important to note is that the cartography of the German Shakespeare reception is self-consciously dotted with the familiar *topoi* of the inheritance plot. Whether one appraises Shakespeare "analogous to a martyred and crucified God" (*einem gemarterten und gekreuzigten Gotte ähnlich*)[864] or, in Hauptmann's words, as

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[859] Hauptmann, "Deutschland und Shakespeare," xii.
[860] Hauptmann, ix.
[861] From *Formula of Concord's* 1580 exposition of the Lutheran understanding of the Eucharist (Dingel, Brechtold-Mayer, and Brandy, "Die Konkordienformel"). Hauptmann's speech to the Deutsche Shakespeare Gesellschaft is even more apposite to our discussion in its "bildungbürgerliche" hope that the "spiritual treasure house of humanity" (*[das] geistig[e] Schatzhaus der Menschheit*) will be spared the unprecedented destruction of the world war. It is also utterly ironic given the curse inscribed on Shakespeare's tomb at Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon: "GOOD FREND FOR IESVS SAKE FORBEARE/ TO DIGG THE DVST ENCLOASED HEARE/ BLESTe BE Ye MAN Yt SPARES THES STONES/ AND CVRST BE HE Yt MOVES MY BONES." Cf. Corn, "Shakespeare's Epitaph."
[862] Quoted in Günther, *Unser Shakespeare: Einblicke in Shakespeares fremd-verwandte Zeiten*, 53.
[863] One thinks of Round Heads and Pointed Heads (originally conceived as an adaptation of Measure for Measure) or The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, with its avowed debt to Richard III.
[864] Hauptmann, "Deutschland und Shakespeare," xii.

"incorporeal common property" (*ideell[er] Allgemeinbesitz*) whose value surpasses "crowns, scepters, jewels, and gold,"[865] in one sense or another "Unser Shakespeare" is a testament, a legacy, "dass hat uns reich bedacht."

But this is above all true of the plays. For their part, the *Sonnets* have yet to find a "classic" *Verdeutschung* comparable to the *Schlegel-Tieck Ausgabe*. This is not for want of trying. By the time Celan published his version, for example, the list of German translations of sonnet 4 already ran many pages and featured not a few notable precedents, including Dorothea Tieck, Gottlob Regis, Stefan George, and even Karl Kraus.[866] Such individual accomplishments notwithstanding, the absence of a canonic translation of all 154 sonnets has been attributed to a variety of causes, both formal and thematic. On the formal side, the difference is said to lie in the generic distinction between epideictic and dramatic verse,[867] or else in the unforgiving mechanics of the German language, whose inflections make rendering a dense line of English pentameter a metrical exercise in what to toss overboard.[868] The latter problem, in a certain sense, goes back to A. W. Schlegel, who not only transposed the English pentameter of the plays into five German stresses but who also elevated the rhymed version of this line into the standard meter of the German sonnet. Together, these two metrical norms effectively fixed the prosodic exchange rate of the *Sonnets* at one-to-one, one English for one German syllable. In practice, this means that German translations often achieve fluency at the cost of morphological and grammatical elision. German cannot compete with the *Sonnets'* "sum" of one-syllable words ("use," "give," "live," lend," etc.) which, to make matters worse, are also often repeated. As Klaus Reichert has observed, so long as they peg their syllables to Shakespeare's iambs, German translators commit themselves to a certain austerity, to writing poems which, however beautiful, remain "shades" (*Schatten*) of the original "substance."[869]

Reichert's vaguely dantesque reference to translative "shades" remains indebted to the distinction between property and substance, whose coherence as a model for economic transaction, logical predication, and spiritual afterlife I discussed in relation to sonnet 4's accounting system. Interestingly, Reichert actually collaborated with Celan on the preparation of the book form of Celan's Shakespeare translations,[870] and it is useful to keep this "spectrality" in mind as we move to how Celan's version of sonnet 4 figures the historical and linguistic transmission of beauty's legacy. Unlike his colleague Reichert, who would publish his own prose versions of the *Sonnets* forty years later, Celan hewed generally to the metrical standard used by Tieck, Regis, George, and Kraus and,

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[865] Hauptmann, viii. Such "royalties" should not be understood metaphorically. An often-unremarked consequence of international copyright law is that, while Shakespeare's English texts have long entered the public domain and become "ideell[er] Allgemeinbesitz," his more modern translations have not and are therefore protected by copyright in the same way that an original work would be. Given how present Shakespeare is in German culture generally and on German theaters especially, a new translation commands a considerable market, a fact which (from a certain point of view) transforms a newly published version into a renewed linguistic "privatization" of the older, English "commons." See Hamburger, "Translating and Copyright."

[866] On Celan's reading of earlier German translations, see Bücher, "William Shakespeare: Einundzwanzig Sonette." On Stefan George's precedent, in particular, see Lengeler, *Shakespeares Sonette in deutscher Übersetzung* and Lehnen, "George Und Celan Als Übersetzer Shakespeares."

[867] Jansohn, "Glocal Shakespeare: Shakespeare's Poems in Germany."

[868] See Wagenknecht, "Shakespeares Sonette deutsch."

[869] Reichert, "'Immer anders, immer das': Shakespeares Sonette in Prosa," 11.

[870] Shakespeare, *Einundzwanzig Sonette*. On Reichert's participation in the Insel edition, see Bücher, "William Shakespeare: Einundzwanzig Sonette."

with a few important exceptions, translated Shakespeare's pentameter into five-beat lines of ten or, in the case of so-called "feminine rhymes," eleven syllables.[871]

Celan's metrical solidarity with this tradition, however, should by no means be interpreted as evidence of his common ground with the legacy of the German Shakespeare translation or even the cosmopolitan patrimony Curtius calls "die Geisteserbe Europas." To the contrary, it is more accurate to read Celan's versions as pitched polemically against this heritage, undermining the established English-German exchange rate by rhythmically disarticulating the five-stress line 'from the inside.' Indeed, several commentators have already observed that Celan's versions do not simply translate Shakespeare's poems, they translate earlier German translations of the *Sonnets*.[872] Celan said as much. As he explained to Ernst Schnabel, a producer at the Norddeutschen Rundfunk,

> Da ich vier deutsche Übersetzungen [of the *Sonnets*] vor mir liegen habe, besteht die Schwierigkeit unter anderem auch darin, daß ich all dem aus dem Weg gehen muß, manchmal auch verschiedenen vom Original vorgeprägten, ja zudiktierten Wendungen.[873]
>
> Given that I have four German translations [of the *Sonnets*] lying before me, one of the challenges also consists in avoiding all that, [and] sometimes even certain expressions that come pre-formed, even dictated by the original.

Here, Celan reveals his sensitivity to what George Steiner calls the "interiority […] of Shakespeare's works inside the German-speaker's sense of his own language of its literary modes."[874] However, the historical self-consciousness that Steiner attributes to "the entire corpus of German Shakespeare translations"—namely that "the translator translates after and against his predecessors almost as much as he translates his source"[875]—receives a new determination in Celan's version. In effect, Celan cuts down this tradition with his "Gegenwort," the self-destructive word which, 'cutting the string,' turns the "corpus" into a "corpse."[876] Such a "*counter*-translation," what Ute Harbusch calls a "*Gegen*übersetzung,"[877] represents less a betrayal of Shakespeare than a self-conscious *refusal of the inheritance*. In this context, the political connotations of Celan's verb "zudiktieren" are by no means coincidental. Situating itself after the catastrophic rupture produced by twelve years of dictatorship, Celan chooses a different "path" (*Weg*) than Curtius. His anti-dictatorial translations call into question the continued currency (*Geltung*) of stock tropes and old, pre-formed figures, challenging his readers to reconsider the presumed validity (*Gültigkeit*) of beauty's legacy.

The "challenge" (*Schwierigkeit*) that Celan mentions to Schnabel is much larger than Shakespeare. It resides in modern German's literary and linguistic genealogy *as such*, a legacy that

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871 We will discussion one such exception below. Another (Sonnet 110) is treated by the comparativist Martin von Koppenfels. See Koppenfels, *Bild und Metamorphose*, 326.

872 See Olschner, *Der feste Buchstab*, 19f. Or, as Steiner puts it at the conclusion of his discussion of Celan and George: "the translator translates after and against his predecessors almost as much as he translates his source," Steiner, *After Babel*, 412. For a more recent discussion, see Zach, *Traduction littéraire et création poétique*, 122.

873 Quoted in Bücher, "William Shakespeare: Einundzwanzig Sonette," 429. Based on the contents of Celan's home library, Bücher speculates that the four unnamed translations were those of Regis, George, Otto Gildemeister, and Therese Robinson, though Reichert has stated that Celan was familiar with other, both German and non-German, translations as well.

874 Steiner, *After Babel*, 412.

875 Steiner, 412.

876 Celan, *Der Meridian*, 3.

877 Harbusch, *Gegenübersetzungen*.

Celan sees materialized before him in the four volumes he consults for his translation. The translation of Shakespeare represented a unique opportunity to bring the language up-to-date by ferrying the German of "Klassiker" through the history of the genocide, through what Celan called "the thousand silences of death bringing speech." But the special status of "unser Shakespeare" implies the extreme difficulty of Celan's project: how does one translate not just Shakespeare's English but Shakespeare's *German*? This is not a rhetorical question. The problem is less that, as Friedrich Schlegel said, "even in England Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Holland, [and] Flanders, actually (*eigentlich*) [one speaks] German,"[878] but that an entire "treasure house" of German phrasal structures and idioms—Celan's "Wendungen"—was quite literally calqued into German from Shakespeare's English. One sees the "Schwierigkeit": having in effect become a hereditary German speaker, Shakespeare more-or-less "dictates" (*diktiert*) his own translation.

To take a notable example, in *Hamlet*, act 1, scene 4, Schlegel has Marcello say "Etwas ist faul im Staate Dänemarks," carefully depositing "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" into German one word at a time. The phrase has since become common coin in the German-speaking world, so common, in fact, that Celan regularly employs it himself—though with a twist. In a 1962 letter to Adorno, for example, Celan breaks off a bitter portrait of the hypocritical tolerance and sham openness of post-War German culture (*Welcher Austausch!*) with a sarcastic collage of lines from *Hamlet*: "Had I but time, o, I could tell you! Ach ja, etwas ist faul im Staate D-Mark."[879] The line is capped with a pun that substitutes post-War "Deutschland" for Shakespeare's troubled "Dänemark" by contracting the latter and replacing the former with its currency, the "Deutschmark" or "D-Mark." The pun gets to the question of cultural currency and literary value.[880] A similar allusion to the "traffic" in literature can be found in the letter to Schnabel. As Celan tells Schnabel, certain German expressions are "vorgeprägt" by Shakespeare's original: they are "pre-shaped" or actually "pre-minted." It is as if the Bard were a foreign mint that directly coined German specie, underwriting the entire business of German "literature" on the strength of "beauty's legacy."[881]

When we keep in mind sonnet 4's model of translation as a "transfer of property" and note Celan's deeply ambivalent relationship to his literary inheritance, we see that the problem for Celan is in fact Shakespeare's excessive translatability. In effect, German culture banks *too* readily on his words, manifesting a confidence which allows them to hold value in translation. This is not to say that translators are given a free pass (German critics can be brutal), only that the value of the transfer is beyond doubt. The inevitable debts the translator contracts vis-à-vis the original are rated too highly. Something, after all, 'is rotten in the state of D-Mark.' Who, exactly, deems the "audit" "acceptable"? And what if the auditor had an interest in dissimulating the toxicity of the liability? As we shall see, it is by drawing attention to this "rot" that Celan's translation of sonnet 4 will disclose the bankruptcy of the legacy and the insolvency of Shakespeare's German currency.

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878 Schlegel, "Über deutsche Sprache und Literatur (1807)," 4.

879 Adorno and Celan, "Briefwechsel 1960-1968," 187. For another relevant use of the "etwas ist faul" quote, see Celan, *Mikrolithen sinds, Steinchen*, 41.

880 For Celan, the unholy "miracle" of the German Economic Miracle was how successfully the prosperity brought by international trade—an unprecedented influx of wealth (*Reichtum*) denominated in D-Marks—managed to displace the memory of war and genocide and of the uncountable losses inflicted by the Third Reich. As Celan once put it, "Something is rotten in the state of D-Mark -: this penny-word (*Groschenwort*) which no longer circulates among the sparking new platitudes that are quoted (*notieret*) over there…" Celan, *Mikrolithen sinds, Steinchen*, 41.

881 On Shakespeare's cultural "currency" more generally, see Bristol, *Big-Time Shakespeare*.

VI. "Bedenk!"

Rot and insolvency are ways of figuring the translation's historical moment as a time of unpayable debts and unredeemable losses. Both of these conditions are intimately related to what it means for Celan to write or translate poetry "today" (*heute*). In his public and private reflections on his own work, Celan regularly stresses what he refers to as the "today-ness" (*die Heutigkeit*) of the poem.[882] In his various expositions of this term, Celan explains that "today-ness" has less to do with the specific date of a poem's composition than, in a quasi-phenomenological vein, with the felt disjunction between the time of a poem's address and the time of its reception. Unlike the fusion of spatiotemporal horizons that Gadamer associates with hermeneutic understanding and the practice of translation, the "timeliness" of Celan's poetry is always disjointed, inopportune, "untimely."[883] "Today" strikes with a shudder, like the falling blade of the guillotine that Celan invokes in his reading of Georg Büchner's play *Danton's Death*. This retelling of the day of Georges Danton and Camille Desmoulins' execution is one of the most arresting moments in the entire *Meridian*. For Celan, the execution scene is where everything "turns," where we leave the domain of "art" (*Kunst*) and enter the domain of "poetry" (*Dichtung*). When the executioner guillotines Danton and Camille, Lucile Desmoulins, having understood nothing of her husband's artful words (*kunstreiche Worte*), cries "Es lebe der König!" *(Long live the King!)*." Shouted in sight of the guillotine during the play's final scene, Lucile's "counter-word" (*Gegenwort*) calls down the curtain by calling for her own execution. In Celan's reading, however, these last words are neither a reactionary credo nor nihilistic bravado, they are "poetry" (*Dichtung*). In their opposition to the "pathos and sententia" of the gallows speeches, Lucile's four-word poem—which in Büchner's play is *both* a translation *and* a citation—represent a "counter" last will and testament. Their act of political and ethical resistance lies not in the incorruptible legacy they bequeath but in their "lauter Sterblichkeit" (*pure mortality*)[884]—their absurd untimeliness and all-too-human finitude: "worthless" properties to be had gratis (*umsonst*) but which bear witness to Lucile's *today*.

But the opposition of the counter-word, the interruption of its "today," is not only associated with mortality emblematized by Lucile's execution. At the level of poetic rhythm, Celan associates such divisive punctuality with the precipitous accentuation of syllable stress (*Akzent*) rather than the regular disposition of metrical feet.[885] In the *Meridian*, art is said to organize its steps into a string of beats (*Hebungen*), and it moves with a Shakespearean flair. "Iambic five-footed" like the Bard's verse and "childless" (*kinderlos*[]) like the Young Man, art, like sonnet 4, is not above making a spectacle out of execution. Such exhibitionism implicates even the most refined art in what is ultimately a vulgar trade in its own forms, a "traffic with [itself] alone" that is nowhere more recognizable than in the solicitations of "market-criers" (*Wozzeck*), the stage tricks of clowns (*Leonce and Lena*), and the rehearsed formulae of gallows speeches (*Danton's Death*). Poetry, by contrast, is what thrusts itself "in between" the "iambic" routines of this verbal automatism. Where traditional iambs march on mechanically, the variable stress that Celan calls the "acute [of today]" (*Akut [des heutigen]*) intervenes as a solution of continuity: it is "the word that cuts the string," a diacritical

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882 Celan, *Mikrolithen sinds, Steinchen*, 141.

883 Thus: "'Zeitloses' Gedicht: das immer zur Unzeit Gegenwärtige. Das durch Gegenwart als unzeitig empfundene Gezeitigte. Zeitlos = Zeitoffen." A difficult passage to translate. Perhaps: "the 'timeless' poem: what is always contemporary at the wrong time. A maturation that for the present is always felt as untimely. Timeless = time-open." Celan, 35.

884 Celan, *Der Meridian*, 3.

885 On the metrical distinction between "stress" (*Akzent*) and "beat" (*Hebung*) with which Celan is playing, see Bunia, *Metrik und Kulturpolitik*, 27ff.

stroke that brings down the curtain with the guillotine. In a sense strictly opposed to the gainful execution announced at the end of sonnet 4—indeed, in a sense 'diesem Sinn ent*gegen*'—the *Meridian* understands poetic rhythm from the perspective of "th'executioner," as though rhythm were the "shade" death cast on the poem's "substance." The change in perspective turns the notion of bequest on its head. The so-called "acute [of today]" (*Akut [des heutigen]*) is not the vital pulse of the past that beats in the present—not Curtius's "living preservation of transhistorical spiritual values"—but an intonation that allows absence to reverberate. "Today," in other words, is not a legacy of which we are the modern beneficiaries, but a loss that is difficult if not impossible to assume.

As I suggested in my discussion of the tension between the "restricted" and the "general" senses of testamentary translation, the speaker of sonnet 4 is in the peculiar situation of both willing Young Man's death and needing to keep him alive. Indeed, the rhetorical artistry of Shakespeare's "kunstreiche Worte" consists in "executing" these two opposing tasks simultaneously. As the one who administers loss and gain, the ambivalent figure of "th'executor" is a kind of compromise formation by which the poem can dispense with the Young Man *and* keep his beauty. In light of the multiple tasks it performs, "executor" surely ranks among sonnet 4's "richly artful words." Importantly, however, it is a word that is "lost" in Celan's translation. But it is not just that Celan's text lacks a figure to broker life and death, his translation puns on the German verb commonly used for testamentary bequests to urge its addressee and reader to "consider" (*bedenken*) what it means to "bestow" (*bedenken*).[886] In a certain sense, the whole translation is organized around this double gesture of "Bedenken," which is transmitted as much by its words as by its rhythms, and which contests the artful ambivalence of the executor.[887] Like the psalm with which it shares this keyword[888]—this "Gegenwort"—Celan's text "gives" (*bedenkt*) so that we may "reflect" (*bedenken*), excavating from Shakespeare's sonnet a creaturely mortality that resists the legal and literary terms on which poem establishes its own "translatability." Celan's translation reads,

> Anmut, verschwenderische du, bedenk:
> du darfst dein Teil nicht ganz an dich verschwenden.
> Schönheit – Vermächtnis ist sie, nicht Geschenk;
> sie kommt aus offner Hand – zu offnen Händen.
>
> Mißbrauche nicht, was dich so reich bedacht.
> Du Schön-und-Geizig, gib, was dir gegeben.
> Du hast und hast – und hasts dahin gebracht.
> bei allem Wuchern reichts dir nicht zum Leben.
>
> Welch einen Handel treibst du mit dir, sag?
> Dein eigen Ich, von dir wirds hintergangen.
> Denk an die Rechnung, denke an den Tag,

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886 *Das Deutsche Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm*, s.v. "bedenken," accessed August 1, 2019.On Celan's use of the "bedenken," see his 1966 poem "Bedenkenlos" (Celan, *KG*, 265), as well as his unsent 1961 letter to Klaus Demus (Celan et al., *Paul Celan, Klaus und Nani Demus*, 406).

887 Cf. Beese, *Nachdichtung als Erinnerung*, 129.

888 Cf. Psalm 90:12. Luther translates the verse as "Lehre uns bedenken, dass wir sterben müssen, auf dass wir klug werden." Robert Alter's English translation reads, "To count our day rightly, instruct,/ that we may get a heart of wisdom." On the psalm's contrasting of human mortality and divine immortality, see Alter's commentary. *The Book Psalms: A Translation with Commentary*, 317ff.

da dir sie die Natur wird abverlangen.

Die Schönheit, ungenutzt: mit dir muß sie verwesen.
Doch nutzt du sie, sie wird, was bleibt, verwesen.

Unlike Reichert's prose version, Celan opted to transpose the "formal" features of Shakespeare's sonnet as well as its referential-denotational "sense." But the rhythm of Celan's translation is not straightforwardly Shakespeare's, a departure which asks us to consider what it means to translate rhythm. Here, a bit of formal analysis is instructive. With the important exception of line 13, Celan reproduces Shakespeare's "iambic five-footed" line and adheres to the alternations of the Shakespeare's rhyme scheme. At first sight, Celan's additional alternation of "masculine" and "feminine" cadences ("bedenk":"Geschenk" vs. "gegeben":"Leben") seems like a significant departure. However, if Celan varies the cadences in this and other sonnets, he does so more-or-less systematically, so that the formal identity of Shakespeare's quartets is maintained. As Christian Wagenknecht has argued, such attention to the strophic construction of Shakespeare's texts, both in each individual sonnet and across the sequence as a whole, is exceptional and actually makes Celan's versions metrically *closer* to their English precedents than the majority of other modern translations, including those of Regis, George and Kraus.[889]

In addition to beats and cadences, another significant dimension of the translation's rhythm is what Norbert von Hellingrath called "harte Fügung" ("hard joining," *harmonia austera*). "Harte Fügung" privileges diction over syntax, so that the text lingers heavily over isolated and often repeated nouns and verbs at the expense of "glatter" (*smoother*) parts of speech like connectives and particles.[890] A paratactic rhythm emerges in the semantic, phonetic, and historical relationships of dense word with dense word. The word "Hand," for instance, not only reverberates through Celan's translation in various grammatical-etymological ("Hand," "Händen," "Handel") and metonymic-thematic ("schenken," "geben," "bringen," "reichen") permutations, but it also recalls the temporality of translation: the pause and advance of Celan's hand as it moves across the page as well as the literal and figurative passage of Shakespeare's text from his hands to Celan's. Implicated in both the act of exchange and the act of writing, hands are what sustains translation. At the same time, however, there are no "hands" in Shakespeare's text from which Celan's "Händen" might take the baton.[891] Though it admirably concretizes the bequest theme and renders the process of translation palpable, the reference to the "hand" that gives and the "hands" that receive is a "touch" that Celan adds to the poem, a rhythm produced by translation.

The presence of Celan's "Hände[ ]" in Shakespeare's poem inscribes the translation's historical difference. One could not reverse the course of translation and, transposing Celan's German words back into English, produce a text whose diction resembled Shakespeare's. Nor would one want to. Nevertheless, to demonstrate what Umberto Eco would call the "minimal linguistic reversibility" of Celan's text,[892] I will offer one possible "inter-linear" version of Celan's translation, together with the English text published in Insel's facing-page edition.[893]

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889 Wagenknecht, "Shakespeares Sonette deutsch," 189. George, for example, does not preserve the formal identity of all three of Sonnet 4's quartets. The cadences of his version are the following: mmmm/mfmf/mmmm/mm. Cf. *Shakespeare Sonette*, 10.

890 Cf. Hellingrath, *Pindarübertragungen von Hölderlin*.

891 I will return to the poem's "hands" in the discussion below.

892 On the advantages and the limits of such "reversitibilità puramente linguistica," particularly in relation to poetic speech, see Eco, *Dire Quasi la Stessa Cosa*, 69f.

893 That Celan was not categorically opposed to such lexical calques is suggested by the inter-linear translations of his own provided that he regularly provided for his wife, Gisèle.

PC: Anmut, verschwenderische du, bedenk:
PG: Grace, you spendthrift, consider:
WS: Unthrifty loveliness, why dost thou spend

PC: du darfst dein Teil nicht ganz an dich vershwenden.
PG: you may not spend your portion entirely on yourself.
WS: Upon thyself thy beauty's legacy?

PC: Schönheit – Vermächtnis ist sie, nicht Geschenk;
PG: Beauty – it is a legacy, not a gift;
WS: Nature's bequest gives nothing, but doth lend,

PC: sie kommt aus offner Hand – zu offnen Händen.
PG: it comes out of an open hand – to open hands.
WS: And being frank she lends to those are free:

PC: Mißbrauche nicht, was dich so reich bedacht:
PG: Do not misuse what considered you so richly:
WS: Then, beauteous niggard, why dost thou abuse

PC: du Schön-und-Geizig, gib, was dir gegeben.
PG: you, Beautiful-and-Stingy, give what you [were] given.
WS: The bounteous largesse given thee to give?

PC: Du hast und hast – und hasts dahin gebracht:
PG: You have and have – and have carried it so far:
WS: Profitless usurer, why dost thou use

PC: bei allem Wuchern reichts dir nicht zum Leben.
PG: for all the usury, it does not suffice you for living.
WS: So great a sum of sums, yet canst not live?

PC: Welch einen Handel treibst du mit dir, sag?
PG: What kind of trade do you conduct with yourself? do tell.
WS: For having traffic with thyself alone,

PC: Dein eigen Ich, von dir wird's hintergangen.
PG: Your own I, by you it's deceived.
WS: Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive:

PC: Denk an die Rechnung, denke an den Tag,
PG: Think of the bill, think of the day,
WS: Then how when nature calls thee to be gone –

PC: da dir sie die Natur wird abverlangen.
PG: when nature will demand it from you.
WS: What acceptable audit canst thou leave?

PC: Die Schönheit, ungenutzt: mit dir muß sie verwesen.
PG: Beauty, unused: with you it must rot.
WS: Thy unus'd beauty must be tomb'd with thee,

PC: Doch nutzt du sie, sie wird, was bleibt, verwesen.
PG: But if you use it, it will administer what remains.
WS: Which usèd lives th'executor to be.

The minimal reversibility of Celan's diction (the absence of clear precedents for "Hand," "gebracht," "Tag," "verwesen," etc.) has little to do with the semantic possibilities of German vocabulary. It is not that the "Wortschatz" lacks sufficiently "kunstreiche Worte." Even Shakespeare's Janus-faced "executor," a word whose English ambivalence does such heavy figural lifting, is not beyond the semantic range of the German lexicon. "Vollstrecker," for example, does the job reasonably well. Schlegel picked "Vollstrecker" to render Lady Anne's "I will not be the executioner" (*Richard III*, 1.3.183), and, of the four German translations found in Celan's personal library, three feature "Vollstrecker" in their versions of sonnet 4's last two lines. George, for example, concludes the poem with

Genutzt wird sie vollstrecker deiner hab.[894]

While it would be an exaggeration to claim that "Vollstrecker" is a word "pre-coined" (*vorgeprägt*) by Shakespeare, it certainly is a translation of "executor" whose circulation has beaten a trail in sonnet 4's German reception. If "Hand" is a lexical trace that Celan willing leaves on his translation, "Vollstrecker," in contrast, seems to be one of those "formulations" (*Wendungen*) that he feels obliged to circumvent ([*die er*] *aus dem Weg gehen muss*).

The absence of the "executor" is intimately connected with the presence of "Hände[r]." The difference points to how Celan's practice of translation departs from the model of transmission found in sonnet 4 itself. To put it in the terms of another contested translation: the figure of "executor" acknowledges the absence of the Young Man's in a first moment only to "sublate" (*aufheben*) this loss in a second. By contrast, Celan's "Hände[ ]" are precisely what does not "transfer" in the literal and figurative translation. They are the *irrelevant* remainder, "was bleibt" between languages: the *Überbleibsel*, the remains, *le reste qu'on ne peut pas relever*. Of course, Celan's "Hände[ ]" are also the site of an exchange, but the transfer they carry out is a rhythmically disjointed and possibly "irrelevant" one, a bequest that crosses a caesura to "give" the recipient "something to think about" (*etwas zu bedenken*).[895]

In Celan's translation of sonnet 4, what forces one to pause is above all Celan's "em dashes" (" –"), the printing marks that German refers to idiomatically as "Gedankenstriche" (lit. "strokes of thought"). Two em dashes punctuate the verse of stanza one:

Schönheit – Vermächtnis ist sie, nicht Geschenk;
sie kommt aus offner Hand – zu offnen Händen.

And a third arrives exactly halfway through the sonnet, splitting verse 7 down the middle:

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894 George and Shakespeare, *Shakespeare Sonette*, 10.

895 A large portion of Derrida's *œuvre* can be cited in a footnote to topic. Bracketing Derrida's own readings of Celan, a good place to start is with the translation of "Aughebung" proposed in *Glas*, and, of course, the reflections on "relève" and translation that can be found in *Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction "relevante"?*

Du hast und hast – und hasts dahin gebracht:

Unlike the "Bindestrich" or "binding stroke" ("-"), which links words together into lexical chains (e.g. "Schön-und-Geizig"), the "Gedankenstrich" interrupts the flow of discourse. Conventionally, it can be used to delimit a parenthetical expression, to mark the absence of a word or clause, or, like a colon, to introduce a further precision. For his part, Celan often inserts "Gedankenstriche" into the lines of his translations and his own poetry, where they assume especially strong rhythmic dimensions.[896] When they appear inside the line, Celan's dashes often produce rhythms that unsettle the beat of the meter and the swing of the syntax, forcing one to parse and reparse the verse in pursuit of the "right" reading. In line 3 of sonnet 4, for example, the "thought-stroke" falls between "Schönheit" (*beauty*) and "Vermächtnis" (*legacy*), dissolving the complex relation of ownership suggested by the sonorous genitive construction "thy beauty's legacy" into an underdetermined confrontation of two nouns across a divide. In contrast to Shakespeare, Celan does not present us with a *particular* beauty or a *particular* legacy. Instead, he distills "thy beauty" into an unqualified "Schönheit," a translation which transfers Shakespeare's testamentary conceit out of the domain of early modern inheritance law and into a recognizably *aesthetic* discourse about "art" ("–ach, die Kunst!"). Indeed, Celan goes so far as to recycle the forms of allegorical poetry, phrasing Shakespeare's opening epithet so as to suggest that "Grace" (*Anmut*) itself is the sonnet's true addressee.

The turn to "Anmut" is a clue that what is being translated here is not just Shakespeare but an iconically German history of thinking about art, ethics, and universal history. Coming on the heels of "Anmut," the "Gedankenstrich" cleaving "Schönheit" and "Vermächtnis" cannot help but make one think of the aesthetic culture of the Weimarer Klassik and of the legacy of texts like Schiller's *Anmut und Würde* (1793). The echo is no coincidence. Schiller himself translated Shakespeare, and Weimar mixed its veneration of Greek and Latin antiquity with a feverish enthusiasm for Shakespeare (Goethe's famous *Hamletfieber*).[897] Even more to the point: the writers of German Classicism were given to casting their neo-humanist synthesis of what would soon be called "Weltliteratur" in the language of testamentary transmission. Thus, in his 1789 inaugural lecture on universal history, Schiller reached for a *topos* with which we are now quite familiar, recalling for his audience not just the "bounteous largesse given [them] to give" but even the "acceptable audit" he hoped they would leave behind:

> We should glow with the noble desire to contribute out of our *own* means to the rich legacy (*dem reichen Vermächtnis*) of truth, morality, and freedom—which we received from the past and which, richly augmented (*reich vermehrt*), we in turn must pass on to the future—and to fasten thereby our flitting human existence onto the intransient chain (*unvergängliche[n] Kette*) that winds through all human races.[898]

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[896] On Celan's use of Gedankenstriche, including in his translation of Gérard de Nerval's sonnet "El Desdichado," see Vedder, "Gedankenstriche in der Lyrik von Ingeborg Bachmann, Nelly Sachs und Paul Celan."

[897] It is worth remembering that *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795/1796) famously turns on a reading of *Hamlet* and the author of *Die Räuber* was celebrated as the "teutschen Shakespeare." Cf. Günther, *Unser Shakespeare: Einblicke in Shakespeares fremd-verwandte Zeiten*, 39. On the "Hamletfieber," see Walter Muschg's classic essay, "Deutschland ist Hamlet."

[898] Schiller, *Universalhistorische Schriften*, 35.

Interestingly, Schiller's early death made his own legacy into one of the first heritages entrusted to the very "bürgerliche Gedenkkultur" (*bourgeois culture of memory*) that his notion of universal history anticipated. For Schiller but also for someone like Curtius, this is what it means to become a Klassiker: to have one's transient existence "taken up" (*aufgehoben*) by an "intransient chain" of transmission that stretches indeterminately into the future.

A beauty "which usèd lives th'executor to be": as Stefan Willer has pointed out, Goethe applied this Shakespearean logic extraordinarily literally, writing an "epilogue" to his friend's "Das Lied von der Glocke" that recast the text as a last will and testament and nominated the fatherland (*das Vaterland*) as Schiller's heir.[899] In *Erbfälle: Theorie und Praxis kultureller Übertragung in der Moderne*, Willer assigns the execution of Schiller's legacy wide-ranging significance. Goethe's epilogue sets a precedent, and the rhetoric he uses fixes the terms of what Willer calls "the economy of cultural heritage" by which Schiller is effectively "translated" into the churchyard of cultural memory.[900] In brief: like Schlegel's Shakespeare, Schiller "was ours" and only became more so upon his death.[901] As complex as such processes of psychic, economic, and symbolic compensation surely are, it bears remembering that continuity is a basic postulate of humanist culture and one that will, as if by necessity, return in Goethe's own canonical "Vermächtnis" (1829). *That* late poem revisits Schiller's image of the unbroken chain, tempering the vision of historical progress that had gripped Schiller in the days before the Revolutionary Terror with a wisdom that Goethe had gleaned from his study of the natural sciences. As the poem's first line puts it: "Kein Wesen kann zu nichts zerfallen!" (*No being can decay into nothing!*).[902]

Like Goethe, Celan was drawn to the natural sciences, but, for him, the historical rupture of the genocide tested the validity of Goethe's "Vermächtnis"—in more ways than one. In fact, what to make of the "Vermächtnis der deutschen Klassik" after Auschwitz was a topic of public debate in the immediate post-War years. Interestingly, Curtius played a central role in this debate, vehemently attacking Karl Jaspers for the irreverence the philosopher showed when he was awarded the 1947 Goethe Prize. In that speech, Jaspers had insisted on the singularity of the historical rupture which divided the present from Goethe, challenging the validity of Goethean *humanitas* for post-War German culture and insisting on the dangers that accompany the "translation (*Übersetzung*) of his truth into one's own world."[903] In his response, Curtius refuted Jaspers' assessment of the historical caesura and explicitly returned to the judgment of Goethe's legacy that he had published before the war. As he wrote in a 1949 article belonging to the polemic,

> Goethe's life and work is a message of light (*Lichtbotschaft*); an affirmation of humanity and earth, of God and nature. I consider it an important duty of German thinkers to interpret this teaching with reverence and ever deeper understanding. Goethe's legacy (*Vermächtnis*) is

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[899] Willer, *Erbfälle*, 195f. The final lines of the first version of "Epilog zu Schillers Glocke" read, "Oh! Möge doch den heil'gen letzen Willen/ Das Vaterland vernehmen und erfüllen." The Shakespearian pun on "execution" is not entirely lost in German: as Eva Horn writes, "Goethe's epilogue […] kills Schiller's text." See Horn, *Trauer schreiben*, 117.

[900] Willer, *Erbfälle*, 194. For those who doubt Schiller's significance for German cultural memory, it bears noting that the catalogue *Fremde Nähe*, a vast collection of documents pertaining to Celan's translation work, was exhibited at the Schiller-Nationalmuseum and published by the Deutsche Schillergesellschaft of Marbach am Neckar.

[901] As Horn puts it, "The kind of monumentalization that these obsequies practice seamlessly conceal their point of departure, mourning. The dead is dressed up for public use (*zum öffentlichen Gebrauch*). […] Schiller 'was ours' – and is only more so now that he is dead. His otherness (*Alterität*) is dissolved; he is assimilated into the memorial needs (*Gedächtnisbedürfnisse*) of the Weimar culture industry." Horn, *Trauer schreiben*, 117.

[902] Goethe, *Gedichte*, 437. My translation.

[903] Jaspers, "Unsere Zukunft und Goethe," 36.

> a force, on which the German youth can heal and grow strong. They should be able to expect their teachers to show them the way there. That is what I believed in 1932 and I believe it still today. The preservation of this legacy (*die Bewahrung dieses Vermächtnisses*) was what the struggle was about then; that's what it is about today (*heute*).[904]

Curtius's sense of "today" (*heute*) as the manifestation of a continuity sustained across history could not be more different from the disjunctive temporality of Celan's "heute," the so-called "Akut des Heutigen." Clearly, when it comes to the translatability of "deutsche Klassiker" like Goethe, Schiller, and *Shakespeare*, Celan's own thoughts resonate with Jaspers's reservations (sein *"Bedenken"*) and above all with the ethical stance that compelled the philosopher to refract Goethe's "message of light" through what Celan called "the thousand darknesses of death-bringing speech." Even more insistently than Jaspers's "Our Future and Goethe," Celan's poetry draws a line between "heute" and the Klassiker.

Literally: the "Gedankenstrich" that Celan places between "Schönheit" and "Vermächtnis" in sonnet 4 is just such a line of ethical and patrimonial demarcation. It renounces the inheritance. Rhythmically, the dash takes the spring out of the line's first step. When read to the beat of traditional German metrics (itself a legacy of classical poetry), Celan's first foot scans as a trochee. At the head of an iambic line, such an inverted first foot can often seem to speed the verse along (cf. "Dénk an| die Réch|nung; dén|ke án| den Tág"). By following the trochee with the "Gedankenstrich," however, Celan strings out the pause and delays the arrival of the second beat. This hesitation suggests that the clause that follows is not a logical precision but an equivocation, revision, or correction. It is as though the poet were disabusing his addressee (and himself) of a certain received idea of "Schönheit" and perhaps even the assumption that beauty *has* a legacy. Put differently: whereas Shakespeare's version distinguishes between different kinds of property transfer ("nature's bequest gives nothing, but doth lend"), Celan lingers on the metaphysics that underwrites such exchanges. His "Gedankenstrich" rethinks Shakespeare's apostrophe, warping the punctuation mark that flags the grammatical, logical, and legal relationship of possession.[905]

Ironically, Celan's *elision* of the apostrophe poses an *obstacle* to the smooth functioning of the legal conceit. In contrast to Shakespeare's poem, Celan's "Vermächtnis" does not transfer "Schönheit" like a deed transfers an estate or a contract transfers property. "Beauty" does not have a "legacy," nor does the "legacy" necessarily bequeath "beauty." Instead, "beauty" *is* a "legacy," more exactly, it is a "—Vermächtnis."[906] Placed immediately after the pause, the word "Vermächtnis" seems to wake up to its own "wordiness." Like the English word "testament" but unlike the word "legacy," "Vermächtnis" can denote the testamentary document as well as the action and object of the bequest. A testament with no legal force whatsoever, a last will that has been reduced to the deadest of letters, is still a "Vermächtnis." In the terms of Celan's translation, therefore, it is entirely possible that *no property changes hands*. The presence of the "Gedankenstrich" invites us to consider the possibility that nothing whatsoever has been transferred, that the "Vermächtnis" itself, the dead letter and the letter of the dead, is all that remains.

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[904] Curtius and Uken, "Goethe, Jaspers, Curtius: Ein Schlußwort in Eigener Sache."

[905] As noted above, "Beauty's legacy" can be read simultaneously as a subjective and an objective genitive. To parse this in the terms provided here, "beauty" has "legacy" as its grammatical and logical property (subjective genitive), but "beauty" is the property that "legacy" legally confers (objective genitive).

[906] The semantic field of "Vermächtnis" is slightly narrower than that of "legacy." Perhaps because it lacks the etymological connection to the papal "legates," whose delegations did not necessary imply the pope's death, "Vermächtnis's" various connotations are more closely bound up with the question of death.

VII. Testament

In a commentary to her translation of a line from René Char's *Feuillet d'Hypnos* ("Notre héritage n'est précédé d'aucun testament")—a line that Celan himself had translated[907]—Rebecca Comay elegantly summarizes the thought prompted by line three's "Gedankenstrich." "What," Comay asks, "if the testament itself were the heritage? Or rather, if there was no heritage—no patrimonial estate to settle, no treasure to be distributed, not even a meaning or value to be safeguarded—only the pressure of a demand as enigmatic as it is insistent?"[908] Building on Comay's point, perhaps we can say that, in Celan's translation, sonnet 4's bequest retains its character as a "dative" imposition while losing its executive force—its "accusative," distributive properties. This would mean that, while the testament continues to interpellate its beneficiary, it is no longer "transitive." It no longer transfers. In other words, the testament "gives" nothing, it "lends" nothing—except itself, except its enigmatic demand. Here, it is important to recall that Shakespeare differentiates between the two transitive verbs: "nature's bequest gives nothing but doth lend." Celan's translation displaces this opposition onto a different pair of terms and a different part of speech. Giving and lending are two acts, which, in the legal universe of sonnet 4, confer different property rights. The fact that, to be binding, the subject of these acts must be dead is not a thought on which the poet dwells. In the post-feudal, early modern context of the *Sonnets*, a hereditary bequest was a near equivalent to a bill of sale, and, in itself, the difference he draws between giving and lending has nothing to do with death. The reader knows that since this is a "bequest," a dead body must be hiding somewhere, but this human subject is kept from view. The testator's grammatical agency is buried under the personified nature who takes charge of the transmission ("nature's bequest"). Not so in Celan's version. By transposing the opposition between the verbs "give" and "lend" onto the opposition between the nouns "Vermächtnis" and "Geschenk," Celan emphasizes the special obligation that death *qua* death confers upon the exchange.[909] To be precise, the displacement of the opposition from the pair of verbs to the pair of nouns subtly recasts the action of translation. If Shakespeare's "bequest" is a "testamentarische *Übertragung*"—a property transfer (*Übertragung*) or metaphor (*Übertragung*) of a property transfer;[910] Celan's "Schönheit" is a "*testamentarische* Übertragung"—the rewriting of Shakespeare's beautiful verse *as* a testament, a translation which is also a "testamentification."[911] Adorno once compared the pause that the "Gedankenstrich" blows open between clauses to the

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907 In her extraordinary essay, Comay argues for reversing Char's sentence: not "Notre héritage n'est précédé d'aucun testament," but "Notre testament n'est précédé d'aucun héritage," which she translates as "our testament comes to us without a heritage." Comay, "Testament of the Revolution (Walter Benjamin)." For his part, Celan sticks with Char's word order: "Unserer Erbschaft ist keinerlei Testament vorausgegangen." Celan, *Gesammelte Werke*, 1992, IV: 469.

908 Comay, "Testament of the Revolution (Walter Benjamin)," 5.

909 Unlike "legacy" and "gift," which in English are near synonyms, Grimm defines "Geschenk" as not being what is conferred by law or right, that is not an "Erbe" or Vermächtnis. *Das Deutsche Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm*, s.v. "geschenk," accessed August 1, 2019.

910 "Übertragung" ("translation") is a literal "Übertragung" of the Greek word *μεταφορά* ("metaphor"), which breaks down into the prefix "meta" ("beyond," "über") and the verb "phora" ("bear," "tragen"). See Müller Nielaba, *Rhetorik der Übertragung*. In addition, it is important to note that the legal and/or economic senses of "property transfer" is far better represented in "Übertragung's" modern use than in "translation's." See Willer, Weigel, and Jussen, "Erbe, Erbschaft, Vererbung: Eine aktuelle Problemlage und ihr historischer Index."

911 On Celan's negation of the rhetorical assumptions of Shakespeare's sonnets, which he attributes to a different "intention towards language, see Szondi's canonical essay, "Poetry of Constancy - Poetik der Beständigkeit: Celans Übertragung von Shakespeares Sonnet 105."

temporality of a "burdensome inheritance" (*die Zeit* […] *des lastenden Erbes*).[912] The ossification of Shakespeare's verbs into verbal nouns ("vermachen":"Vermächtnis," "schenken":"Geschenk")—Celan's oft-noted "tendency to the substantive" (*Hang zum Substantivischen*)—seems to bear witness to this inherited burden.[913]

A "Vermächtnis" weighs on its beneficiary differently than a "Geschenk," but, for Celan unlike Shakespeare, this obligation is not a social or legal bond. To the contrary, in what seems like an open contradiction, he translates Shakespeare's bequest in what appear to be the least obliging terms possible: "Sie kommt aus offner Hand – zu offnen Händen." Idiomatically, "eine offne Hand haben" (*to have an open hand*) suggests unguarded generosity, a signification that traces back to the Hebrew Bible.[914] In Deuteronomy, for instance, the opening of the hand figures the *cancellation* of a debt (Deut 15:11).[915] The word "Hand" holds a special place in Celan's poetry and prose, where it gathers together several dimensions of his poetics. As scholars have shown, Celan's "Hand" is at once the creaturely body,[916] the pen's motion,[917] the poet's signature,[918] the extended offering,[919] the hoped for encounter,[920] and the ever-present danger of violence and dismemberment.[921] Given the overdermination of the hand within his *œuvre*, it is in one sense not surprising that Celan should dig up this remainder of the testator's body from beneath Shakespeare's allegory. The excavated hand restores a dimension of corporeal contact to testamentary transmission generally and Celan's assumption of Shakespeare's legacy in particular. In another sense, however, this intimacy is entirely spectral. In bequests, the lid of the coffin separates the hand that gives from the hand that receives: to borrow from one of Celan's euphemisms, "es kommt etwas daszwischen" (*something comes in between*).[922] Indeed, impossibility of embodied exchange might be what distinguishes a "Vermächtnis" from a "Geschenk."[923] Whatever a "Vermächtnis" gives (*bedenkt*), it also gives to thought (*bedenkt*), precisely since the giver remains irremediably absent.[924]

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912 Adorno, "Satzzeichen," 109.

913 A relevant declaration of Celan's from the *Meridian* materials: "Im Einmaligen und Endlichen wird das Wort zum Namen — Nomen, Hang zum Substantivischen [ ] Es ist einem Namen zugeordnet, der unaussprechlich ist." Celan, *Der Meridian*, 75. See also the text to Celan's radio play, "Die Dichtung Osip Mandelstamms." Celan, 217.

914 Röhrich, "Hand," 648.

915 Cf. Robert Alter's commentary on this verse. Alter, *The Hebrew Bible*, 2186.

916 Cf. Lozinski-Veach, "Embodied Nothings."

917 For an analysis of the manuscripts (the "*Hand*schrfiten") of Celan's Shakespeare translations, see Schmull, "Übersetzen Als Sprung." See also Stoll, "'...und eine Schreibmaschine.'"

918 Cf. Menninghaus, *Paul Celan*, 101f.

919 Cf. Strätling, *Die Hand am Werk*, 499.

920 Cf. Broda, *Dans la main de personne*, 95–118.

921 Cf. Pennone, *Paul Celans Übersetzungspoetik*, 489f. On the severed hand, see Celan's unsent 1962 letter to René Char: *Correspondance 1954-1968*, 151.

922 Celan, *Der Meridian*, 2.

923 Etymologists trace "Geschenk" back to the proto-Indo-European etymon "(s)keng-," which means "crooked," "skewed." The modern sense of "gift" is thought to have developed out of a meaning today denoted by the verb "einschenken" (*to fill a glass*). In German, one can speculate, "giving someone a gift" (*jmdm etw schenken*) is rooted in the physical action of pouring someone a drink—presumably with one's own hands. See Pfeifer, "schenken."

924 In her discussion of Celan and Mandel'stam, Susanne Strätling connects this absence to both poets' interest in the figure of the "message-in-a-bottle" (*Flaschenpost*). "The message-in-a-bottle," she writes, "is not only a bridge across time. It is a testament (*Testament*), 'the last will of a dead person," which traverses time to lay upon the reader the legacy (*Vermächtnis*) of the deceased." Strätling, *Die Hand am Werk*, 499.

The "Denken" (*thinking*) and "Danken" (*thanking*) that this loss elicits are by no means ancillary to the transmission.[925] And it is perhaps in reflecting on this absence that, by means of a phantom translation or "multilingual Wortspiel," another heritage casts its shadow upon Celan's language.[926] Robert Alter notes that in the Bible, the word for "hand" has an additional meaning that is not reflected in modern German or English usage. In biblical Hebrew, besides signifying "hand," the word *yad* denotes a "commemorative monument."[927] This signification is associated above all with Isaiah 56: 5, where the prophet promises pious eunuchs a permanent place in the new Jerusalem: "I will give them within My house and within My walls/ a marker and a name better than sons and daughters,/ an everlasting name will I give them that shall not be cut off." The word that Alter translates as "marker," and that Luther translates as "Denkmal" ("memorial"), is *yad* ("hand"). In 1964 the word "yad" circulated in languages other than Hebrew, above all in the Isaian collocation "Yad Vashem" ("hand and name"), the name that, a decade earlier, the Israeli Knesset had given to the massive project of documenting the genocide and which remains today the name of the monument and museum complex housing those archives. In open allusion to Isaiah 56:5, the (impossible) task of the Yad Vashem Archives is to make good on the prophet's promise: to create a space "within [its] house and within [its] walls" that will safeguard the memory of the victims "better than sons and daughters." Chillingly, history has re-literalized these biblical verses. Ritual commemoration was necessary in the eunuchs' case because they could not bear offspring of their own, and the genocide makes such institutionalized memory once again necessary, since the most obvious "passeurs de mémoire" (lit. "ferrymen of memory") were in many cases murdered along with their families.[928]

The same history that re-literalizes the biblical citation "actualizes" (*aktualisiert*) the language of Celan's translation. An openness to loss, to the ghosts of vanished hands and incinerated bodies, is part of what brings Celan's translation up-to-date (macht es wieder *aktuell*).[929] If we imagine the translator too as a kind of "passeur," then we can say that the "passage" of Shakespeare's legacy in Celan's translation finds itself interrupted by a different "mémoire."[930] It is as though, in the passage from English to German, the ferry had been gripped by a "hand" (*yad*) reaching out of Lethe, a lexical memory which sends a shudder through the "Übersetzung." And it is this invisible Jewish hand whose absence is perhaps commemorated by the "Gedankenstrich."[931] "Sie kommt aus offner Hand – zu offnen Händen": with its caesura after the sixth syllable, line four is what German Renaissance poets would call a "vers commun."[932] But Celan's dash exaggerates the medial caesura

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925 On Celan's etymological conjunction of these two verbs, see Celan, "Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der freien Hansestadt Bremen," 185.

926 On the presence of Hebrew and French puns in Celan's German texts, see Petuchowski, "Bilingual and Multilingual Wortspiele in the Poetry of Paul Celan."

927 Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, xxi. Of course, "yad" also refers to the ritual pointer used in public readings from the Torah scrolls, since the point of this instrument is shaped like a tiny human hand. When referred to such ritual uses, Celan's image of the hand as a site of transmission is arguably no figure at all.

928 On the limitations of the "passeur" or "chaîne" *topos* for figuring the memory of the genocide, see Coquio, *La littérature en suspens*, 20–21.

929 See Celan's letter to Werner Weber about his translation of *La jeune parque*. Quoted in Gellhaus, "Das Übersetzen und die Unübersetzbarkeit - Notizen zu Paul Celan als Übersetzer," 398.

930 On the intersection of different historical memories and memory cultures, see Michael Rothberg's introduction to *Multidirectional Memory*, 1–29.

931 On the topic of the "invisible hand," see another of Celan's "testamentary" translations—this time of René Char: "Wenn die Erbschaft wirklich groß sein soll, muß die Hand des Verstorbenen unsichtbar sein" (*If the heritage is to be truly large, the hand of the deceased must be invisible*). Celan, *Gesammelte Werke*, 1992, IV: 523.

932 Cf. Wagenknecht, "Kleine deutsche Metrik," 14.

and strains the coherence of the verse's two hemistiches, disarticulating the inherited schema and breaking the chain of hands. For the third time in this quatrain, readers of Celan's translation are effectively called on to reflect (*bedenk*, an imperative), and those receptive to the ghost of Hebrew that haunts Celan's German will hear, in this moment of silence, the hollow echo of the unfulfilled Isaian promise.

From this perspective, Celan's is not only a translation of pre-war German into post-War German, but a diasporic translation of *Hebrew* into German. Isaiah had promised to safeguard the eunuch's memory lest these members of the covenant be "cut off" (*karath*). Celan does not pretend to keep this promise and re-member in his verse what history has irreparably severed. If his translation speaks Isaiah's "everlasting name," it does so only in the form of a "[virtual] interlinear translation."[933] At the level of the text, the Jewish tradition resonates only as a break in the German verse—that is, if it resonates at all. Has something been remembered or has it been forgotten? The *Sonnets* too offered themselves as a substitute for biological offspring. Rather than "sons and daughters," the poet would provide the Young Man with a literary posterity that would sustain his memory for as long as "men can breathe or eyes can see." Celan did not translate this particular verse from sonnet 18, and, in his translation of sonnet 4, he hesitates on the syntax that would transfer this "beautiful" sentiment from Shakespeare's "[frank] nature" into his "offne[ ] Hände[ ]." As in Celan's translation of "beauty's legacy," the only thing that joins the hands of line four is a "Gedankenstrich"—a "stroke of thought" which calls to mind the breakdown of the chain of transmission.

VIII. "Der niemand übersetzt…"

What happens when a translation gestures to the breakdown of the transmission that it itself instantiates? Is a translation that transfers nothing still a "translation"? If we follow the Latin etymology of the verb, we might say no. The English verb "translate" is derived from the past participle of *transferre*, which suggests that whenever we use the verb, we have *always already transferred* something, even if it is only Latin.[934] And this, in a sense, is Celan's challenge: how to transform the translation of Shakespeare's legacy into evidence of its loss. Celan's answer involves returning to *Shakespeare's* problem. His translation, I argue, translates the sonnet's original problem (roughly, human transience) *without* translating Shakespeare's solution. In Shakespeare, the poet-executor redeems the Young Man's debt by carrying his beautiful property forward. The poem credits the beautiful body it commemorates: *its* beauty is *his* property *already* translated. In Celan's version, this transmission no longer operates. Every word of the translation is one word too much. As strange as it may sound for a poet known for his extreme reticence, Celan's translation of sonnet 4 self-consciously *over* translates its model. Celan's words do not transfer Shakespeare's metaphorical riches so much as they mark the insolvency of beauty's legacy in German translation.

Put differently, one could say that Celan deliberately overtaxes Shakespeare's literary estate. And this too is a translated pun of sorts. In German, "to overtax"—to make excessive financial

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[933] Benjamin, "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," 21. I use these words to describe the thought that the "Gedankenstrich" helps us think. To determine whether such a virtual translation "actually" fulfills Isaiah's promise requires not only sorting out the importance of Jewish mysticism for Benjamin's essay, but also Celan's reception of both Benjamin and the Jewish tradition. Such a discussion well exceeds this project, though parts of it have been broached by others. On the first question, see Sauter, *Die Virtuelle Interlinearversion*, esp. 33-92; on the second, see Zach, *Traduction littéraire et création poétique*, 156.

[934] *OED Online*, s.v. "translation," accessed August 1, 2019.

claims upon a resource, or to otherwise lay undue burdens on someone or something's literal or figurative capacities—is one of the historical senses of the verb usually translated as "to translate": namely, "übersetzen." In such usages, the prefix "über-" does not imply a spatial displacement ("to set over") but denotes instead the transgression of a quantitative or qualitative limit ("zu viel setzen": *to place too much*). In his *Wörterbuch der hochdeutschen Mundart* (1801), Johnann Christoph Adelung provides several examples of the participle "übersetzt" that carry the meaning "zu viel setzen."[935] An eighteenth-century Klassiker like Goethe, Schiller, or *Shakespeare* could still say "ein Berg ist mit Weinstocken übersetzt" (*a hill is overplanted with grapevines*) or "das Haus ist mit Leuten übersetzt" (*a house is overcrowded with people*). *Grimm* speculates that, over time, such senses of material "overloading" (*überladen*) combined with gambling jargon (i.e. "to outbid") to produce the meaning of "overtax" found in expressions like *iniqua taxatione gravare* (lat. *to weigh down with an unjust tax*).[936] And it is in relation to such usages that the phrase "jemanden übersetzen" denotes taking or demanding excessive profit from someone. Thus: "der Verkäufer übersetzt den Käufer, wenn er einen unbillig hohen Preis nimmt oder fordert" (*The seller overcharges the buyer if he takes or demands an unjustifiably high price*).[937]

When it denotes such an excessive charge, "übersetzen" is closely related to the verb "wuchern," which means "to lend at interest" or "to tax" money. In his translation of Ezekiel 18:8, for example, Luther renders the righteous man's refusal to lend with "advanced interest" (*neshek*) or with "accrued interest" (*tarbit*) as "Der nicht wuchert, der niemand übersetzt."[938] In this instance, "übersetzen" means to practice "usury." If the Hebrew word *neshek* names the "bite" that the Wucherer takes out of the debtor, *tarbit* is the mounting burden that accumulates on the back of the debtor, was ihn *übersetzt*.[939] Although Luther generally referred to his practice of translation as "dolmetschen" or "verdeutschen," there is a certain irony in his choice of "übersetzen" as a translation of "tarbit." At the time, "übersetzen" had already acquired the meaning "to transfer (*übertragen*) from one language to another." Thus, when he translates (*übersetzen*) the refusal to lend at interest (*tarbit*) as a renunciation of "übersetzen" (*der niemand übersetzt*), Luther violates the letter of the prophet's law with the same word that transmits it: he sins *in* translation. This curious fact that "lending at interest" and "translating" make use of the same word might seem like an intriguing lexical convergence of minor real consequence, were it not that the doctrine of *sola fide* rests in part on Luther's insertion of the word "allein" (*alone*) into his translation of Paul's epistle to the Romans. The Reformation was a battle over "Übersetzung," over taxing and translation, and Luther's point is that, while his text literally "adds" (*hinsetzt*) a word to Romans 3:28, his translation does not overtax the passage's "sense" (*Meinung*) like the Church does when it cites Scripture to justify, among other things, ecclesiastical taxes.[940] Although the Church abides by the Vulgate, it certainly profits from the "use" of the Jerome's Latin translation. Were the word available to him, Luther would not have

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935 Adelung, "Übersetzen."
936 *Das Deutsche Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm*, s.v. "übersetzen," accessed August 1, 2019.
937 Adelung, "Übersetzen."
938 Luther offers the same translation in Ezekiel 22:12.
939 Many biblical scholars believe that there is no difference in meaning between *neshek* and *tarbit*. What difference there is between the two words, the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* suggests, has to do with the perspective they take on the practice of lending at interest. Etymologically, *neshek*, meaning "bite," refers to the extraction of interest from the point of view of the debtor while *tarbit*, meaning "increase," refers to the augmented wealth of the creditor. See Cohn and Eliash, "Usury." For a more detailed, historical discussion, see Soloveitchik, "The Jewish Attitude to Usury in the High and Late Middle Ages (1000-1500)."
940 Luther, "Sendbrief Vom Dolmetschen," 26.

hesitated to claim that the Church "financializes" Scripture. Its monopoly generates a "textual" rent that accumulates in the form of ecclesiastical property.[941]

The questions raised by this lexical history of "übersetzen" are both different from and strikingly analogous to those prompted by sonnet 4's testamentary conceit. In Shakespeare's sonnet, beauty produces a rent, and beauty can, like property, be transferred (*translated*) to another. In his translation, Celan takes up this legal and economic figure and doubles it against itself to ask what value is transmitted when the poem is translated. Although the word itself may remain unspoken, given the self-reflexivity with which the translation brokers Shakespeare's financial tropes, the polysemy of Luther's "übersetzen" implicitly haunts Celan's version. Is the translation entitled to the value it extracts from "beauty's legacy"? Or does the German translator, like the usurers reproached in Ezekiel, "overtax" Shakespeare's poem by recirculating it in a radically different linguistic and historic context? What happens, in other words, once German readers realize that the "bequest" cannot pay for the life that Hauptmann and others claim Shakespeare "lives" in Germany?[942]

Up to a certain point, the threat of default and the specter of an insolvent afterlife are possibilities summoned by sonnet 4's own set of tropes. As I noted in section II, Shakespeare's rhetorical figures are rooted in long-standing beliefs about the social costs of finance and especially in the Aristotelian argument that "chrematistics" overtaxes the healthy exchanges of "economics." By "taxing" money for private gain, finance dissipates hereditary wealth, disarticulates "natural" reproduction, and ultimately destroys life. In this sense, the verses "Profitless usurer, why dost thou use/ So great a sum of sums, yet canst not live?" oppose the price of money with the cost of living and play the arithmetically compounding "sums" of usury ("use") against the qualitative *élan* of organic reproduction ("live"). With respect to the financial trope, the Young Man lends his wealth at interest but does not recoup a (sufficient) "profit[]" to cover his expenses. With respect to the sexual one, he "spend[s]" his beauty profligately but also fruitlessly. Sonnet 3 had already cast the Young Man's life in the future anterior (But if thou live rememb'red not to be,/ Die single and thine image dies with thee). Sonnet 4 simply deepens the thought: a life that generates no heir, offspring, or *tokos* is not really a life at all.[943] Or rather, in sonnet 4, an excessiveness—an "*über*-mäßigkeit"—associated with unearned interest and nonreproductive sex interrupts the cycle of life and overburdens (*übersetzt*) the living. Already in the original, the inheritance is overtaxed and on the verge of default.

In Shakespeare, "übersetzen" in the sense of "transferring" solves the problem of "übersetzen" in the sense of "overtaxing." By flagging how his own "Übersetzung" does not redeem the legacy but only taxes it further, Celan translates Shakespeare's problem without translating Shakespeare's solution. In concrete terms, problem and solution converge in Shakespeare's pun on "use," the trope that refigures expenditure as investment. In English, then, "use" both names the problem and provides the solution. For the German translator, however, "use" is *just* a problem.

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[941] In this context it bears remembering not only Luther's sermons against usury, but his insistence, in the "Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen," that the Bible translation earned him "not a penny" (*keinen Heller*). Luther, 24. In a similar vein, Hawkes emphasizes the convergence of Luther's ecclesiastical and commercial critiques: "Martin Luther denounced the fetishization of priestly labour that permitted the commodification of the Mass as one element within a wider process of objectification perpetrated by the banking house of Fugger. Indeed, Luther does not distinguish between ecclesiastical and commercial fetishism. He describes indulgences as symbols representing a determinate amount of penitential labour, which are fetishized in a process that typifies the ecclesiastical and the secular markets alike." Hawkes, "Shakespeare and the Performative Sign," 113.

[942] Hauptmann, "Deutschland und Shakespeare," xii.

[943] The same identification of capital and offspring can be found in the *Merchant of Venice*—"My daughter! Oh my ducats!" (2.8.15)—as well as the same slippage between the costs of living and the possibility of living on through a heir. Thus, after being dispossessed of both daughter and ducats, Shylock exclaims, "You take my life/ When you take the means whereby I live" (4.1.375-6).

The polysemy by which "use" can mean both "increase" (*usury*) and "exhaust" (*use up*) is not available in German in the same way that it is available in English or even in French (*usure*). Nonetheless, Celan finds an elegant alternative to "use" that *seems* to preserve (or even to augment) the richness of Shakespeare's pun while transferring the conceit into a different set of lexical relationships.

> Du hast und hast – und hasts dahin gebracht:
> bei allem Wuchern reichts dir nicht zum Leben.

As in Celan's aphorism about the market for Pound discussed in chapter 3, "Wuchern" here refers to the practice of lending money at an excessive rate of interest. And, as we've just seen, it is the verb that, together with "übersetzen," Luther uses to translate the prophet's censure of usury: "Advanced interest and accrued interest you took, and you got ill gain from your fellow men through oppression."[944] As I already mentioned in my reading of Celan's poem "Flügelnacht," however, the nominalized infinitive "Wuchern" also denotes the process of growing profligately, as plants sometimes do. In line 8, Celan flexes these two meanings against one another: on one hand, there is the "growth" (of plants) that coincides with life. On the other hand, there is the "growth" (of debts) that overtaxes and eventually "strangles" life.[945] Particularly if one imagines crops climbing toward the sun, one sees the irony in the poet's observation that, "for all the rampant growth" (*bei allem Wuchern*), the Young Man's holdings neither "reach" (*reicht*) the desired height nor suffice (*reicht*) for the end of living. It is as though, having brought in the harvest after a particularly good year, the Young Man sees that his yield is still insufficient to cover his debts.[946] He has both too much and too little. Counterintuitively, the riches (*Reichtum*) with which he was "reich bedacht" (*richly endowed*) do not reach far enough (*reicht ihm nicht*). Couched in the historical tension between rural production ("Wuchern" as growth) and urban lending ("Wuchern" as usury), Celan's pun on "riches" and "reaches" does not so much flag an accounting error as point to a problem with the accounting

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944 Ezekiel 22:12. Alter, *The Hebrew Bible*.

945 Celan is not the only one to notice this tension. In his study of the *Merchant of Venice*, Christian Enzensberger writes, "It is not by chance, but rather because it has such real consequences, that [usury] is associated with strangling, killing, with 'throat-cutting' (*Halsabschneiderei*). It is trapped in a compulsive procedure of its own creation and with no possibility of escape, cut off from any goal save its own voracious propagation (*Vermehrung*), "*lives*" in conformity only with itself (*aus sich selbst*), is, as the German word "Wucher" says, an out-of-control growth (*Wachstum*) that comes to serve nothing but itself. In principle, it desires to incorporate *everything* and thus ultimately even the person of the usurer, whom it mercilessly exploits for its own ends, puts at risk, and whose human needs it dismisses as a burdensome expense." The phrase "aus sich selbst leben" (lit. *to live out of oneself*) is related to the notion of "Naturwüchsigkeit," which in Western Marxism refers the ability of an economic sector or cultural formation to develop on its own accord and without external intervention. Enzensberger, *Literatur und Interesse*, 311–12.

946 "Etwas dahin zu bringen," which is the infinitive phrase that corresponds to Celan's clause, means "to accomplish something" or, figuratively, "to bring something into a certain state." "Etwas da hinzubringen," a verbal construction in which "hin" is a prefix of "bringen" and not part of the pronominal "dahin," means "to bring something to a demonstratively indicated place (at a demonstratively indicated time)." "Hinbringen" also means "to reap" or "to gather" (*einbringen, einernten*). Although Celan prints the first construction, the alternating stress of the metrical schema emphasizes "da" in a way which suggests the second reading. By playing the abundance of nature in the form of the harvest against the caprices of exchange value, this reading would map out the disjunction between the field of production and the market for commodities. Cf. *Das Deutsche Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm*, s.v. "hinbringen," accessed August 1, 2019.

itself. The measure by which one accounts for value is broken. Life will never be priced high enough to pay off the debt the living.[947]

Shakespeare saw this problem too and his solution was to roll over the debt onto future generations and to let the principal remain unpaid. Indeed, Shakespeare's speaker presumes that the debt can never be fully discharged. Rather than being definitively paid off, the debt is simply transferred to another, who transfers it to another, and so on. This is the "acceptable audit" that the poet proposes and, to the degree that the poem continues to credit the Young Man's beauty, it is also the "acceptable audit" that the poet "leaves."[948] By substituting a literary for a biological legacy, Shakespeare's poem puts the Young Man's insolvent beauty 'in the black.' Such refinancing is not possible in Celan's German. If Shakespeare's poem provides an "acceptable audit," Celan's translation can be said to audit this "audit." Indeed, rather than merely keep Shakespeare's "book," the rhythms of Celan's verses review the original's ledger line by line, lingering over its accounting and halting suddenly where its line of credit breaks off. For example, the translation's third "stroke of thought" (*Gedankenstrich*) falls midway through line seven, where it derails how Shakespeare's "sum of sums" is reckoned in German. In Celan's version, beauty's cumulative "sums" are carried over in the repetition of the verb "haben" (*to have*), but the momentum of rhetorical amplification and possessive accumulation is interrupted by the caesura between the second and the third iteration of "have." As if marking a switch from "having" to "halving," the em-dash signals a reversal in the order of operation. In Celan's language, the "Gedankenstrich" insinuates a thought (*Gedanke*) that will become fully explicit in the subsequent line: the worry (*Bedenken*) that the mere reproduction (*Wuchern*) the patrimony one was "generously bequeathed" (*was dir reich bedacht*) will not amount to "life" (*reichts dir nicht zum Leben*).

In German, however, it is not only plants and moneylenders that *wuchern*, words *wuchern* too. Several scholars have already noted how the repetition of the word "hast" in line seven anticipates the "Wuchern" named in line eight. The *geminatio* of "du hast und hast" figuratively compounds the Young Man's assets—his "Hab." The figure of repetition literally "geminates" or "doubles" the Young Man's holdings and, as a result, dramatizes "how usury produces its effect" (*wie sich Wuchern auswirkt*).[949] This is true, but it is also true that the grammatical function of "hast" changes as the word repeats itself across the break indicated by the "Gedankenstrich." Whereas the first two instances of "hast" parse most readily as "full" verbs, by its third iteration "hast" has become the auxiliary of "bringen" ([*du*] *hasts…gebracht*). This change in part of speech implies both a change in tense (from present to perfect) and a change in perspective (from description to inference). After the interruption, the same is no longer the same. More accurately speaking, the caesura does not merely introduce a difference, it marks a break in the *process* of duplication and prompts the turn towards historical reflection. Importantly, it is only in this moment of retrospection that "haben" acquires some sort of object, as though the estate that the Young Man holds did not precede its legal and linguistic "tenure" but was instead constituted as property through reiterated claims of ownership. As a full verb, "to have" always implies an object; the movement of Celan's line, however, renders

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[947] One group of meanings associated with the Latin verb "taxare," from which the English word "tax" derives, is "to rate," "reckon," or "assess": "to settle the price or value of." According to this set of meanings, to "overtax" something is to measure its value too highly. From this perspective, exorbitant taxes are a burden because they make one accountable for more than one "really" has. *OED Online*, s.v. "tax," accessed August 1, 2019.

[948] Compare with Posthumus Leonatus's speech from *Cymbeline*, "If you will take this audit, take this life,/ And cancel these cold bonds" (*Cym.* 5.4.27-28).

[949] Cf. Lengeler, *Shakespeares Sonette in deutscher Übersetzung*, 16–17.

the meaning of the predication more precise, implying that what the Young Man has is his because it was the object of a literal or legal transfer, a "Hingebrachthaben" (*to have brought here/there*).[950]

This movement from full verb in the present tense to auxiliary in the past mimes the process of transfer. Technically speaking, the enigmatic "s" appended to the third instance of "hast" is the direct object pronoun of "bringen" (*to bring*) and not of "haben" (*to have*), and therefore predicates the transfer and not the having. This difference adds an important ambiguity. Half-vanished by synalœphe, the "[e]s" (*it*) of "hasts dahin gebracht" may supply the missing predicate of the first two uses of "hast," but it is just as possible that the "s" does not refer to the preceding verbs and comes instead pre-scripted as part of the set idiom "du hast es so weit gebracht." In the latter case, "s" is a merely formal object, which, like the explicative "it" in the English exclamation "you made it!", provides a bit of grammatical filler without referring to anything in particular. This ambiguity is thematically essential. Until this point in the stanza, the transmitted inheritance has been denoted through a rather elliptical use of the relative pronoun "was" (was *dich so reich bedacht*, was *dir gegeben*). "Du hasts dahin gebracht" pushes such oblique phrasing to the point of making the transmitted object vanish into the protocols of syntactical structure. The more one thinks about it (*je mehr man es* bedenkt), the more undecidable the reference becomes. One cannot foreclose the possibility that "what" (*was*) Celan's poem inherits may be nothing more than a phantom object up by the idiomatic routines of the German language, a ghost in the grammatical machine.

Something similar might be said for the partially eclipsed object of the verse that completes the thought: "bei allem Wuchern reichts dir nicht zum Leben." Here too, the "s" is undecidably suspended between "empty" and "full." "[E]s" (*it*) can be read either as "the purely formal" subject of the verb "reichen" or as a pronoun that refers back to the "substance" of the testamentary bequest (*was dich so reich bedacht*). In the latter case, "it" substitutes for *that* holding; in the former, "it" is a mere "placeholder," a "Fürwort" (*pronoun*, lit. a "for-word") that cannot be exchanged "for" anything. Once the chain of substitution breaks, however, the object bequeathed in line 5 and mentioned in line 6 literally vanishes from the poem. Overtaxed by excessive use, by line 7 "it" ceases to refer to the bequest ("dahin" as "lost") and persists only as the reminder of insolvency. This is the worst-case scenario, but the Young Man's fortune hardly fares better if one reads "it" as a fully functioning pronoun, commanding reference and carrying forward what was originally bequeathed. In this scenario, the problem is not the transmission but the accounting. "Bei allem Wuchern reicht [was dich so reich bedacht] dir nicht zum Leben." The pun on "reich" suggests that sometime in the interval between past and present the scale of value was fatally dislocated. The Young Man's "riches" no longer "reach," he is no longer "rich" enough. In Celan's account, the patrimony that "du hast" does not add up to real wealth. Here, the slippage of the "du" (*you*) from addressing the young landholder of Shakespeare's poem to addressing the current reader of Celan's—the legatee presumably holding the translation *in their hands*—is unmistakable. And so is the irony. Title to the legacy may transferred, claims may proliferate (*du hast und hast*), and the market value may even climb, but these are just words that "wuchern." The assets they refer to are toxic, the estate rotten and incapable of supporting life.

IX: Verwesen

This rot that consumes the legacy points to the difference between Shakespeare's time and Celan's own. The rot compounds in the translation's final lines and prevents the sonnet from executing its final turn toward redemption. In Shakespeare's original, the couplet is where the poetic speaker

[950] Beese, *Nachdichtung als Erinnerung*, 130.

proposes the "acceptable audit" by which fruitful "use" will redeem the Young Man's issue-less "usury." The poem's last words broker death into life through the conceit of testamentary translation, as the "th'executor"—a figure of the poet—steps in to transfer the Young Man's material possessions, reproduce his genetic properties, and consolidate his literary estate. Transmission proceeds over the Young Man's dead body and reverberates in the final rhyme of "thee" and "be."

The demonic contract between "thee" and "be" bargained in Shakespeare's couplet is doubly revoked by Celan's translation, which offers a different exchange and different transmission in its place. In Shakespeare's original, beauty's legacy is in part sustained through the formal balance of the composition. The inherited form of the sonnet—itself a bequest translated across time and language—underwrites the transmission; it is a picture of the canonicity the poet desires for the Young Man. As I mentioned earlier, the first twelve lines of Celan's translation reproduce such formal features with surprising fidelity. In the couplet, however, Celan violently dislocates the inherited templates of the English or Italian sonnet tradition—first through a conspicuous violation of the metrical norm and, second, through the abysmal irony of the rhyme of "verwesen" (*rot*) and "verwesen" (*administer*), a rhyme which projects the process of decomposition onto the obligation to hold in trust. Both of these are forms of *rhythmic* disarticulation. The first explicitly so: by adding an extra stress to line 13, Celan breaks the established pattern of the previous twelve five-beat lines and thus derails the metrical equivalence at the base of the sonnet form. Metrically speaking, line 13 is an artifact from a different poetic tradition. It is a strict "Alexandriner," complete with medial caesura after the third stress.

Die Schönheit, ungenutzt: mit dir muß sie verwesen.

More than a *memento mori*, Celan's use of "verwesen" here picks up the verdant imagery of line 8's "Wuchern." In the context of tenurial usufruct, the participle "ungenutzt" (*unused*) signifies not only the Young Man's truncated genealogical tree but also the unrealized profit of his land holding. The metaphor is clear: one uses beauty like one exploits the land—for "gain" (*Nutzen*). Line 13's syntax and punctuation manage this metaphor quite efficiently, allowing Celan to economize on certain operating words while retaining a fluent clarity of expression. The telegraphic quality of the syntax is smoothed over by the Alexandrine's symmetry, whose two halves block out the thought that Celan declines to spell out explicitly.

Such economy of means offers quite a contrast to the translation's final verse. Unlike line 13, the meter and syntax of line 14 can barely sustain Celan's lexical elisions. Although Celan returns here to the poem's default, five-beat meter, in the wake of the Alexandrine, the reassertion of the metrical norm feels like an expressive constriction. This effect is aggravated by the lopsidedness of the line. The first phrasal unit gracefully interweaves consonance with assonance (*D*och n*u*tzt *d*u sie) only to open onto the syntactic and rhythmic minefield of the last three feet.

Doch nutzt du sie, sie wird, was bleibt, verwesen.

The three commas accentuate the footprint of each iamb, which slows the poem down in the final stretch. The pointed framing of the two-syllable foot, however, conspicuously throws off the sonnet's ultimate landing on "verwesen." This three-syllable word trips up the line's punctuated pace, its extra syllable dangling unmetrically outside the established frame. Ordinarily, this would pose no problem. By convention, the excessive slack syllable of the feminine ending would be resolved within the larger metrical unit of the couplet, its local asymmetry rationalized through the symmetry of the feminine rhyme (in this case, a "super-symmetry," since "verwesen" and

"verwesen" are perfect homonyms). But Celan has denied himself this resolution by deliberately sabotaging the form: the marriage of a six-beat alexandrine to a five-beat *vers commun* is an odd couple that throws the metrically underwritten equivalence out of joint. Hence the misstep of the poem's close: a slack syllable too many for the line, and a strong syllable too few for the couplet. The poem stumbles over its "last word." It fails to "execute" its last step.

This failed execution is all the more striking given the obvious importance of the provocative final rhyme of "verwesen" with "verwesen." The "verwesen" : "verwesen" rhyme represents the first of two instances of *rima identica* in the corpus of Celan's 18 Shakespeare translations, and, of the two, surely amounts to the more interesting example (Celan's translation of sonnet 65 rhymes the separable prefix "auf-" with itself). In sonnet 4, the first use of "verwesen" signifies dissipation, decomposition, and loss. As such, it is semantically related both to the Young Man's squandering of the patrimony (*verschwenden*) and to his failure to harvest the organic "Wuchern" of his estate in a manner that "reicht [ihm] zum Leben" (the prefix "ver-" can denote a process that has been carried beyond its appropriate term, a "Wuchern" that turns into a "Verwesen"). "Verwesen," in this sense, is the fate from which the speaker hopes to shield the Young Man's beauty.

The ethical and economic counsel of other early sonnets that Celan translated are similarly shaped by this desire. The poetic speaker wants to "safeguard" (*wahren*) the Young Man's beautiful (e)state, to preserve its "being" (*wesen*), and to keep it from "being rotten" (*ver-wesen*).[951] Thus, Celan's translation of sonnet 1 begins,

> Was west und schön ist, du erhoffst ein Mehr
> von ihm: die Rose Schönheit soll nicht sterben.
> Und gibt sie, die gezeitigte, die Krone her,
> so wahre, was sie war, ihr zarter Erbe.
>
> What exists and is beautiful, you hope for an increase
> from it: the rose beauty should not die.
> And if it, having born fruit, passes on the crown,
> then preserve, what it was, its tender heir.

Sonnet 1's tuneful imperative to "wahre, was [die Rose] war" (*preserve what* [the rose] *was*) is picked up in sonnet 4's play on "verwesen." This is because "verwesen" has a rare homonym with a different etymology tracing back to the Old High German verb *firwesen* and which means "to occupy somebody's place" (*jemandes Stelle vertreten*). At least until the early nineteenth century, "verwesen" retained this sense and, alongside "decompose," meant "manage" (*verwalten*), "administer" (*versehen*), or "represent" (*einen vertreten*).[952] Today, this sense persists in the seldom-used noun "Verweser,"

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[951] There is an unmistakable Heideggerian ring to Celan's use of verbs like "wesen," "wahren," and "zeitigen," an echoes which should be heard as both chiming with and chiming against Heidegger's formulations in works like *The Origin of the Work of Art*. Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes." This connection is made but not developed in Beese, *Nachdichtung als Erinnerung*, 102 n9. For a fuller treatment of the status of "wesen" in Celan and Heidegger, see Hamacher, "WASEN: Um Celans Todtnauberg."

[952] As an attestation of this sense, Grimm cites Luther's translation of Aesop's fable about the lion and the donkey, in which the animal kingdom praises the donkey, "Nu haben wir den rechten könig funden, welcher kann beide, weltlich und geistlich regiment, verwesen" (*We have now found the proper king, who can administer both the earthly and spiritual rule*). *Das Deutsche Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm*, s.v. "verwesen," accessed August 1, 2019.

which appears individually and in *kompositа* with the meaning "delegate" (*Stellvertreter*), "deputy" (*Regent*), or "guardian" (*Vormund*)[953]—indeed, in some circles, the literal or figurative executor of a testament is still called a "Nachlassverweser."[954] Like Shakespeare's own play on the dual meanings of "executioner," a word like "Nachlassverweser" puns on itself: 'der Nachlassverweser verwest den Nachlass als der Nachlasser verwest im Grab' (*the testamentary executor manages the legacy when the testator rots in the grave*).

The German homophony of rotting and representing shows how fraught managing Shakespeare's legacy becomes in German translation. In English too, the poet of the *Sonnets* acknowledges that death ("execution") is a prerequisite for transmission ("execution"). His argument is that, "refigured" in biological progeny and literary legacy, the Young Man's essential properties—the predicates of his *Wesen*—will live on:

> Then what could death do if thou shouldst depart,
> Leaving thee living in posterity?

In Celan's versions of these sonnets, however, this chain of transmission—of legal and literary *translation*—literally disintegrates. "Rot" inserts itself at the crucial linkages. Rather than recompose Shakespeare's legacy, Celan's translations deliberately trip over their own language, de-composing the legacy with which they have been entrusted. Thus, through the cross-pollinated metaphor of royal succession and botanical reproduction, Celan's version of sonnet 1 implicitly figures the Young Man as a *Verweser*—both royal regent and oxidizing reagent. In an equal and opposite manner, sonnet 4 petitions the Young Man to propagate "die Rose Schönheit" and to leave the "Verwesung"—the custody and the spoilage—of "what remains" (*was bleibt*) to the fruit of that use. In this hereditary domain, the growth (*wuchern*) of things like roses no longer entails "life," while management (*verwesen*) no longer entails "preservation." Celan's point is that, transplanted into German, the "Wuchern" that grips beauty's rose "does not suffice for [it] to live."

For all its irony, sonnet 4 reckons with the Aristotelian distinction between a virtuous *oikonomia* and vicious *chrematistics*. Although he will use one regime of value as a figure for the other, Shakespeare's sonnet rests upon the opposition between the cultivation of use-value that takes place within the *oikos* and the accumulation of exchange-value that occurs outside it—between estate management on one side and self-consuming avarice on the other. Celan's translation inherits this scale of values but it also transfers the basic discrimination that structures the original's "audit" onto the unstable opposition between "verwesen" and "verwesen," a difference that is neither audible nor auditable. The rhyme *translates* the principle of sonnet 4's economy into a homophony in which loss coincides with preservation. By routing sonnet 4's patrimony through this rhyme, Celan produces a *mise-en-abyme* into which the poem's several lines of transmission disappear. Although one of the "richest" rhymes there is,[955] the identical rhyme of "verwesen" with "verwesen" flags post-War German as incapable of receiving Shakespeare's "legacy." The "Schatz der Menschheit" (Hauptmann) and "überzeitliche Geisteswerte" (Curtius) with which the Shakespeare's poem is "reich bedacht" are, in Celan's translation, debased by an unnamed history that echoes in the lexeme "reich." The dislocation within the German language that the couplet seizes upon and aggravates is emblematic of other fault lines running through Celan's mother tongue. Its sardonically "rich" rhyme alludes to unsaid historical complicities, which, like the "Verwesung" practiced by the "Verweser," render the German "Wortschatz" unsuitable as a storehouse of literary value.

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953 Adelung, "Verweser."
954 Diehl, "Kampf Der Rolle Rückwärts."
955 On *rime riche* and identical rhyme, see Brogan and Rettberg, "Identical Rhyme."

With a more precise sense of the reservations (*Bedenken*) it harbors about the transfer it supposedly executes, Celan's translation of sonnet 4 allows us to better understand the larger problem of translation after Auschwitz. In her reading of the translation, Henriette Beese takes us part of the way there when she notes that the rhyming of "verwesen" and "verwesen" signals the loss of both the Young Man and the literary trust that sustained his legacy.[956] The commemoration of this loss is what Beese understands by the term "Nachdichten" (*after-poetry*), which is her name for Celan's practice of translation. As Beese explains, "Nachdichten" is neither cultural transfer nor the "literary historical survival" (*literarhistorisches Überleben*), but rather an afterwardness inscribed into the text of the translation, "ihre eingeschriebene Nachträglichkeit."[957] This is doubtless correct, but there remains another step to be taken. Quoting from Peter Szondi's study of modern drama, Beese locates the "afterwardness" of Celan's translation in the poetic surplus that "sparkles" (*schillert*) when the two senses of "verwesen" illuminate one another. This phoenix-like luminosity is the afterlife that Shakespeare's original achieves in translation: what Beese calls its "Scheinleben" (pseudo-life).[958]

But "Scheinleben" is the wrong word for a rhyme on "rot." While ambivalent (a "Scheinleben" connotes a "sham" Leben), this reading keeps alive received ideas about literary immortality and the redemptive power of aesthetic semblance and, in its way, is not so different from sonnet 18's consolation, "So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,/ So long lives this, and this gives life to thee." More importantly, though, Beese's wording does not entirely escape the *business* of the aesthetic in which Shakespeare's poem self-consciously traffics and which Celan's translation adamantly refuses. In addition to the semblance character of art, after all, the word "Schein" can refer to a voucher (*Gutschein*) or a banknote (*Geldschein*)—which is to say, to the monetization of a debt. Shakespeare and Celan are deeply interested in *both* senses of "Schein." Each in his own way counterbalances the idealist connotations of "Schein" with a materialist understanding of the social institutions and legal forms that buttress that appearance and guarantee its value. Thus, if a "Schein-leben" is life reduced to face value, a life good only for exchange, a life "thou […] canst not live," a "Lebens-schein" might be said to refer to the credit that sustains the Schein, to the suspension of disbelief that underwrites aesthetic judgment.[959] German has a catchword for this that names both the "Schillern" of art's phenomenal appearance and, by metonymy, the philosophical vindication of its semblance character (associated with the work Friedrich Schiller): "der schöne Schein." To the degree Beese's use of "Scheinleben" remains indebted to the legacy of Schiller's "schöner Schein," her reading of Celan's couplet may remain too invested in the notion of aesthetic value and, by extension, too bound to Shakespeare's legacy to fully seize the break the rhyme produces in the line of transmission and the rupture that situates his "Nachdichten" *after* Auschwitz. As is so often the case with readings of Celan, the danger lies in substituting a chastened traffic in memory for an earlier traffic in beauty. Both economies, aesthetic and commemorative, presume that the "Schein" of Celan's translation is still "good" (*gültig*). This

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[956] Beese writes, "[a]s the "you" succumbs to decomposition (*Verwesung*), it is preserved in the existing poem; as the poem tries to preserve what has decomposed (*den Verwesten*), it too decomposes (*verwest*); in order to preserve the decomposing poem (*das verwesende Gedicht*), the new preserving poem (*das erneut verwahrende Gedicht*) must assimilate itself to the delegate [poem] and its decomposition (*dem verwesenden und seiner Verwesung*)." Beese, *Nachdichtung als Erinnerung*, 131.

[957] Beese, 196–98.

[958] Beese, 131.

[959] The crediting of life implied by the word "Scheinleben" finds its nightmarish historical analogue in the certificates that circulated in the Jewish ghettos under Nazi occupation. These so-called "Lebensscheine" (*life certificates*) were issued by the authorities and temporarily exempted their holders from deportation to the extermination camps. Edelheit and Edelheit, "Lebenscheine."

does not "account for" the radical dislocation of literary value produced by the genocide. Rather than register a credit, on the "today" (*heute*) from which Celan writes, the practice of translation is a melancholic mnemotechnics for recalling debts, and the translation an unredeemable *IOU* or "Schuldschein" for all that has been lost.[960]

This dislocation of transmission is not just transmission by other means or under a different sign. It is worth taking seriously the possibility that the translation is too dislocated to execute even this most minimal form of transfer. If one considers the couplet closely—wenn man es genau *bedenkt*—one notes that the alternatives represented by the two senses of "verwesen" are not mutually exclusive in the manner that a beauty "tomb'd" opposes a beauty that "lives." Shakespeare's contrast is explicitly carved in stone; Celan's is more ambiguous. A "tomb'd" beauty vanishes from the field of the visibility; a rotting beauty, on the other hand, is a spectacle. That something "rots" (*verwest*) does not mean it no longer remains (*bleibt*): to rot, in fact, implies remaining as "remains" (*Reste*). A putrefying corpse or a decomposing plant is a "remainder" (*Überbleibsel*) that "remains" (*bleibt*) among the living without "remaining" alive. The rotting thing is an ephemeral monument to itself, a way of staying "présent dans l'absence."[961] The couplet, then, does not counter-pose its rhyme partners but actually underscores their literal and conceptual coincidence. Rotting and remaining belong to one and the same temporal process, like the radioactive decay that keeps the time of atomic clocks. The beauty that rots and the beauty that remains are not two but one, and the work of the translation is not to spare the one the fate of the other but, paradoxically, to "administer" the decay.[962] What this means is that the task of the translator effectively changes from burying the body (of the original) and distributing its "properties" to opening the tomb, exhuming the remains, and exposing the rot. In the language of the *Meridian* this corresponds to the suspension of art (*Kunst*) through poetry (*Dichtung*). The translation unfastens the death mask to reveal the vanished or vanishing creaturely countenance beneath, a spectacle "von lauter Sterblichkeit und umsonst"(*of utter mortality and to no purpose*).[963]

The deeper point, then, lies neither in the resolution to reject the inheritance nor in the decision to betray the original. Such terms still imply the possibility of transmission,[964] and it is precisely the historical possibility of transmission that Celan's translation calls into question. The rhyme of "verwesen" and "verwesen" dislocates the economy of translation, in which the traffic of sense between languages is understood in terms of equivalence and exchange, of credit and debt, of bankable profit and measurable loss. As Celan's translation of sonnet 4 suggests, there is a problem with the language in which the books are "kept," in which words and values are "thesaurized." Translated into German, Shakespeare's last words bequeath a legacy of rot. "Sie wird, was bleibt, verwesen": the easiest way to parse these lines is to insert an elided demonstrative or indefinite pronoun between the third and fourth foot. Thus, a paraphrase like "sie wird das, was bleibt, verwesen" or "sie wird alles, was bleibt, verwesen" clarifies that the relative clause "was bleibt" is the grammatical object that beauty "will administer." As it is, however, the printed verse lacks such clarity, Celan preferring to leave the hierarchy of syntactical subordination vague. The looseness solicits another reading. While the grammatically correct interpretation construes "what remains" as an object, the lack of a pronoun produces a parallel structure that places "sie" and "was bleibt" in apposition. Read as an appositive, "was bleibt" redescribes the grammatical subject of "wird […]

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960 On "debt" (*Schuld*) as a mnemotechnical instrument, see Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*.
961 Blanchot, *L'espace Littéraire*, 347.
962 For a discussion of what it might mean to "live" such an afterlife, see Certeau, "L'institution de la pourriture: Luder."
963 Celan, *Der Meridian*, 11.On the *Meridian's* discussion of the death mask, see chapter four.
964 Indeed, the "traduttore" is a "traditore" because they hand something over (Lat. "tradere," *to consign*). See "tradire."

verwesen." *What remains will rot*. Strictly speaking, such a reading is ungrammatical: for "was bleibt" to refer to subject and not the object of "verwesen," it should be placed next to subject pronoun and agree with that pronoun's gender ("was bleibt, (das) wird verwesen," "sie, die/welche bleibt, wird verwesen"). In the immediate context of the poem, however, the coincidence of "bleiben" and "verwesen" is thematically and logically overdetermined. In this reading, translation does not secure the legacy from loss but rather participates in that loss itself: *sie verwest selbst*. From this perspective, far from transferring property, the translation presides over its destitution.[965]

In French, the language of Celan's exile, it is quite easy to mistake "verses" (*vers*) for "worms" (*vers*). The pun has a long history in French poetry, where the work of the poem often approximates a saprotrophic mode of existence—the poet of "Spleen," for example, describes his memory as a "gros meuble à tiroirs encombré […] de vers" (*a large chest of drawers filled* […] *with verses/worms*).[966] Particularly given Celan's passion for the plays, however, one certainly should not rule out the Shakespearean intertext:

> HOTSPUR. But that the earthy and cold hand of death
> Lies on my tongue: no, Percy, thou art dust
> And food for–
> *Dies*
> HAL. For worms, brave Percy: fare thee well, great heart!
> Ill-weaved ambition, how much art thou shrunk![967]

In its own way, Hal's is a Celanian irony: here too, an artful (*kunstreiche*) string of last words is cut short by an affirmation of loss disabused of illusion. Indeed, given their own interminable work of metabolizing death, tunneling in the dark through "the ashes of burnt-out meanings,"[968] perhaps Celan's translations aspire less to that sanctimonious mode of preservation that Heidegger associates with an artwork's "Bewahrung"[969] than to the equivocal custody administered by "le ver," which represents a more ambivalent, linguistically dislocated, and thoroughly "uncanny" (*unheimlich*) form of remembrance: a "Ver-Wesen"—a "worm being." In any case, Celan's translation of sonnet 4 does not simply commemorate the loss of Shakespeare's English, whose historical reference and semantic richness "wither and fall like an autumn of leaves" (*wie ein Herbst von Blättern welken und absinken*).[970] The rot with which Celan concludes his translation also refers to the putrefaction that contaminates the transfer from the German side: something is indeed rotten in D-mark. This rotting is internal to the German language, undermining the attempt to master loss in speech and rendering its words incommensurable, even in relation to themselves. The highly elliptical final verse of Hölderlin's poem "Andenken" reads "Was bleibet aber, stiften die Dichter," a line from which flows a river of reflections on how the poet "endows" (*stiftet*) continuity.[971] Celan may have been thinking of this

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[965] Grimm also notes that, in Luther and in other writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, "verwesen" in the sense of "rot" appears as a transitive verb. Interpreted according to this rare usage, Celan's final verse would translate as "But if you use it, it will rot what remains." *Das Deutsche Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm*, s.v. "verwesen," accessed August 1, 2019.
[966] Baudelaire, "Spleen."
[967] *Henry IV, Part 1* 5.3.84-88
[968] Celan, "Edgar Jéné und der Traum vom Traume," 157.
[969] Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 54.
[970] Johann Gottfried von Herder, "Shakespeare," quoted in Beese, *Nachdichtung als Erinnerung*, 131.
[971] See, for example, Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*.

image of the poet's vocation when he wrote "Doch nutzt du sie, sie wird, was bleibt, verwesen." Celan is known to have revered Hölderlin. When, on a day near Passover 1970, Celan left his Paris apartment to end his life, he left on his desk a book opened to an underlined passage containing Clemens Brentano's judgment of Hölderlin: "Manchmal wird dieser Genius dunkel und versinkt in den bitteren Brunnen seines Herzens…" (*Sometimes this genius goes dark and sinks into the bitter well of his heart*…) But Celan did not underline the rest of Brentano's sentence: "…meistens aber glänzt sein apokalyptischer Stern Wermuth wunderbar rührend über das weite Meer seiner Empfindung." *(…but most often his apocalyptic star Wormwood glitters wonderfully moving across the wide sea of his sensibility.)*[972] After Auschwitz, "das Wesen der Dichtung" (*the essence of poetry*) is not what is used to be. As Celan confessed to his friend André du Bouchet, "there is something rotten in the poetry of Hölderlin."[973]

X. After Poetry, Translation

"Il y a quelque chose de pourri dans la poésie de Hölderlin": if he did in fact say it, this statement is perhaps as close as Celan came to granting the pertience of Adorno's notorious statement, "to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric" (*nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, is barbarisch*).[974] As is well known, Celan felt betrayed by Adorno, whom he judged to have grievously misunderstood the critical impetus and ethical force of his poetry's effort to bear witness to the genocide. The German poetic tradition *was* thoroughly rotten. To continue writing such poetry *was* barbaric. But that is not what Celan attempted. Unlike the post-War Naturlyriker, unlike Hans Egon Holthusen, and unlike Heidegger, Celan had no intention of picking up where the Romantics, the Modernists, or even Hölderlin (or, at least, the Hölderlin of *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*[975]) left off. Or, as Celan remarks in a personal note from the late 1960s:

> Kein Gedicht nach Auschwitz (Adorno)
> Was wird hier als Vorstellung vom "Gedicht" unterstellt? Der Dünkel dessen, der sich untersteht hypothetisch-spekulativerweise Auschwitz aus der Nachtigallen- oder Singdrossel-Perspektive zu betrachten oder zu bedichten[976]
>
> No poem after Auschwitz (Adorno)
> What idea of the "poem" is being presupposed here? The arrogance of someone who dares, in a hypothetical-speculative manner, to consider or lyricize Auschwitz from the perspective of the nightingale or the song-thrush

This "Vorstellung vom Gedicht" is precisely the sort of artful "Toposforschung" that Celan decries in the *Meridian*. The nightingale and the thrush are poetic commonplaces sustaining a tradition that Celan's work ruptures and dislocates. This work does not consist in reviving either Keats' nightingale or Eichendorff's "Nachtigall" but in opening the casket, removing the death mask, and

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[972] Michel, *Das Leben Friedrich Hölderlins*, 516. See also Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 287.
[973] "Il y a quelque chose de pourri dans la poésie de Hölderlin." See Du Bouchet, *Désaccordée comme par de la neige*, 75.
[974] Adorno, *Prismen*, 30.
[975] The qualification is important because certain readings of late Hölderlin (though significantly not Heidegger's) emphasize how Hölderlin's relevance for poetry after Auschwitz lies in his own insight into the "quelque chose de pourri" rotting in his own poetry. See, in particular, Nichanian, *Le sujet de l'histoire*, 245–75. On what distinguishes Heidegger and Celan's readings of Hölderlin, see André, *Gespräche von Text zu Text*.
[976] Celan, *Mikrolithen sinds, Steinchen*, 122.

showing such songbirds have too become "food for worms." Not the poem from the perspective of the song-thrush, in other words, but the poem from the perspective of the "executor," the poem as the abysmal coincidence of "verwesen" and "verwesen."

Celan's rhyme of "verwesen" and "verwesen" does more than translate the end rhyme of Shakespeare's couplet, it executes the legacy of German poetry. Thinking of Adorno's dictum, one might say that Celan's dénouement is not only bitterly ironic, it is willfully "barbaric"—artless in its exact repetition and strange in its syntax, which is foreign to English *and* foreign to German.[977] The metrical misfire and formal imbalance run counter to the inherited norms of "dichterische Rede" (*poetic discourse*), and the "barbarism" of the final hemistich "assault" (*vergewaltigen*) the venerable legacy of Holthusen's "vollkommen sinnliche Sprache" (*fully sensible speech*).[978] They knowingly squander the inherited rhetorical, prosodic, and formal resources of German poetry, and, cutting the "lives" out of "what remains" (*was bleibt*), disenchant the Young Man's afterlife and bury the myth that the poem might function as a means of redemption.

But this means that although Celan's translation executes "poetic discourse," it does not "execute" in the manner that matters most for Shakespeare's speaker. It neither "translates" in the legal sense of executing (*vollstrecken*) a property transfer from one owner to another, nor does it "translate" in the dictionary sense of "express[ing] or convey[ing] the meaning of (a word or text) using equivalent words in a different language." The meaning "transfer" does not transfer. Or, to put it differently, Celan's testamentary translation is all testament and no translation.

Without a substantive transfer—without a correspondence of meaning, a conveyance of properties, or a transmission of value—a translation is just an ambivalent recollection and ambiguous citation of another's words: a "decaying" reverberation of sound and sense. But this "Übersetzung" that "setzt" nothing "über," that announces its unredeemed belatedness and allows loss to resound in the language of arrival, is nonetheless a translation. No, not a translation, but rather a "speaking-after," a "Nachsprechen." Celan's version of sonnet 4 speaks after Shakespeare. It speaks the *after*. But in this it is not so different from Celan's "original" poetry. For Celan's original poetry too speaks *after*. The absence that echoes in the rhyme of "verwesen" and "verwesen" is a loss that reverberates in Celan's own language, a "Nachhall" of poetry after poetry.

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[977] For the Greeks, the barbarian was the one who did not speak Greek. Drawing on this history, Barbara Cassin reminds us that speaking a barbarian tongue means to speak outside the *logos*. It is a language that amounts to "bla bla bla." Cf. Cassin, *Éloge de la traduction*.

[978] On the "Vergewaltigungen" of Celan's Shakespeare translations, see Borgmeier, *Shakespeares Sonett "When Forty Winters ..." und die deutschen Übersetzer: Untersuchungen zu den Problemen der Shakespeare-Übertragung*. On Holthusen's "vollkommen sinnliche Rede" see chapter 3.

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