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Ethical Tendencies: Poetic Attention in the Wake of the Holocaust

by

Simone Sofia Stirner

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Comparative Literature

and the Designated Emphasis

in Critical Theory

and the Designated Emphasis

in Jewish Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Judith Butler, Chair
Professor Chana Kronfeld
Professor Niklaus Largier
Professor Debarati Sanyal

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Poetic Attention in the Wake of the Holocaust

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Abstract

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Designated Emphasis in Critical Theory

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This dissertation examines the ways in which poetic writing in the wake of the Nazi genocide orients readers toward responsiveness to the past and responsibility in the present through formal strategies. Poetry, in its rhythms, sensory texture, and signifying structure is always a site where our usual patterns of perception can be altered. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, I argue, this formal resource is mobilized to affect the ethically pertinent experience of what we tend to and how we do so. Taking the poetry of Paul Celan as a point of departure, I engage in dialogue with the poetic works of Dan Pagis, Charlotte Delbo, May Ayim, and Max Czollek, crossing different linguistic and historic contexts. I show how, in the writing of these authors, formal elements such as fragmentation, semantic indeterminacy, or multilingualism affect the experience of reading. Poetic form, in this context, generates modes of attention that are receptive and keenly dialogic, countering thereby the violent logic of "concentration" particular to the universe of the camps. I call these modes "ethical tendencies," and I focus on four in particular: susceptibility, patience, hesitation, and wakefulness. By developing an account of the modes of attention compelled by poetic writing after the Nazi genocide, this project opens up the doors for a new perspective on "poetry after Auschwitz." It shifts the long-held focus on the past's "unspeakability" toward the ways in which poetry of this historical moment can draw readers into ethical ways of bearing with the past and relating to the present.

The four chapters of the dissertation each focus on one "ethical tendency." Chapter One, "Susceptibility," develops a reading of Celan's long poem "Engführung," which is often considered a turning point in Celan's work, away from the metaphoric quality of his earlier poetry toward a less "accessible" aesthetic. Against this, I suggest that the poem—precisely through its form—seeks to generate a mode of reading and remembering that is defined by susceptibility toward the past in the present: By attuning the reader to its breath rhythm, it privileges a mode of being "with" the poem and its history over the certainty of conclusive interpretation. Chapter Two, "Patience," brings Celan into dialogue with the Hebrew-language

poet Dan Pagis. In the writing of both these poets, formal elements such as semantic indeterminacy and perspectival shifts generate a feeling of difficulty and disorientation. I show how the very formal elements that contribute to this sense of "difficulty" draw readers into a process of tarrying with the text. Formal difficulty, from this perspective, can be generative of a practice of patience whose ethical implication lies in the reader's ongoing engagement with the text—and its history. In Chapter Three, "Hesitation," I show how poetic strategies of delay and repetition can change habituated forms of perception. The first part of this chapter focuses on poetic prose by Charlotte Delbo, which highlights the complexities of ethical seeing under the specific regime of attention perpetuated by the concentration camps, all while reorganizing the field of the visible for the reader—potentially transforming existing habits of seeing. The second part of the chapter focuses on the rhetorical strategies of Celan's *The Meridian* to show how the speech's errant, delaying—hesitating—rhythm unfolds a critical potential in the moment of its performance, challenging the audience to listen attentively. Chapter Four, "Wakefulness," moves forward in time, from the 1960s and 1970s to the writing of Afro-German poet May Ayim in the 1990s and the work of contemporary German-Jewish poet Max Czollek in the late 2010s to trace the ethical tendencies of their poetry. Bringing the writing of these two authors into dialogue with Celan, I show how poetry formally engenders "wakefulness," a mode of attention, which cultivates a vigilance toward present continuities of past violence from within a capacious memory that sees history not as a set of isolated events but as a deeply entangled phenomenon. I end with a coda that reflects on the labor of reading and remembering—of tending to history. It is a labor which, if we are to take the credo "never forget" seriously, will remain a task forever.

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INTRODUCTION

III.

ja, liebe! denken wir an deutschland, märkischer sand, denken an die heide oder gusseisen, summen: *der mond ist aufgegangen, die goldnen sternlein prangen, am himmel hell und klar*. sterne sind gelb und haben sechs ecken, VERDAMMT, sterne sind entfernte wolken und bestehen aus: gas, VERDAMMT

wir summen: *der wald steht still und schweiget, und aus den wiesen steiget, der weiße nebel wunderbar.* der wald, der freundlich schweigende deutsche wald und seine einmalige vielfalt: birkenwald, eichenwald, buchenwald, VERDAMMT aus den wiesen steigt nebel, wunderbar weißer rauch, VERDAMMT

from: Max Czollek, "von der wiederkehr," (2020).

[*III.*

yes, love! when we think of germany, the markish sand, think of the moors or cast iron, to hum: the risen moon is beaming, little golden stars are gleaming, in heavens bright and clear. *stars are yellow and have six points, DAMNIT, the stars are distant clouds of: gas, DAMNIT*

we hum: the woods stand still and hold their silence, and from the meadows rises white mist wonderfully. *the woods, the friendly closemouthed german woods and their unparalleled diversity: birchwald, oakwald, buchenwald, DAMNIT from the meadows rises mist, wonderfully white smoke, DAMNIT*]

from: Max Czollek, "of return" (transl. Jon Cho-Polizzi), (2020).

The long, eight-syllable German word *Vergangenheitsbewältigung,* a composite of *Vergangenheit*, "past," and *Bewältigung*—a noun that describes a process of "overcoming" or "struggling to overcome"—usually identifies the process by which German society comes to terms with, and remembers, the history of National Socialism and the Holocaust. It stands for programs of "de-Nazification," for trials, and reparation payments. It evokes public gestures and rituals—from Willy Brandt's *Kniefall* (genuflection), at the monument to the victims of Warsaw's Ghetto uprising and images of German politicians laying wreaths down at Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Memorial. *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* entails a broad culture of remembrance that includes extensive public education, museums, and national memorials dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust. The legal, political, artistic, and social practices that form part of Germany's *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* have often been considered exemplary in terms of a nation taking responsibility for its own history.[1]

In the poem "von der wiederkehr" ("of return") by German-Jewish poet Max Czollek, the past is not overcome, not "*bewältigt*." It lingers in the tune of the German lullaby "Der Mond ist aufgegangen" ("The Moon Has Risen,") when words like "star" and "fog" and "night" reanimate the memory of the Shoah. It is there in the silence of the forest that shares its name with the site of terror and death. As the smoke rises from the meadows, it carries with it the memory of other smoke. "Damnit" exclaims the speaker, twice, before asking, three lines further down: "what's the deal with the boredom, this german amnesia?" (*was ist das mit der langeweile, dieser deutschen amnesie?*) In 2018, Czollek was part of a collective of authors, theater producers, activists, and scholars issuing a sharp critique of Germany's culture of remembrance in an editorial for the magazine *Jalta. Positionen zur Jüdischen Gegenwart* (*Jalta. Perspectives on the Jewish Present*). They write:

> Germany counts as "world champion of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung,*" of "coming-to-terms with-the-past" and […] has apparently succeeded in integrating the 'dark chapter' of its history into the master narrative of the unified Federal Republic's identity. The established culture of remembrance is considered the "happy ending" of a terrible history.[2]

Germany in 2018, "re-unified" for almost 30 years, has settled into a comfortable rhythm of remembrance. And yet, next to the existing narrative of the Shoah and its "*Bewältigung*," continuities of the past in the form of contemporary violence are left unattended. As the editors explain: "Together with today's remembrance culture, another space was created where contemporary anti-Semitism and racism are discussed as if in a vacuum. […] and continuities of right wing and anti-Semitic violence are left unaddressed."[3] At a time that is marked by the trials of the National Socialist Underground (NSU) murders and the strengthening of right-wing extremist parties in Germany and beyond, the country prides itself on its successful culture of remembrance—remembering, all while forgetting.

The concerns of Czollek and the editors of *Jalta* emerge against the specific background of the political and social climate of the late 2010s in Germany, but they are not altogether new. Almost sixty years earlier, in 1960, Jewish, Romanian-born, German-language poet Paul Celan was confronted with a similar situation. As public forms of Holocaust remembrance slowly began to take shape in the "new" post-war Germany, Celan's poetry came to play a significant role in this new landscape, with his poem "Todesfuge" ("Death Fugue") being included in school curricula and anthologies. At the same time, however, Celan's warnings against the persistence

of anti-Semitism in Germany, his concern about the role former members of the NSDAP continued to play in political, legal, as well as literary circles were not heard, or discarded as paranoia.[4] In May 1960, Celan learned that he would receive the prestigious Georg-Büchner-Prize.[5] In preparation of his acceptance speech, which soon became known as *Der Meridian* (*The Meridian*), Celan wrote the following lines, which foreshadow *Jalta*'s critique of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*:

> We have been, each in his own way, witnesses of a process, which has led us away from that which only fifteen years ago still lay true and heavy on our heart to the following situation: talking of the turning [*Umkehr*] instead of change itself, supposed engagement and commitment instead of real responsibility, cultural busy-ness [*Kulturbeflissenheit*] rather than simple attentiveness. (M, 169)[6]

The fragment criticizes the false or perfunctory nature of the "*Kulturbeflissenheit*"—a solicitous cultural concern with that which "lay true and heavy on our heart 15 years ago"—but does not take real responsibility, does not pay attention. Like *Jalta*'s perspective on the disengagement of Germany's official program of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung,* Celan's note diagnoses detached forms of speech that turn remembrance into a token gesture of taking responsibility rather than an agent of change. The context of his critique is different than that of 2018, and yet we see, already back then, not only a concern with the imperative to remember the Shoah, but an investment in a particular kind of memory that does not become perfunctory, isolated, or disengaged. Celan too intimates that it is possible to forget while remembering, to commemorate the past while being inattentive to its persistence in the present.

Eventually, Celan did not include the explicit critique quoted above in his speech. What he did do, however, was write poetry that sought to generate attentiveness. Here is where this dissertation begins, with the observation that in poetry written in the aftermath of the Holocaust we can find a loose but persistent pattern: It demands modes of attention, which resist the "vacuum" and the perfunctory "cultural business" and open up the potential for a responsiveness toward the past and a responsibility in the present.[7] Where Celan's and Czollek's comments issue this demand in a direct fashion, their poetry—and that of others—proceeds in a different way, through formal strategies that affect the ethically pertinent experience of what we tend to and how we do so. This, then, is the core of my argument: In the wake of the Holocaust, in the poetry of Celan—and others—poetic form turned into a resource to shape modes of ethical attention in the present of reading. Poetry, in its rhythms, sensory texture, and signifying structure is always a site where our usual patterns of perception can be altered and attention formed in new ways. This potential of poetry to affect the attention of its readers is not limited to poetry after the Holocaust.[8] But at this historical moment, this formal resource is enlisted to compel modes of attention that are receptive, responsive, and keenly dialogic and they counter the violent logic of "concentration" particular to the universe of the camps as well as its potential recurrence in the present.

I call these modes "ethical tendencies" and the following chapters each focus on one such "tendency": Susceptibility, patience, hesitation, and wakefulness. With each, I begin from the poetry of Celan and then proceed to read his writing in relation to others: the Hebrew poet Dan Pagis, the French author and Auschwitz survivor Charlotte Delbo, and—in a move up to the present moment—the work of Afro-German poet May Ayim in the 1990s, before the final section returns to Max Czollek. The aesthetic of these authors—and hence the formal strategies

that they employ—are not unified. Celan's poetry is frequently considered "obscure" and "difficult" while Delbo's poetic prose at times bears a photographic clarity. The semantic density of Czollek's poetry resonates with Celan's language but also differs from it in several ways, in its broad references to everyday objects for instance or the use of colloquial language, which in turn also defines the writing of Pagis and Ayim, albeit in a different fashion. What unites all of them, however, is that they mobilize form to attend to the persistence of the past in the now. In that sense, the temporality of these poetic writings counters what Walter Benjamin calls the linear, historical time that distinguishes past from present and confines history to epochs, like "military barracks."[9] The temporality of the writing that I engage with in this study resonates, rather, with what Christina Sharpe calls being "in the wake" of slavery or what Ross Chambers describes as the "time of aftermath" of the AIDS crisis. The poets I focus on write after disaster but also in its continuing present, and it is from this place that the urgency for engagement and ethical relationality arises.[10] From within this historical position, their writing seeks to reorient what readers relate to—what readers tend toward and attend to—and how they do so.

In this introduction, I will now first define what I mean by "ethical tendencies," a concept that I develop out of Celan's reflections on the relational structure of poetry in *The Meridian*. In a second step, I explain how these tendencies are formed in the process of reading, before I turn, in a third step, to the question how this focus on the effects of poetic form on a reader's attention expands our understanding of "poetry in the wake of the Holocaust" at large.

Ethical Tendencies

"Tendency," from the Latin *tendere*, "to stretch out, direct oneself toward a place" designates an inclination, directedness, and orientation toward another person, place, or time.[11] Tendencies, in this sense, are always relational. They constitute modes of being turned toward someone or something, of attending to another person or—in the context of my study—to the memory of another time. "Attention" derives from *ad-tendere* and the ethical tendencies that I discuss in this dissertation are, in this sense, modes of attention.[12] They describe what we are oriented toward, what we give time to and invest in. "Tending," in its semantic valence of caring for, looking after, or working on (as in tending a garden) also speaks to the effort and labor that processes of tending and attending entail. This last aspect that associates tendencies with the semantic field of soil and agriculture at first seems to have little to do with the attention we pay in reading poetry. But in the aftermath of the Holocaust it reminds us that remembering and being with the past in the present is a form of keeping it alive, a vital practice that prevents the past from hardening, sedimenting, ossifying, preparing the ground instead for critical interventions in the present.

In using the word "tendency," I follow Celan's language in *The Meridian*. Speaking in general terms about the nature of poetry, he describes "the poem" as keenly tending toward an "other." While there is no German word that captures the different semantic fields of "tending" in the same way that the English does, the different valences of the notion permeate Celan's "Meridian"-speech on various levels. Famously, the poem is "underway," it "heads toward" an "other," "goes toward it, bespeaks it," (M, 9) and this "other" is also "turned toward it, the poem." Next to this relational dimension, we also hear that "[t]he poem shows […] a strong tendency to fall silent [*eine starke Neigung zum Verstummen*]." (M, 8) With this observation in particular Celan moves from a general consideration of "the poem" to the specific: "the poem today [*das Gedicht heute*]," which reminds us that the poem's "inclination," its "*Neigungswinkel*" (M, 9) as Celan calls it in yet another point in the speech, is shaped by history.

At the same time that the speech describes how the poem tends toward an "other," it also intimates that this way of tending applies to someone who responds, someone or something that is "turned toward [the poem]," someone "who—always, still—perceives, is turned toward phenomena, questioning and addressing these." (M, 9) The poem's tendency, from this perspective, constitutes itself in relation to an "other" who or which in turn is also involved in this scene, giving the poem time and attention.

The problem of *Aufmerksamkeit* (attention) itself is foregrounded most directly in *The Meridian* with the following statement:

> The attention the poem tries to pay to everything it encounters, […] is not, I believe, the achievement of an eye competing with (or emulating) ever more precise instruments, but is rather concentration that remains mindful of all our dates.
> "Attention"—permit me to quote here a phrase by Malebranche, via Walter Benjamin's essay on Kafka—"Attention is the natural prayer of the soul."
>
> Die Aufmerksamkeit, die das Gedicht allem ihm Begegnenden zu widmen versucht, […] ist, glaube ich, keine Errungenschaft des mit den täglich perfekteren Apparaten wetteifernden (oder miteifernden) Auges, es ist vielmehr eine aller unserer Daten eingedenk bleibende Konzentration.
> "Aufmerksamkeit"—erlauben Sie mir hier, nach dem Kafka-Essay Walter Benjamins zu zitieren—, "Aufmerksamkeit ist das natürliche Gebet der Seele." (M, 9)

In citing from Malebranche's French, Celan intimates that his notion of "*Aufmerksamkeit*" is infused with the valences of the French "*attention*"—and, respectively, the Latin "*ad-tendere*." The fact that he introduces Malebranche through Benjamin's writing on Kafka at the same time opens up to a context in which attentiveness is less (or at least not only) that of Malebranche's Christian devotional prayer but also what the Jewish thought tradition knows as *Kavana*. This Hebrew term, in the words of Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich, "resists translation" and means something along the lines of "direction, attention, concentration [*Ausrichtung, Aufmerksamkeit, Konzentration*]"—all terms that Celan uses throughout the "Meridian"-speech.[13] The semantic layers of this Hebrew term hence equally permeate throughout Celan's speech, revealing its interconnectedness with the notion "tendency."

Finally, the above quote from *The Meridian* highlights the connection of "tending" and "ad-tending" to remembrance—while also performing it through the very language Celan uses. The German "*Aufmerksamkeit*" entails the notion "*merken*," "to remember something" or "take note." Here, Celan connects it to "*Eingedenken*," a form of mindfulness toward history. Celan formulates this in a capacious way, as a mindfulness toward "all our dates," but his speech also foregrounds an explicit concern with one specific date. He asks: "Perhaps one can say that each poem has its own "20th of January" inscribed in it?" In the context of the speech, this particular date recalls the day that Büchner's Lenz "walked through the mountains," but also, significantly, January 20th 1942, the date of the Wannsee Conference, in which Adolf Hitler, Adolf Eichmann, and their collaborators finalized plans for the 'final solution.' (M, 8) This is the history that the poem "today" bears with it, but it is also a history that is sedimented in the word "concentration" itself. In *The Meridian* the notion "concentration," "Konzentration," addresses most immediately the form of "attentiveness" that Malebranche defined as "natural prayer of the soul" and the gathering of dates in the present moment, the spiritual fullness of remembrance by way of Kafka,

Benjamin, and Malebranche. But within the notion of concentration, the echo of the "concentration camps" forms a constant presence. In his *Shibboleth: For Paul Celan*, Jacques Derrida reminds us of this when he notes: "The word concentration can become a terrible one for memory."[14]

The proximity of these two signifieds of "concentration"—a form of attentiveness that is "mindful of all our dates" on the one hand, and the concentration of the "concentration camps" on the other—is no coincidence. The forms of attentiveness to which my study turns are situated precisely at the moment of their encounter. Ethical tendencies—susceptibility, patience, hesitation, and wakefulness—all are attentive to this historical "concentration," at the same time that they counter it. They constitute forms of attention that slow down, interrupt, or subvert the violent form of "concentration" inherent to what David Rousset, in the immediate aftermath of the war, has termed the "concentrationary universe," that is, the system that found its most concentrated form in the Nazi concentration camps but also includes the systemic violence that enabled them and which persisted in parts after their closure.[15] Ethical tendencies are acutely relational and potentially transformative. They account for the absent presence of an other, they are mindful of history's mark, and they open up the potential for forms of seeing, perceiving, and being that respond to the past in a way that is also responsible to the present and the future. They are "ethical" precisely because of these characteristics, because they are not perfunctory or passing "commitments" but also not seeking to master the past or bring it to a conclusion, as *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* implies. Ethical tendencies, we can say then, are not tendentious.

While Celan's reflections on the ways of tending and attending that emerge in and around a poem are the most immediate source for my own conceptualization of "tendency," the latter also bears affinity with the way in which Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick theorized tendencies—and the ethical affordances that they entail.[16] As Ramzi Fawaz puts it, tendencies for Sedgwick described "the ways in which *what* we tend toward, invest in, feel affinity with, obsess over, attach ourselves to, shapes and reshapes not only our sense of self but our ethical relationship to the world at large."[17] Where Sedgwick's work traces the "attachments we develop with other bodies, objects, affects, experiences," my study foregrounds the ways in which we tend to the past and locates the potential for the formation or re-orientation of attachments and investments in the moment of reading: If what we tend toward shapes our ethical relationship to "the world at large," then the tendencies that poetry generates in the wake of the Holocaust can also shape our ethical relation to the present.

Shaped by the Past

How, then, do ethical tendencies come about? The readerly tendencies that the following chapters are dedicated to are not imposed onto a poem from the outside. Rather, they are generated through the very form of the poems. *Ethical Tendencies* shifts away from representation as the central category of analyzing poetry after the Holocaust toward an interrogation of the effects that poetry's form has on the present time of reading. How, for instance, is the fragmentary aesthetic of a poem not only indicative or representative of the historical crisis but something that shapes the experience of reading? What forms of attention are cultivated in this process?

In Celan's "Engführung," "Stretto," which I read in Chapter One, the poem's fragmentary aesthetic can be read as indicative of historical violence and loss. The long poem

that spans over several pages begins with the lines "Taken off into / the terrain / with the unmistakable trace" and also mirrors this "unmistakable trace" as the text itself is repeatedly cut apart and individual words are fragmented into stuttering syllabi. In the context of poetry after the Holocaust, this aesthetic can be interpreted as testifying typographically and spatially to the historical destruction and loss. Formal elements such as fragmentation or the absence of coherent, unifying meaning can be read as the trace of historical violence on language. In other words, the specific forms of literature after the Holocaust can be understood as encoded symptoms of history—symptoms, which processes of interpretation can attend to. My approach here is to reorient the focus toward the question what in fact happens when this poetic form that is marked by history affects the reader. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, for instance, once described Celan's language as "exhausted, crippled, faltering on the edge of silence or of the incomprehensible."[18] But this description also applies at times to readers, who find Celan's poetry exhausting: In its formal difficulty, its language, which at times seems just *too much*—in moments when a single word spins into a seemingly endless number of possible interpretations—and then again *too little*, when it fragments and breaks off into silence, Celan's writing can generate a feeling of being stuck, even frustrated.[19] Celan himself once spoke of the "unbearable" nature of poetry. This perceived formal difficulty, however, also compels readers to return to the poems and read them over and over again. Which reorients the question of the ethical stakes of formal effects: If the "exhausted" language is a symptom, what happens when readers read it? What might Celan's aesthetic have to teach us precisely through its difficulty, what might one learn—or unlearn—through the "unbearable" nature of his writing, the irritation and frustration, but also through the persistent sense of connection across and within difficulty?

The readings that I develop pay attention to the tendencies that unfold in response to poetic form. They follow for instance the delays generated through the gaps on a page that have the eye wander from one end to the other. They ask what shifts in orientation happen when a seemingly empty signifier has readers ruminate over possible meanings. They consider what commitments and attachments are created when a poem asks to be read over and over. They follow breath rhythms to see what new orientations in time and space this corporeal engagement produces, all in order to understand what ways of relating poetry requires of us—in the wake of the Holocaust. By focusing on the ways in which poetic form can generate "ethical tendencies," my study dialogues with a growing literary sub-field of attention studies that thinks about the relation between aesthetic form and attention as well as a field that loosely has been described (and frequently contested) as the "New Formalism."[20] The latter, according to Samuel Otter, has readers return to what Russian formalist Victor Shklosky described as the "slowness of perception" produced by verbal art.[21] Form, the sensory structure of language, verbal complexity and density, rhythm, tone, speed, the shape of a poem on a page, textures of sound—elements such as these affect readers' perceptive patterns, they orient or disorient. Poems are sites where patterns of perception can be changed, new forms of relation established, and habituation suspended in favor of new ways of seeing.

To the extent that this dissertation investigates the capacity of poetic form to generate *ethical* tendencies, it also resonates with the theoretical investments of recent studies, which foreground ethics not as propositional content but as grounded in aesthetic experience.[22] Namwali Serpell's extensive study on the relation between literary uncertainty and literature's ethical value, for instance, discusses in this vein how the "highly structured form" of Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita "molds the reading experience into [a] shifting, variable mode of uncertainty," highlighting how uncertainty generated by form has the power to "unsettle readers' moral

values."[23] Most recently, Karen Zumhagen-Yekplé has shown—via Wittgenstein—how the formal difficulty of modernist literature conducts "oblique ethical teaching."[24] In locating the conditions of possibility for ethical relation in the experience of reading, these approaches, just as my own, also suggest, in Serpell's words, "an axis of affinity with recent interest in "surface reading" and the "descriptive turn.""[25] The term "surface reading," coined by Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus functions like an umbrella term for a series of different types of reading, which "refuse the depth model of truth" and turn to the surface of a text, be it in form of a text's materiality, its affective and sensuous dimensions, or anything else that is taken to be "there" instead of hidden and repressed.[26] These approaches—including, for instance, Sedgwick's "reparative reading" or Anne Anlin Cheng's "hermeneutics of susceptibility—differ from so-called "symptomatic," "paranoid," or "suspicious" readings. They do not follow what Heather Love describes as "familiar academic protocols like maintaining critical distance, outsmarting […] refusing to be surprised."[27] It is a difference that entails ethical stakes: Where the "suspicious" readings try to master a text, forms of "surface" reading seek to encounter a text on its own terms. I intervene in this discussion by emphasizing that reading—and relating to—a text in a way that is "ethical" is not only a matter of "academic protocols" that are taken up at will by a reader. Rather, I focus on the ways in which texts themselves compel readers into states of susceptibility or patience, formulating their own ethics through an experiential argument.

The focus on the specific formative effect of literary form on readers' attention that grounds my argument about the ethics of attention, has also been the object of literary attention studies that span such different contexts as British romanticism (Lily Gurton-Wachter's *Watchwords: Romanticism and the Poetics of Attention*) or premodern devotional poetry (David Marno's *Death be Not Proud: The Art of Holy Attention*).[28] Most recently, Lucy Alford's *Forms of Poetic Attention* developed a comprehensive categorization of different forms of attention that are generated in and through poetry.[29] In studying these approaches to poetic attention while developing my own framework for the particular tendencies generated by poetry after the Holocaust, I was struck by the fact that all of them, at one point or another, turn to the poetry of Celan, as if when it comes to poetic attention, all roads would eventually lead to him.[30] This dissertation takes another direction. It begins from Celan and develops a specific argument about the relation between poetic form, reading, and ethical relation from within his writing, extending outward from there to encounter similarities, continuities, and transformations in the work of other poets who write in the long aftermath of the Holocaust. The dissertation foregrounds how the aesthetic dimension of a poem that is shaped by the history of the genocide affects the present of reading and how, by consequence, the reader's relation to the present might be challenged to take new—ethical—forms.

Beyond Unspeakability

By reading poetry after the Holocaust with an attention to the ways in which its very form comes to shape how readers attend and relate to the past and thereby, potentially, also to the present, I bring to the fore something that has often been neglected in the discussion around "poetry after Auschwitz": While much has been written and said about what is at stake in "writing poetry after Auschwitz" since Adorno issued his famous statement that to do so would be "barbaric," less has been said about the question of how this poetry, once it is out there, is being read and attended to.[31]

The discussion around Adorno's dictum on poetry after Auschwitz is well known, as is the fact that he revised his statement subsequently, conceding that "[p]erennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream; hence it may have been wrong to say that after Auschwitz you could no longer write poems."[32] Celan's poetry, famously, was a significant factor in the shift in Adorno's approach.[33] In *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno writes: "Celan's poems want to speak of the most extreme horror through silence."[34] This notion of speaking through silence returns in the discussions around "poetry after Auschwitz" time and again. The immensity of atrocities encrypted by the name "Auschwitz," in this line of thought, has brought language to its limits, defying the possibility of representation as the events of the Nazi genocide appear incommensurable with language. Within poetry, this crisis of language is often located in moments in which language no longer seems to mean anything. When Lacoue-Labarthe, as mentioned earlier, speaks of Celan's speech as "exhausted, crippled, faltering on the edge of silence or of the incomprehensible," he understands form as a symptom, an immediate response to the historical violence.[35] The Holocaust cannot be represented, and this translates into a "language of silence," a fragmented "writing of disaster," or an "aesthetic of atrocity."[36]

The narrative of the Holocaust's "unspeakability" has come to be criticized from different directions.[37] One of the implications of the term "unspeakable" qualifies a "sacred" object, "that is, an object that either *cannot* be spoken, because it lies outside the profane world and its language, or *may not* be spoken, because speaking it would be a profanation," and so declaring the Holocaust as the "unspeakable," as Thomas Trezise has pointed out, risks raising it to the status of the divine, as something that doesn't belong to the profane world.[38] Against the paradigm of unspeakability also stand the sheer number of testimonies that speak of and to the reality of what happened. Poets like Celan, Pagis, and Delbo wrote not only in spite of it all, but also precisely because of "that which happened."[39] While the problem of speakability, of what it takes to "write after Auschwitz" certainly influenced how they wrote, the concern for "speaking" of the past went along with another one: the problem of listening and attending to it. Shifting our attention to the way in which authors negotiate this problem highlights a different ethical challenge: What if the Holocaust can be spoken but no one is listening? What if someone speaks but that speech isn't quite understandable and the listener then turns away and attends to the speech no longer? Or what if the speech is fractured by silence, what does it take to bear with this silence—and what is at stake in doing so? How do readers turn toward or away from what is said in the wake of the Holocaust?

In *Measure of Our Days* (*Mesure de nos jours*), the third volume of Delbo's Auschwitz-trilogy, she includes the following poetic reflection that conveys some of this tension between the pressure to speak—and the failure of listening:[40]

Vous voudriez savoir poser des questions	You'd like to know ask questions
[…]	[…]
et quand nous répondons vous ne savez pas comment passait une journée et vous croyez que nous ne savons pas répondre.	but if we gave you an answer you still don't know how a day was spent and assume we don't know how to answer.

The poem acknowledges the persistent curiosity of an audience, a "you" in hearing and knowing the answers to their question at the same time that it exposes the difficulty of relating "how a day was spent;" and it suggests that this inability to transmit experience might lie not only with those who are assumed not to "know how to answer," but also with those who listen. We find a similar concern reflected throughout the notes that Celan took while preparing his acceptance speech for the Georg-Büchner-Prize. Different fragments convey a struggle with being heard. Celan notes, for instance: "'You' don't hear me any longer, therefore I will confront you with silence." (M, 161), and we also recall Celan's remark at the beginning of this introduction, which insisted on the importance of "true attentiveness"—an investment that was also tied to his own contemporary moment. There exists a problem of responding to speech, of attending to poetry for him, at a particular point in time.

The months leading up to Celan's "Meridian"-speech coincide with a number of historical events that marked transformations in cultural engagements with the memory of the Nazi genocide—in Germany and beyond. 1960 was the year that Eichmann was captured in Argentina, setting the stage for a trial that would not only result in the conviction of one of the central perpetrators of the Nazi genocide but also reshape the public discourse around the Holocaust—and Holocaust testimony itself. The Eichmann trial inaugurated what Annette Wieviorka would call the "era of the witness" by opening up a public space for testimony to be articulated and heard.[41] In Paris, where Celan lives at the time, activist support for the independence of Algeria from French rule increased—the Manifesto of the 121 endorsing Algeria's struggle for independence was published in September of that year. Among the signatories are writers, filmmakers, and intellectuals like Claude Lanzmann, Alain Resnais, or Maurice Blanchot, for whom the resistance to the Algerian War was closely linked to a responsibility toward the memory of the Nazi genocide.[42] Meanwhile, in Germany, the period of "denazification" after the war was followed by the *Wirtschaftswunder* of the 1950s. With the economic "rebirth," a new self-understanding of German identity emerged by which the society differentiated itself from the Nazi-past—all while continuing to reintegrate former party officials into its political and legal ranks.[43] When Celan eventually gave his "Meridian"-speech in October of 1960, he was aware, as Amir Eshel relates, that "many of the attending dignitaries had participated knowingly or involuntarily in the Nazi endeavor and that most belonged to the conservative cultural elite of Adenauer's Germany."[44] Now, they were celebrating his poetry. This may have been on Celan's mind when he remarked, in another preparatry note to *The Meridian*: "It is not a sign of reversal when [with other words] but with the same intonation as yesterday, [things] and humans are praised that were damned yesterday." And then, explicating what kind of "intonation" this would be: "The Nazi tone/Nazi stench [*der Naziton/Nazimief*] survives the Nazi vocabulary [*das Nazivokabular*]." (M, 173)[45] The terms "Nazi tone" and "Nazi stench" that Celan introduces here are striking. The official language, like the official culture of National Socialism might have ended, and yet Nazism persists as an air or atmosphere continuing to structure the present.[46] Those who were "damned yesterday" are now celebrated; Celan, a Jew, receives the highest honor within German literary circles that tout commitment but fail to assume "real responsibility." Czollek's poem returns to us here: *From the meadows rises mist, wonderfully white smoke, DAMNIT*.

The misreading of Celan's poetry, the fact that his warnings against the persistence of anti-Semitism, the lingering of the Nazi-stench, were not heeded, all resonate with his concern for "true attentiveness." In other words, yes, Celan, like so many others at that time in history struggled with language—and with the German language in particular. But he was equally

concerned with how readers attend to the past, to that which "not too long ago lay close to our heart" and to the responsibility toward this past in the present. For him, as for other poets, this concern is woven into their aesthetic as they find in poetic form a resource to generate attentiveness instead of "supposed engagement and commitment." Engagement, then, is generated through poetic form itself: It might take place as a minimal shift in perception produced by the semantic density of Celan's language, it can be the affective weight of not "understanding" a poem, or the sudden experience of the synchronicity of a reader's breath with the poem's beat. What emerges through these formal engagements is not "tendency writing" but moments in which readers relate in new ways to the text and—by extension—to their own present.

Chapter Breakdown

Chapter 1, "Susceptibility," develops a reading of Celan's long poem "Engführung," a poem that is often considered a turning point in Celan's work, away from the metaphoric quality of his earlier poems toward a more "obscure," less "accessible" aesthetic. Against this, I suggest that the poem—precisely through its form—seeks to generate a mode of reading and remembering that is defined by susceptibility toward the past in the present. Focusing in particular on the mode of embodied attention that the poem produces through its breath rhythm, I argue that "Engführung" projects poetry as the site in which past and present are dynamically intertwined. This "susceptibility" that the poem models both through content and form allows for an understanding of reading poetry as a practice of relationality by which the past is experienced alongside and as part of the present.

Chapter 2, "Patience," brings Celan in dialogue with the Hebrew-language poet Dan Pagis. It starts from the observation that the writing of both these poets produces discomfort, impatience, frustration or even "hate" as Celan himself said. These difficult affects, I suggest, are not just the result of the subject matter of their poetry but go back to the poems' formal difficulty—the fact that they are considered hermetic and require elaborate hermeneutic skills. Against this background, I show how the very formal strategies that contribute to a sense of "difficulty" hold the potential to draw readers into a process of tarrying with the text. I focus first on the effects of Celan's "spectrality" (a semantic indeterminacy that activates a play with historical events) and second on Pagis's disorienting shifts between different perspectives, linguistic registers, and intertexts (a phenomenon I describe as "poetic multiplicity"). Together, their poetry shows that formal "difficulty" can be generative of a practice of patience whose ethical implication lies in the readers' ongoing engagement with the text—and its history.

Midway through this study stands a brief and speculative interlude on "Poetry as Pedagogy." It emerges out of the second chapter and the consideration of the way in which formal difficulty forms a practice of enduring patience, expanding on a problem that runs throughout the entire study. If we take poetry to shape ethical tendencies in the now of reading, is poetry then a form of pedagogy? Abstracting from the individual forms of attention and the formal elements that generate them, this section considers the problem of poetry as pedagogy with a particular eye to the ethical challenges of dogmatism and the potential inherent in "unlearning" habituated ways of attending and perceiving in the present.

How does poetry not only generate modes of attentiveness toward the past but also affect the readers' relation to their own present? This question, which already forms a latent thread throughout the first two chapters, is taken into focus in Chapter 3, "Hesitation," in which I show

how poetic strategies of delay and repetition—a tendency to hesitate—change habituated forms of perception. In the first part of this chapter, "Seeing Otherwise in Charlotte Delbo," I read "One Day," ("*Un Jour*"), a short piece from Charlotte Delbo's genre-defying *Auschwitz and After*, (*Auschwitz et après*) that highlights the complexities of ethical seeing under the specific regime of attention perpetuated by the concentration camp, all while reorganizing the field of the visible for the readers—potentially making them see, not merely look.[47] The second part, "Listening Otherwise in Celan's *Meridian*," returns to the speech, which has already formed a theoretical point of reference throughout the earlier chapters. Here, I take into focus its rhetorical strategies to show how the speech's errant, delaying—hesitating—rhythm unfolds a critical potential in the moment of its performance, challenging the audience to listen attentively.

Chapter 4, "Wakefulness" moves forward in time, from the 1960s and 1970s to the writing of Afro-German poet May Ayim in the 1990s and the work of contemporary German-Jewish poet Max Czollek in the late 2010s to trace the ethical tendencies of their poetry. Bringing the writing of these two authors into dialogue with Celan, I show how poetry formally engenders "wakefulness," a form of attention, which cultivates a vigilance toward present continuities of past violence from within a capacious memory that sees history not as a set of isolated events but as entangled—as "full" instead of what Walter Benjamin called "empty, homogenous time." I end with a coda that reflects on the labor of reading and remembering—of tending to history. It is a labor which, if we are to take the credo "never forget" seriously, will remain a task forever.

*

To speak of "ethical tendencies" throughout these readings implies—or at times explicates—that there are also other, "unethical," possibly "bad" ways of reading Holocaust poetry. The aggressive tendency toward mastering a text, for instance, seeking to find the hermeneutic key that will unlock existing patterns of understanding and resolve its difficulty, comes across as such a "bad" way of reading. So does the habituated form of institutionalized German Holocaust remembrance that proceeds without critically reflecting on the present moment. This approach, of course, begs the question throughout whether these ethical tendencies do not result in their own form of narcissism, their own form of mastery. This dissertation wants to recuperate susceptibility, hesitation, patience, and wakefulness as ethical tendencies that might work against forms of remembrance that take place in a vacuum, against perfunctory *Kulturbeflissenheit*, but this too brings with it the danger of romanticizing these tendencies. One can easily imagine "patience" becoming a virtue upon which a "good" culture of memory is built, endowing "patient" forms of remembrance with moral superiority all while redeeming society once more of real responsibility. And so it is important that these tendencies always remain open to inconsistent, conflicting developments. The chapter on "patience," in this sense, not only ends up talking more about impatience; Celan's interpretation of Georg Büchner's Lucile, whom I read as an embodiment of patience, is also a figure who commits to her own death, putting pressure on the idealization of "patience" as part of a contemporary culture of remembrance. The forms of reading that appear as "unethical" are often integral parts to tending ethically to the memory of the Nazi genocide. While the first chapter foregrounds the ethical import of giving up on "symptomatic" readings in favor of rendering oneself susceptible to a text and to history, Chapter 4, by contrast, highlights the importance of "suspicious" and "paranoid" readings when it comes to being vigilant about the persistence of the past in the present. And while both Celan and

Czollek criticize institutionalized remembrance in Germany, they also, in doing so, enliven it and open up new avenues for the future.

Like Celan's poem that tends toward an "other," reaching and searching for relation, the modes of attention formed in the reading of poetry do not posit a finite goal. And maybe it is precisely this moment of openness within the different "tendencies"—their tentative character—that resists the tendentiousness of propaganda and concentration that formed an integral part of the Nazi regime.[48] Susceptibility, patience, hesitation, and wakefulness do not "stand at attention," obedient to an authority. Rather, they constitute forms of openness and self-reflective commitment and precisely in this capacity they take a stand for a more ethical future.

1. SUSCEPTIBILITY

Read no more … go.

— Paul Celan, "Engführung,"

What kind of withness *is it?*

— Anne Carson, *Economy of the Unlost.*
Reading Simonides of Keos with Paul Celan

Bearing with the Past in Paul Celan's "Engführung"

"Taken off into / the terrain / with the unmistakable trace: / Grass, written asunder. The stones, white / with the grassblades' shadows:" with these words begins Paul Celan's long poem "Engführung" ("Stretto") of 1958—a poem that will extend over 180 lines, several pages, moving through a poetic landscape marked by loss.[49] The poem is, as has been stated on numerous occasions, in dialogue with Alain Resnais's film *Nuit et Brouillard*, (*Night and Fog*) (1956), the script of which—originally written by Jean Cayrol—Celan translated into German.[50] The "terrain with the unmistakable trace" evokes the landscape of the concentration camps that Resnais's film moves through. "Grass, written asunder," in this line of thought, can be read as an evocation of the film's first long tracking shot that, carried by the calm and rhythmic voice of the speaker, moves over green grass writ apart by barbed wire fences. As much as these first lines invoke the landscape of the camps, they also will seemingly come to speak of the text itself: In the poem, lines and individual words are repeatedly fragmented, opening up a wounded textual terrain that disturbs attempts for goal-oriented meaning making and cohesive understanding.

With this wounded terrain—historical and textual—in view, two imperatives at the end of the second stanza give reason to pause. Following the poem's turn toward a view onto "stones, white with the grassblades' shadows," we read:

Lies nicht mehr – schau!	Read no more – look!
Schau nicht mehr – geh!	Look no more – go!

What would it mean to read no more but "go," or to "walk" even: to read that one is to read no more and then continue reading (for what else is one to do with a text?), but in a manner that is also a form of walking, possibly perceiving or being with language otherwise? These imperatives seem to suddenly shift the reader out of a hermeneutic approach to the text toward an other reading, one that engages the body rather than the mind, one that experiences the poem's breaks and gaps not only as signs but also as something tangible. 'Walking a poem' guides us to the foot of its meter, the pace of its breath. To infer that the text gives its readers instructions in this way is, however, somewhat ironic if the whole point of these instructions would be that we as readers are to "read no more."[51] That said, the question of how to "read no more" remains, and opens up to others: What does it mean to "read no more" but "go," "walk," if the terrain is dense with the traces of history? What kind of attention, what forms of tending *toward* and tending *to* the past does such movement entail? Or, to pick up a term that poet Anne Carson coins in her reading of Celan: "What kind of *withness* is it"?[52]

In this first chapter, I spend time with Celan's "Engführung" and argue that this long poem seeks to generate a mode of reading and remembering that is defined by susceptibility toward the past in the present. This argument entails three different aspects. First, it is an argument about the relation between poetic form and attention. The fragmented, broken form not only reflects the wounds of history, it also has an experiential effect on readers: Echoing the poem's own words "read no more… look no more...," the poem's form is marked by the withdrawal of imagery on the one hand and the foregrounding of what I will come to highlight as the "palpable" dimensions of language: rhythm, breath, and the shape and texture of words. This palpable form, in turn, generates a reading experience that is marked by receptivity and a moment of surrender. It asks readers to bear with the poem instead of trying to translate it into existing frameworks of knowledge and understanding. The second aspect of the broader argument of this chapter concerns the relation between the way we read this poem and the way we remember the history of the concentration camps. My claim is that by seeking to generate susceptibility in the process of reading, the poem also models a form of remembering that is similarly susceptible to the past. This link between reading and remembering is grounded in the understanding that Celan—as I discussed in the introduction—understands poetry to "bear its dates" with it. I hence read the lines "read no more… go" not only as a call for a different practice of relating to a text, but also for a different practice of remembering—of relating to the past. This brings me to the third and final aspect of my argument, which concerns the status of "Engführung" within Celan's oeuvre as well as within a broader culture of remembrance in Germany. The centrality of "Engführung" within the context of Celan's work and poetics has been pointed out repeatedly. Jean Daive, poet and friend of Celan, called it his "*ars poetica* for the end of time."[53] Often, "Engführung" is considered a counterpoint to Celan's early—and still most famous poem—"Todesfuge." "Engführung," like "Todesfuge," so the understanding, shares a commitment to testify, poetically, to the concentration camps.[54] At the same time, however, "Engführung" is perceived as a significant turning point in Celan's aesthetic, a shift away from what one of Celan's English translators, Pierre Joris, has described as the "abundance of near-surrealistic imagery and sometimes labyrinthine metaphoricity" in his early poetry toward an aesthetic that is more obscure, in which the "syntax grew tighter and more spiny [and] his trademark neologisms and telescoping of words increased."[55] This shift is often read in terms of a poetic withdrawal into "hermeticism" in the face of the "unspeakable" nature of the Nazi genocide. Against this claim of the "inaccessible" nature of Celan's later poetry—and

"Engführung" as the first instance of this inaccessible aesthetic—we can note that the poem starts out by moving us, not away but, right *into* something. Without having asked for it, we are granted access—not to "understanding," but to a "terrain" that is both textual and historical. "Engführung," like "Todesfuge," then, engages the memory of the concentration camps, but it does so without the "surreal imagery" and metaphoricity through a relation that follows the parameters of touch. This shift in Celan's aesthetic, I argue, is not to be taken as a sign of withdrawal into hermeticism or obscurity or as the failure of language in response to the genocide's unspeakable nature.[56] Rather, the peculiar aesthetic of "Engführung" is generative of a susceptibility both toward the text and the historical past whose traces can become felt in the moment of reading.[57]

Where the early reception of "Todesfuge" is defined by attempts to integrate the memory of the Shoah into existing frameworks of understanding, "Engführung" models a way of relating to the past that is not based on conclusive and cohesive understanding, not seeking mastery or success, but marked by an attitude of receptiveness and openness.[58] Becoming susceptible to the claim of the past in reading holds the potential that we might relate otherwise to the past beyond the text as well, deferring it neither to a space of unknowing—the sphere of hermeticism—nor assuming that we have understood it all and can therefore integrate it into a fixed culture of remembrance. Instead, reading, relating, tending in a way that is "susceptible" is to perceive the past as related to our present all while acknowledging its uniqueness and irretrievable character.

In what follows, I hence begin with a brief look back to the reception of "Todesfuge" and Celan's response to it. I complicate the usual understanding that Celan's decision to distance himself from his most famous poem and the subsequent change in his aesthetic were a response to the impossibility of representing the horrors of the Shoah. Instead, I read the shift in line with Celan's curious claim that poems have to be "carried" and "endured." I then turn to "Engführung": First, I show that, on a thematic level, the poem confronts us with scenes of attuning oneself to the breath of someone else, of rhythmic touch, and of fingers reaching through time, all while withdrawing imagery and foregrounding forms of tactile, instead of visual perception. I suggest that these scenes constitute a poetological consideration that projects the poem itself as a site in which the past is not represented through images or metaphors but folded into the present, akin to a form of touch. In a next step, I analyze the formal dimensions of the poem. By tracing its breath-pattern, I demonstrate how the poem brings about a peculiar attunement between reader and text and reflect on the poetological stakes of this corporeal relation and the specific kind of attention it entails. Breath, which has long been considered central to the poetics of Celan, reveals itself as the paradigmatic figure for susceptibility. It is the site of an opening toward an other, of vulnerability, but also—in this capacity—a site of potentiality. In breathing with a poem, we might give life to the past, give air to traces that have been covered over. Beyond its semantic dimension, then, drawing on the resources of poetic form, "Engführung" reconfigures the relation between the text, the historic "dates" that mark it, and the present of reading so that the question of how to be with this text—how to read it or look at it, breathe with it or possibly even walk with it—also becomes a question of how to be with its history, on and off the page. In the final move of this chapter, Walter Benjamin will help me articulate the ethical stakes of what I call—following Anne Anlin Cheng—a "hermeneutics of susceptibility," that is a "reading practice that is willing to follow, rather than suppress, the wayward life of the subject and object in dynamic interface."[59] This hermeneutics of susceptibility becomes, in Celan, the model for a practice of remembrance that follows similar ethical paradigms.

"Todesfuge," Unbearable

"Black Milk of Morning," the "Grave in the Air," "Death is a Master from Germany"—these images from Celan's "Todesfuge" came to shape public consciousness in Germany and beyond.[60] Here was a poem that represented the past through memorable metaphors and the German audience—which had mocked and derided Celan on his first public reading of "Todesfuge" during a meeting of the *Gruppe 47*—had, by the late 1950s, assigned it a near-redemptive status of the perfect Holocaust poem.[61] One early critic found in it "nine characteristic concentration camp images which, by means of their skillful artistic arrangement, let death take shape before the reader's eyes."[62] Considered to have visualized the horrors of the Nazi genocide, the poem was institutionalized, taught in classrooms, and enlisted to support the image of a new Germany after the war, for which the remembrance of the Holocaust became part of its political self-understanding, part of a program of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.[63] Celan, for his part, distanced himself from the aesthetics of "Todesfuge" and by the late 1950s refused to read it in public. The common understanding was that he did so because he "came to think that it spoke too directly of things, which could not be said."[64]

Celan's preparatory notes for *The Meridian*, however, suggest that the problem is located elsewhere. For instance, in a comment on the poem's recurring image of "black milk of morning, [*schwarze Milch der Frühe*]" Celan asserts: "Black milk of morning: that's not one of those genitive metaphors […] as they are presented to us by our so-called critics, to keep us from approaching the poem; it is no longer a figure of speech or an oxymoron, it is reality [*das ist Wirklichkeit*]." (M, 158) In another note, Celan addresses a concrete misunderstanding: "[I]n a well-intended discussion of the 'Death Fugue' the German middle school kids are told that Shulamit is a name from the Balkans etc. – Shulamit, that is a name from the Song of Songs." (M, 158) Where this last comment seems to issue a subtle but pointed critique against those critics whom Celan, in another note calls "posthumous caretakers of Jew[ish] thought inheritance [*posthume deutsche Betreuer jüd[ischen] Gedankenguts*]," (M, 172) the emphatic claim that "black milk of morning" is "reality" not "metaphor" forms part of an antimetaphoric position that runs throughout Celan's poetry. This position also finds expression in the following note: "He who does not […] help carry the poem carries over and speaks of metaphors." (*Wer das Gedicht nicht […] mit-tragen will, überträgt und spricht gern von Metaphern.*) (M, 158)[65]

Celan's mistrust toward metaphors has been the object of extensive discussion, in which positions differentiate themselves from each other depending on whether or not they see in Celan's poetry a consequential realization of his critique of metaphor or not, and what defines "metaphor" for Celan in the first place.[66] As Axel Englund suggests, Celan's conception of metaphor "is firmly at rest within the boundaries of the Aristotelian definition: he considers metaphor to be a rhetorical strategy employed in order to embellish an already existent idea by substituting a figurative expression for the original proper one, thereby concealing by ornament what really ought to be said"—a notion that is "unthinkable for German-language poetry in the wake of the Holocaust."[67] Critics from Jean Bollack to Winfried Menninghaus have wrestled with this resistance to metaphor and the possibility of a new kind of metaphoricity in Celan's work.[68] What has received close to no attention, however, is the other side of Celan's critique of metaphor, namely, the curious understanding that poems are a matter of "*mit-tragen*," "bearing with" and sometimes even "*ertragen*," "enduring, suffering." Celan writes: "As that which cannot be carried over [*das Unübertragbare*], as the not easily borne and the often unbearable

[*das Unerträgliche*]—unbearably heavy/difficult—one hates the poem." (M, 158) Metaphor's "carrying-over" offers an escape from "carrying" the poem and bearing with it. This claim that one should "bear with" a poem seems almost unbearable itself since it cannot be easily translated into existing categories of literary analysis. "*Mit-tragen*" asks not for traditional skills of interpretation but implies forms of labor, care, and commitment. The same goes for Celan's proposition that poems are "unbearable," "*unerträglich*," which introduces an affective dimension into the inventory of tools of close reading. I will return to this latter dimension in the second chapter. Here, I want to foreground that Celan's call to "carry" a poem also provides a model for being and bearing with the past that is different from Germany's culture of remembrance which integrated "Todesfuge" as exemplary poetic rendition of the horrors of the Shoah into a program of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. The poem that was said to "represent" the past in an exemplary way was also, at the same time, upheld as an example for the ultimate inaccessibility of the past, which can only appear concealed, as metaphor.[69] This inaccessible, unspeakable version of the past made it possible to perceive it as removed from the present, void of what Celan calls its "reality." With this in the background, I now want to return to "Engführung," making the case that this poem figures the relation between past and present differently, as marked by susceptibility. It instructs readers in a practice of reading that "carries" the poem, walking with it, and thereby renders the reader susceptible to the presence of the past on the way.

Blind Palpations

Early on in the history of the poem's reception, Peter Szondi developed a reading of "Engführung" that departs from a focus on its semantic dimension, highlighting instead its non-representational, a-mimetic character: "Engführung" Szondi writes, "is not mimesis, is no longer representation: it becomes reality. Poetic reality, of course, text, which no longer submits to reality, but frames and establishes itself as reality." That is why this text cannot be "read," nor can the image it describes be "looked" at, and "traditional methods of reading" are inadequate.[70] If we do bracket Szondi's words and the poem's own imperative to "look no more…" briefly and take a look at the layout of the text, "Engführung" stands out, not only because of its length, but also due the peculiar organization on the page: The sequence of stanzas on the left side of the pages is repeatedly interrupted by brief visual echoes on the right side. An asterisk marks the beginning of the poem and precedes each of the short segments on the right.[71] The typographic layout appears fragmented—due to its unusual semi-rhythmic dispersal across the page—but also highly formalized. In its shape, we might see the fingers of a hand, or an electrocardiographic image rotated by ninety degrees. If we now also bracket the poem's first imperative to "read no more…" and take up a more "conventional" form of reading, as Szondi put it, I suggest that the poem provides us with a theorization of poetry as the site of a susceptibility toward the past. In order to make my case about this poetological import of "Engführung," I want to draw attention to the moment in which the poem both speaks of not seeing, while also increasingly withdrawing any images from its language.

Following the first stanza that moves into the "terrain with the unmistakable trace" and the imperative to "read no more… go," the third stanza follows the movement of a wheel, "climbing over a dark field," a "starless night" (*Ein Rad, langsam, / rollt aus sich selber […] die Nacht / braucht keine Sterne*) before the next stanzas proceed with a series of displacements of certainty:

Der Ort, wo sie lagen, er hat	The place where they lay, it has
einen Namen—er hat	a name—it has
keinen. Sie lagen nicht dort. Etwas	none. They did not lie there. Something
lag zwischen ihnen. Sie	lay between them. They
sahn nicht hindurch.	did not see through it.
Sahn nicht, nein,	Did not see, no,
redeten von	spoke of
Worten. Keines	words. Not one
erwachte, der	awoke,
Schlaf	sleep
kam über sie.	came over them.
*	*

A place is first announced as having a name and then none. Someone is identified as lying "there" before the poem withdraws this statement again: "They did not lie there." Something came between "them," intercepting vision, before the fall of sleep reaffirms the closure of eyes. "They did not see through." Someone "spoke of words," but in reading, we do not learn what this speaking-of-words is about. Sleep weighs on the scene. Then the layout opens up again, and the poem signals toward a question that remains open:

[Kam, kam. Nirgends	[Came, came. Nowhere
[fragt es –	[asked—

At this point in the poem, vision has been suspended. The next stanza draws a strange scene of intimacy and precarious encounter into focus, in which an "I" announces itself, is "audible," and then "ticks" toward an other—a plural "you"—whose breath, then, falls in step with the speaker:

Ich bins, ich,	I am the one, I
ich lag zwischen euch, ich war	I lay between you, I was
offen, war	open, was
hörbar, ich tickte euch zu, euer Atem	audible, I ticked toward you, your breath
gehorchte, ich	obeyed, I
bin es noch immer, ihr	am still the one, and
schlaft ja	you're sleeping
*	*
[Bin es noch immer –	[Am still the one—
Jahre.	Years,

Jahre, Jahre, ein Finger	years, years, a finger
tastet hinab und hinan, tastet	gropes down and up, gropes
umher:	all around:
Nahtstellen, fühlbar, hier	sutures, palpable, here
klafft es weit auseinander, hier	it gapes wide open, here
wuchs es wieder zusammen - wer	it grew back together – who
deckte es zu?	covered it up?

As if in affirmation of the previous section that suspended vision, these stanzas confront us with a striking absence of images while shifting over into different perceptive registers: first to listening and then to touch. There is a ticking sound, the response of "breath" and then a finger that slowly feels its way downward, a tending toward an unknown other, a blind palpation of covered-over sutures, traces of a past covered over. The verb "*ticken*," which indicates the sound of a clock and with it metonymically the passing of time, does not only convey a sound, it holds another meaning too: As Szondi has pointed out, "*ticken*" in this verse "means both what it signifies today and "touching;" the word imparts both meanings simultaneously, because both at this point become one."[72] "*Ticken*" momentarily holds the sense of hearing and the sense of touch in one, before the next stanza draws the reader further into a scene in which the connection between time and touch now unfolds to convey a sense of fingers touching, reaching through "years," tracing downward toward sutures: "Here / it gapes wide open, here / it grew back together." The word "sutures" seems to indicate a body, but the consequent line "it grew back together" also suggests that this sutured scar might be a *Grasnarbe*, which translates directly as "grass-scar" returning us to the images of the grown over landscape of the concentration camps from *Nuit et Brouillard*. In a letter to Erich Einhorn, Celan explains that the poem also "evokes the devastation of the atomic bomb," adding another historical layer to the poem which is entangled with the history of the Nazi concentration camps.[73] According to Dietlind Meinecke, Celan emphasized specifically that there are "bombs ticking in this poem," that something "announces itself."[74] As the poem's speaker "ticks" and breath obeys, and fingers run over a surface for palpable traces, the "terrain" that this blind palpation attends to is thick with historical reality: Bombs ticking, the wounds of the concentration camps resisting to be covered over.

It is a strange form of attunement, encounter, and susceptibility that this scene confronts us with, an *Engführung,* a "leading into closeness" of sorts that also takes place on the level of language: "ticken" draws together the perceptive modes of listening and touching, the passage of time, and the "ticking" of the atomic bomb. There is a thickening of language in this ticking, *ein Verdichten* that intimates a closeness with the very mode of being of poetry, *Dichtung*, itself. A similar density characterizes the word "*gehorchen*": What the English translates as "obeyed" in the line "your breath obeyed" contains in the German original the term "*horchen*," "listening." The speaker is "audible," "*hörbar*," and when the breath of an addressed "you" "obeys," this response is hence a form of "listening," "*horchen*." In this peculiar encounter, we can hear echoes of Celan's statements on what poetry is: First, Celan famously stated that "Poetry: that can mean an *Atemwende*, a breath-turn." (M, 7) Second—lesser known, but equally relevant—Celan once noted: "Poetry, that is not 'word art;' it is a matter of listening and obeying." (*Dichtung ist nicht 'Wortkunst'; sie ist ein Horchen und Gehorchen*.) The above scene, which confronted us with an embodied, rhythmic "withness" mapping breath onto an intimate "listening and obeying," hence implicitly projects poetry as the site of a susceptibility toward the past.[75]

Two years after the writing of "Engführung," Celan will reflect on a form of "attentiveness" that is "mindful of all our dates" in *The Meridian*, echoing the peculiar scene from his poem:

> The attention the poem tries to pay to everything it encounters, its sharper sense of detail, outline, structure, color, but also of the "tremors" [*Zuckungen*] and "hints" [*Andeutungen*], all that is not, I believe, the achievement of an eye competing with (or emulating) ever more precise instruments, but is rather a concentration that remains mindful of all our dates [*eine aller unserer Daten eingedenk bleibende Konzentration*]. (M, 9)

What returns in this speech is an attention that is not "the achievement of an eye" but a corporeal sense for detail, not only for visual shape and structure and color but for "tremors" and "hints" ("*Zuckungen*" and "*Andeutungen*"). The critique of the "eye" that seeks to compete with ever more "precise instruments" links up with the suspension of "looking" and the turn to breath and touch in "Engführung." The sense for "tremors" suggests a form of perceptive encounter that is close to corporeal touch, attentive to the unexpected movements of a body. In characterizing the attention of the poem as "mindful of all our dates," this quote also echoes the temporal depth of "Engführung." Here, as in "Engführung," Celan alerts us to abandon the instruments and the "eye" when we tend to the past, instead rendering onself susceptible to its tremors.

From the way in which "Engführung" theorizes poetry as the site of a susceptibility toward the past, I now move to a discussion of the formal dimensions of the poem. Focusing in particular on the poem's breath rhythm, I argue that the form of "Engführung" holds the potential to render the reader susceptible in the movement of reading. In the poem—even in the single word "ticken"—the peculiar constellation of breath and rhythm and touch was deeply entwined with history—with the reality of the concentration camps and the atomic bomb. Following the breath rhythm of "Engführung" we find that the peculiar kind of susceptibility that the poem describes in the scene above also emerges out of the effect of poetic form on the reader. The poem renders readers susceptible and thereby implicates them into the history of the "terrain with the unmistakable trace."[76]

Breathing with "Engführung"

The notion of breath has long been acknowledged as central to Celan's poetics. "Poetry: that can mean an *Atemwende*, a breathturn," said Celan in his "Meridian"-speech. (M, 7) Reading through draft versions of *The Meridian*, note upon note turns on the figure of breath. "On breathroutes, it comes, the poem, it is there, pneumatic: for everyone" reads one of the notes, and, shortly after that: "Breath: The poem remains, if you allow me a little critical jargon, pneumatically touchable." (M, 108) The poem is "the trace of our breath in language," and the "aura [*Hauch*] of our mortality." (M, 115) At yet another moment, Celan writes "the poem = breath = creature." (M, 117)[77] Between the German "*Atem*," the Greek "*pneuma*," as well as the Hebrew "*ruah*" and "*neshima*," all of which form part of the poem's echo chamber, the figure of breath opens up to notions of inspiration and animation, unsettles the boundary between the spiritual and the corporeal, and reminds us of the threshold between life and death.[78] It describes a form of temporalized experience that is both momentary (the individual moment of inhalation and exhalation) and ongoing (the rhythmic interchange between both across time). In this sense,

breath is a ticking and touching of its own—and an exemplary figure of susceptibility: Breath is an opening toward an other, toward an outside that might be unknown. It is a moment of exposure and vulnerability. It contains a risk, but this susceptible relation is also the condition for sustaining life. In the context of poetry that is marked by the concrete historical reality of the concentration camps, to think about breath is also to think about the gas chambers—inscribing the historical dimension into the semantic and somatic dimension of breath.

These considerations influence the way that we can understand breath to operate semantically in Celan's poetry—as a term, trope, metaphor, or figure. But Celan himself also repeatedly emphasized the importance of attending to breath as a somatic operation. Picking up on a German idiom, his notes to the "Meridian"-speech give remarkable instructions for reading:

> "What's on the lung, put on the tongue," my mother used to say. Which has to do with breath. One should finally learn how to also read this breath, this breath unit [*diese Atemeinheit*], in the poem; in the cola [sense] is often more truthfully joined and fugued than in the rhyme; shape of the poem: that is the presence of the single, breathing one [*Gegenwart des Einzelnen, Atmenden*]. (M, 108)

In emphasizing the importance of reading the "breath units" of a poem, Celan draws on Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig's practice of Bible translation that highlighted the importance of recuperating the breath rhythm of the Hebrew original in the German version.[79] Obeying the breath is hence not only a figure for the specific relational structure of poetry but also means to read the breath rhythm, to give over one's body to the rhythm of the text, to let it come to bear upon one's breath, if only for the limited time of reading a poem. Breath, in other words, is not only a trope for a particular relationality but a somatic practice exercised in reading. With this in mind, I want to follow these instructions of Celan, focusing on the very passage that introduced breath as the relating moment between an "I" and a "You" to see how the poem itself attunes the reader to its rhythm, and what happens if the readers' breath obeys the ticking/touching of the poem.

We can begin by observing once more the fragmentariness of the poem as a whole, its layout on the page that breaks apart the stanzas, sets them to different sides of the pages. The shorter, single lines to the right of the longer stanzas give off the impression of a response or an echo. Between both "sides," the wide gaps create an occasion for breath, they allow for the reader to inhale, and pick up the reading again after a short pause. These empty spaces seem like visualizations or indeed materializations of the "breath-units," whose importance Celan emphasized. But the breath rhythm is not only produced through the pauses between words. Breath is carried and guided by individual words, as some demand aspiration, others expiration. One of the texts that Celan read around the time of preparing for the "Meridian"-speech, Gaston Bachelard's *L'Air et les Songes* (*Air and Dreams*) points us to the nuances of breathing with poetry—down to the level of the single word and syllable.[80] In the French word for soul, "*âme*," Bachelard explicates, "the broad "â" is a vowel that is pronounced with a sigh, the ending of the word providing sonority for the aspirated vowel;" with the word "*âme*" we exhale. Paying attention to the phonetic patterns in the sections of "Engführung" that follow right upon the above moment that addresses breath directly, one can detect a remarkable pattern of words that all place the accent on a short, exhaling "a" in a repetitive sequence. Consider these stanzas again:

J**a**hre.
J**a**hre, J**a**hre, ein Finger
t**a**stet hin**a**b und hin**a**n, tastet
[...]

K**a**m, k**a**m.
K**a**m ein Wort, k**a**m,
k**a**m durch die N**a**cht,
wollt leuchten, wollt leuchten.

Asche.
Asche, **A**sche.
N**a**cht.
N**a**cht-und-N**a**cht.

Voicing the poem, following the series of "a"s, breath narrows down, tightens, the poem demanding exhalation upon exhalation. A sequence like *kam, kam, kam* minimizes the option to draw in air, the plosive phoneme "k," formed further back in the oral passage than other consonants, obstructs the air where vocal chords are vibrating against each other—a pronunciation that resembles that of the glottal stop.[81] *Kam, kam. Kam ein Wort, kam, kam durch die Nacht.* This stanza that speaks of the word coming through the night, willing or wanting to shine, echoes the lines from Celan's "Meridian"-speech in which he insists that "the poem wants to head toward some other, it needs this other, it needs an opposite. It seeks it out, it bespeaks itself to it." (M, 9) The reader—voicing the poem, breathing with it—is drawn into a nearness with the rhythm of the poem, an "Engführung" of sorts. As if reflecting this internal tension between the "wish to shine" and the parallel restriction of breath, the lines following the notion of "*leuchten*," "shine, or glisten," read: "*Asche, Asche, Asche*." "Ashes, ashes, ashes." The poem is passing into darkness on a semantic level at the very moment in which the breath of the reader voicing the poem narrows down. The poem indeed has become "unbearable" at this point. In a text, which is marked by the memory of toxic, lethal air, the realization that readers run out of breath is disturbing. What kind of "withness" is this?

The fact that "Engführung" takes readers along with it, guiding their breath, is of course not unique to this one poem. Presuming that we do indeed vocalize poetry—as Celan asks us to—then any poem shapes the reader's breath rhythm through its rhythm. What is unique in "Engführung," however, is that its breath rhythm allows for an awareness of this pattern in the very moment that the poem extends an implicit theorization of poetic attention that allows us to see the connection between such a form of "withness" and history. Being "with" the poem we are also "with" its dates and the historical reality that it testifies to. Even as we do not exactly see where we are going, and into which darkness the poem is headed, and who or what speaks and breathes and touches in these lines, breathing with the poem, rendering ourselves susceptible, we practice a mode of bearing with the poem that is also a form of bearing with the past. The poetic "withness," in other words, is a model for witnessing, a way of being "*zugegen*," that is also a form *Zeugenschaft.*

Reaching through Time

The reception of "Todesfuge" presupposed a metaphorical relation between text and reality. Its images were understood to represent the world of the concentration camps—an approach that Celan rejects when he states, emphatically, in his notes that "black milk of dawn" is not a metaphor but "reality." What "Engführung" proposes through its poetic reality then, is an understanding of the past as implicated and experienced in the present of reading, not something that remains displaced through metaphor.[82] One conceives of the past not as distant, removed, accessible through an act of the mind, but as something that appears entangled with our own present. The practice of breathing with a poem might be the most concrete form of this experience. Ultimately, however, this relation between text, reader, and history does not rely on the poem being voiced. Celan's poetics posits this entwinement as constitutive of poetry as such.

When Celan uses the term "*Atemeinheit*," "*breath unit*," the most immediate reference (supported by his own notes) is Buber's use of the term in the context of his and Rosenzweig's bible translation.[83] There is, however, another term that appears in relation to "*Atemeinheit*" and that is "*Atemhof*," "breathstead" (M, 107) which in turn echoes "*Zeithof*" "timestead," a term used by Edmund Husserl to describe the 'halo' of "retentions" and "protentions" belonging to each moment in time. Celan picks up this term when he notes: "Timesteads, breathed through [*durchatmet*], breathed around [*umatmet*.]" (M, 110) In Husserl, the temporal structure of the timestead seems to lack the corporeal dimension of Celan's "*Atemhof*" but there is a moment in Husserl's *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (*Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins*)—a text, which appears in Celan's bibliographical notes to *The Meridian*—that provides a helpful example for the experience of this structure of temporal "halos."[84] In it, Husserl likens the particular temporal structure of retentions and protentions to the physical experience of music. He unfolds this argument in small steps; I therefore cite this passage at length:

> Like the violin tone (thought of as something physical), the appearance of the tone has its duration; and in this duration it changes or remains constant. I can focus my attention on one phase or another of this appearance: appearance here is the immanent tone or the immanent tonal movement, apart from its "signifying." But this is not the ultimate consciousness. This immanent tone becomes "constituted"; namely, together with the tone-now of the moment we also continuously have tone-adumbrations, and in these adumbrations the extent of tone-pasts that belong to this now presents itself. […] In the case of a melody, for example, we can bring a moment to a halt, so to speak, and find in it the memorial adumbrations of the preceding tones. Obviously the same thing also applies to each individual tone. We then have the immanent tone-now and the immanent tone-pasts in their succession. But, in addition, we are supposed to have the following continuity: perception of the now and memory of the past; and this whole continuity is itself supposed to be a now.[85]

Husserl's "*Zeithof*"—the temporal "halo" that thinks the present "now" as drawing together layers of pasts and futures, retentions and protentions of the now, into an intimate belonging—resonates with the temporal structure implied in the image of breath ticking and touching through "years, years, and years" in "Engführung." Husserl's description of the temporal "halo" is of course revealing from another angle in the context of a poem that takes its name from a musical principle, the "stretto," that overlaps different subjects in a fugue. "Engführung"—this long

poem that draws together the history of the concentration camps with the ticking of the atomic bombs in the present of reading—not only provides an image for this kind of temporality but also instructs readers in the kind of susceptibility that would allow for an experience of this temporal depth. Where Husserl uses the physical experience of music as an example to describe the structure of time as a form of temporal belonging, Celan identifies poetry as the privileged site for such a temporal experience.

Celan's reflections on the poetry of Ossip Mandelstam, dated May 9, 1959, help to further clarify the temporal dimension of this relation between reader, poem, and the past. Celan describes Mandelstam's poems in the following words:

> For Mandelstam, the poem is a place where all we can perceive and attain through language is gathered around a center which provides form and truth: around the being of an individual, challenging the hour, its own and that of the world, the heartbeat and the aeon. This is to show to what extent Mandelstam's poems […] concern us today.[86]

For Celan, the possibility of thinking time as being "with" the present depends on understanding language as the site of what König describes as an "intersubjective corporeality with spatio-temporal implications."[87] The poem concerns us today because of its peculiar relationality that implies the body. As König has emphasized in his reading of the above passage, it is through one's being and one's body [*den Herzschlag*], that the individual is connected to the aeon, to the infinite, the world—and then to us in our embodied being [*mit unserem jeweiligen Leib*]—today.[88] In his discussion of Mandelstam, Celan's language approximates that of Merleau-Ponty who, in a section of the *Phenomenology of Perception* (*Phénoménologie de la perception*), which discusses the spatiality of the body, writes:

> Insofar as I have a body and insofar as I act in the world through it, space and time are not for me a mere summation of juxtaposed points, and no more are they, for that matter, an infinity of relations synthesized by my consciousness in which my body would be implicated. I am not in space and in time, nor do I think space and time; rather, I am of space and of time; my body fits itself to them and embraces them.[89]

Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the body as reaching into time resonates with Celan in the above passage on Mandelstam as well as his reflections on poetry in *The Meridian* and the passage in "Engführung." Through the imagery of "Engführung" and these other writings, Celan comes close to Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, but where the latter two rethink the relation of the past and the present perceiving body more generally, Celan specifically highlights the poem as a site where the entwinement of different times can become palpable and perform its work upon the now. If it is through our body that we reach into the world of perception, then poetry–which, for Celan, holds a corporeal dimension–is a privileged place to experience an opening toward the past and a different form of being with it. Celan's "*Atemhof*" is a "*Zeithof*" in the sense that the reader—corporeally present to the poem—is also entwined with its history. There is, then, in Celan, an implicit theory of poetry as an interface between the past and the present that relies on its corporeal dimensions. The past is neither something to be seen, nor to be decoded. Rather, the poem is the site of a susceptibility toward the past in which we experience our enmeshment with it. To bring back Husserl's language: The "perception of the now" and the "memory of the past"

form a continuity, which is "itself supposed to be a now." In the "now" of reading, we are with the past—which thereby forms part of the continuous "now."

Through this understanding that the past is indeed part of the now, the poetics of "Engführung" line up with another moment of Resnais's *Nuit et Brouillard*. In the final minutes of the film, as the camera moves, once more, over the "terrain" and the physical remainders of the former concentration camp, the voice-over extends a warning:

> And here we are, earnestly looking at these ruins as though the old monster of the camps lay dead beneath the rubble,
> we who pretend to regain hope before this image that recedes into the distance, as if one could ever be cured of the plague of the camps,
> we who pretend to believe that it is all confined to a single epoch and a single country, and who don't think of looking around ourselves, and who don't hear that people are crying out without end.[90]

In "Engführung," something resists being covered over, sutures are still palpable as a finger reaches through years, past violence is not confined to a single epoch. Something is audible and someone listens. This restructuring of the relation between past and present, as the last section has shown, is not just a model provided through the poem's images or figures, it is also realized in the process of reading as a pneumatic susceptibility toward the past.

We find another echo to this in the second of Ingeborg Bachmann's *Frankfurt Lectures on Poetics* (*Frankfurter Poetik Vorlesungen*). Embedded in larger her considerations of poetry's responsiveness to—and responsibility for—the clamor of history in general and the past World War in particular, Ingeborg Bachmann references Nelly Sachs's poem "To you that build the new house" ["*An euch, die das neue Haus bauen*"].[91] The poem imagines those "that build the new house" setting up new walls, a new bedstead, living without "those who departed," before exclaiming "Oh, the walls and household utensils / are responsive as Aeolian harps." (*Ach, es sind die Wände und die Geräte / Wie die Windharfen empfänglich.*)[92] In these lines, Bachmann suggests, Sachs's poem reminds us "on what ground we are building, on how many graves and sites of disgrace." But, Bachmann states, "our walls and tools will be responsive like Aeolian harps."[93] As we read and walk Celan's terrain with the unmistakable trace, the poem cultivates a similar responsiveness and receptivity. Readers, reading no more, have to turn their bodies into Aeolian harps, susceptible toward the echoes and breaths of the past in our own present. "Engführung," inaccessible in some sense, grants access to a space of experience in which the past reveals itself as folded into the present. Resistant to what Szondi called "traditional methods of reading," the text proposes a different form of reading: not a quest for "aboutness" but a practice of "withness."

A Practice of Susceptibility

My earlier reading of "Engführung" covered roughly the first third of the poem. Following the lines "sutures, palpable, here / it gapes wide open […] who / covered it up?" and the turn toward "ashes and night," the poem will proceed for another 120 lines. Throughout, it continues to resist what Szondi had called "traditional methods of reading."[94] Instead of asking to be interpreted, the images and language itself seem to take shape, form and deform before the reader. In one moment, for instance, the poem moves through a long series of adjectives that create a felt sense

of material surfaces: "grainy and stringy. Stalky / dense; / grapy and radiant; kidneyish / flatish and / lumpy [*körnig und faserig, stengeling, / dicht; traubig und strahlig; nierig, / plattig und / klumpig*]." Readers do not know what these terms describe, what *is* grainy and stalky in the first place. Predicates absent any concomitant subject—lacking the about—these adjectives proliferate, build up a density to the point where language itself becomes palpable, the heap of words exposing a texture of its own. Still, we try to establish a firm grip on this dense heap, but the language resists, breaks up the grasp of understanding from the inside, challenging us to loosen our goal-oriented attention toward understanding and instead feel language pulsating, making small moves, taking shape.

The fact that the poem generates such a form of reading, however, does not mean that what Dominick LaCapra has called a text's "aboutness"—its historical referentiality—disappears.[95] On the contrary: markers of "aboutness" appear throughout. With line 136, for instance, we are turned toward the following scene: "no / flight shadow, / no / plane table, no / chimney soul rises and joins in [*kein / Flugschatten, / kein / Meßtisch, keine / Rauchseele steigt und spielt mit*,]" words that recall the following lines from Celan's "Todesfuge": "death is a master from Germany / he calls out more darkly now stroke your strings then as smoke / you will rise into air [*der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland / er ruft streicht dunkler die Geigen, dann steigt ihr als Rauch in die Luft*]." [96] In the stanza beginning "above the / bullet trap on / the ruined wall: / visible, once / again: the / grooves […] [*überm Kugelfang an / der verschütteten Mauer: / sichtbar, aufs neue: die Rillen*]," the notion "*Kugelfang*" is again familiar through Cayrol's script to *Nuit et Brouillard*, which uses the very term to describe to viewers the yard of block 11 in Auschwitz, used for executions. But even in these hints of "aboutness," the poem does not invite the hermeneutic gestures of uncovering hidden meanings, it does not seem to obscure anything. After all, the poem tells us: The trace is unmistakable, the sutures are palpable, the grooves are visible. This is both reassuring and hard to bear with, for their presence testifies to loss.

To conclude, I now want to draw the practice of reading and remembering that "Engführung" generates into relation with another thinker whose work provides language and imagery for such an alternative mode of reading and remembering—and indeed walking—and who can help us think about the ethical stakes of susceptibility once more, namely, Walter Benjamin. In his notes on the *flâneur*, Benjamin curiously distinguishes between two modes of encountering the past:[97]

> But the great reminiscences, the historical shudder—these are a trumpery which he (the *flâneur*) leaves to tourists, who think thereby to gain access to the genius loci with a military password. Our friend may well keep silent. At the approach of his footsteps, the place has roused [*ist ... rege geworden*]; speechlessly, mindlessly, its mere intimate nearness [*innige Nähe*] gives him hints and instructions. He stands before Notre Dame de Lorette, and his soles remember: here is the spot where in former times the *cheval de renfort*-the spare horse-was harnessed to the omnibus that climbed the Rue des Martyrs toward Montmartre. Often, he would have given all he knows […] about the site of a surprise attack or even of a barricade, to be able to catch the scent of a threshold or to recognize a paving stone by touch [*das Tastbewußtsein*], like any watchdog.[98]

This passage articulates two different modes of getting in touch with the past. On the one hand, there is the tourist who relates to the history of an urban site by way of "military passwords." On

the other, we find the *flâneur* whose manner of reading the city implies a different modality of knowing. The *flâneur* stands before Notre Dame de Lorette and "his soles remember." He remembers not by gaining access through "military" tools but through "*Tastbewußtsein*," recognizing "by touch," attentive to the movements of the place, which is "rege geworden," a figuration that brings to mind the way in which Celan envisioned an attentiveness toward "tremors and hints." This account of reading entailed in Benjamin's notes on the *flâneur*, a reading that relies on a recognition by touch, on the memory of "soles" formed through intimate nearness resonates with the kind of embodied attention entailed in Celan's "Engführung." In Celan's poem, readers are not granted access to the past through "military passwords." Rather, they are invited to surrender to a nearness with the text in a way that mirrors the elements of physical touch.

It might seem counterintuitive, if not outright wrong, to associate the mode of reading that "Engführung" generates with *flânerie*. After all, the latter is associated with leisure, idleness, and detachment from society and history, wheras Celan's poem moves us into a terrain that is full of history's violence. To think of *flânerie* as detached from historical realities, however, has little to do with Benjamin's version of it, which is keenly oriented toward the echoes of history. The understanding that the past is not something to be disclosed through military passwords is grounded not only in a resistance to the potential violence that military intervention would entail, but because the past was never understood as something buried and dead in the first place, but as something that ticks and touches. The "old monster of the camps," as Resnais's film had it, never lay "dead beneath the rubble" in the first place, is not "confined to a single epoch and a single country." Celan's poem foregrounds a similar understanding of time not only in its image of fingers reaching through time but also by foregrounding the dimensions of poetry that are not "*übertragbar*," "transferrable"—rhythm, the immediacy of breath, the shape of language.

The practice of susceptibility that we recognize in Benjamin's *flâneur* as well as the practice of susceptibility that Celan's "Engführung" compels, both reveal an affinity with so-called theories of "surface reading" addressed in the introduction. For these theories, as Best and Marcus suggest, the turn away from "depth models" of interpretation entails an ethical stance: to surrender attempts to master a text through conclusive understanding in favor of a practice of receptiveness.[99] Such receptiveness, I propose, is also required in practices of remembrance that remain attuned to the echoes of the past in the present. In the critical context opened up by Best and Marcus, Anne Cheng articulates what she calls a "hermeneutics of susceptibility," that is, "a reading practice that is willing to follow, rather than suppress, the wayward life of the subject and object in dynamic interface."[100] The issue for Cheng is a practice of reading—a reading of texts, bodies, and architecture alike—that might offer an alternative to the kind of symptomatic reading, which having "aimed to expose hidden ideology, has ended up producing entrenched ideologies of its own."[101] Cheng establishes this hermeneutics of susceptibility in differentiation from the hermeneutic tradition of so-called "symptomatic" reading, a form of interpretation that looks for hidden or repressed meanings beneath the surface of the text and finds its precursor in Freud's "approach to deciphering trauma" which echoes, according to Cheng, an "excavating archeology."[102] We see this interpretative movement in Freud's "Aeteology of Hysteria" from 1896, where he aligns the process of archaeological excavations with that of psychoanalysis—both of them performing a labor of unearthing the remains of the past:

> Imagine that an explorer arrives in a little-known region where his interest is aroused by an expanse of ruins, with remains of walls, fragments of columns, and tables with half-effaced and unreadable inscriptions. He may content himself with inspecting what lies exposed to view, with questioning the inhabitants—perhaps semi-barbaric people—who live in the vicinity, about what tradition tells them of the history and meaning of these archaeological remains, and with noting down what they tell him […] But he may act differently. He may have brought picks, shovels and spades with him, and he may set the inhabitants to work with these implements. Together with them he may start upon the ruins, clear away the rubbish and, beginning from the visible remains, uncover what is buried […].[103]

It is this process of excavation—shovels, spades, picks at hand—that resonates with the symptomatic readings, with what Paul Ricoeur called the "hermeneutics of suspicion."[104] This early iteration of Freud's symptomatic approach renders palpable why the symptomatic approach has, in recent critical hermeneutics, been characterized as aggressive.[105] Cheng articulates these opposing methods of reading in a context that seems removed from the poetry of Celan. But there is, in the kind of interpretation of his poetry that seeks to undo the "hermeticism" of his poems, to "bring light into the darkness" of his obscurity an echo of the reading that sets out to unearth what is hidden by the mask of ideology. There are reasons for practices of reading that labor to unearth what is hidden and covered over—in a text or in history. In fact, the fourth chapter of this dissertation itself turns to ways in which poetry unearths the sedimented violence of the past within language. But this gesture of unearthing takes on a violent character when its tools of interpretation (picks, shovels, psychoanalytic technique) move forward by interpreting a poem only to match it with a pregiven frame of reference and fixate it, once and for all. Such gestures also seem to be the object of Celan's critique of the unwillingness of his readers to bear with the poetry, to exercise a form of *mit-tragen* instead of trying to transfer— *übertragen*—a supposed meaning of the poem.

"Engführung," as this chapter has highlighted, invites a different "withness." The poem allows for an encounter with historical depth precisely by inviting a form of reading that does not "carry over." Reading Celan's "terrain with the unmistakable trace" does not take the form of Freud's digger and excavator, but rather that of someone who in walking, breathing, surrendering mastery, enters into an intimate nearness with a place and time. At stake in this reading of poetry, as this chapter highlighted, is an approach to history itself, that is, the question of how we attend to a past that might never fully disclose itself to us, which always, to some extent, remains incommensurable with language and existing frames of reference and understanding. In other words, the complete reality of the concentration camps can never be fully transmitted in language and never be fully read and looked at. The multiplicity of lives, and stories, and experiences, the fullness of loss and how things felt when the "terrain" constituted 'the present' exceeds conclusive understanding. But, as Celan's "Engführung" has shown, there still is an imperative to "walk" and move through and with this history and in doing so, sense its entwinement with the always new present of reading. Those who walk the textual and historical terrain it opens up, do not grasp and excavate but give themselves over to its rhythm. This entails a moment of surrender, a commitment of one's time, a moment of trust as we follow the breath of the poem. The poem invites this form susceptibility, this "ethical tendency" and in doing so, proposes not only a hermeneutic practice but also a practice of remembrance, in which past and present form a "dynamic interface." That said, there is no guarantee that readers will indeed

follow its call and walk, not read, and there is a larger question lingering in this call for reading otherwise that asks which reader really must bear with the past in the first place and what work it entails—a question that I return to in the coda to this study. For now, there is the insight that "Engführung," this counter piece to "Todesfuge," proposes a different way of being with and relating to the "terrain with the unmistakable trace." A proposition that entails a "hope," as Celan says at one point in *The Meridian*, a hope for a susceptibility and responsiveness to the past in the present.

2. PATIENCE

Read! Just carry on reading …

— Paul Celan, to a reader

In response to the question of a reader, how one could better understand his poetry, Celan reportedly once suggested to "just carry on reading," "*immerzu nur lesen*," and that "understanding" would eventually set in on its own.[106] What is one to do with this advice against the background of what Celan described as the "unbearable" nature of poetry? What is at stake in continuing to read when reading seems so difficult?

The term "unbearable," "*unerträglich*" conveys a sense of irritation, discomfort, frustration, contempt, or—in the strongest of terms that Celan himself used—"hate." (M, 158) If we track the "affective economies" of Celan's writing, we run into such "ugly feelings" time and again.[107] There was early on the irritation and contempt that *Gruppe 47* members expressed at Celan's reading of "Todesfuge." Later, Celan's texts would generate feelings of frustration or exasperation: Critics noted that his poems "resist any kind of interpretation [*Gedichte die sich jeder Deutung verweigern*]" or found them to be "necessarily dark [*notwendig dunkel*]."[108] As one particularly startled reader put it: Celan's poems appear to be "translations from a strange and foreign language," and it would require "a team of depth psychologists working in tandem with Germanists skilled in the art of intuition" to "bring light into these poems and interpret their symbols."[109] This sense of "difficulty" and "inaccessibility" reflects of course only one aspect of the ways in which Celan has been read and still is being read. At the same time that his poetry left readers struggling with their sense of obscurity, it was also repeatedly considered for its dialogic structure and its radical openness toward what Celan, echoing Emmanuel Levinas, calls the presence of an "Other."[110] The difficult affects that arise out of the reading of Celan's poetry and the dialogic, open nature of his writing are not to be understood in opposition to one another. As Namwali Serpell has emphasized, affect, a term that derives from the Latin "*afficere*," "to influence," is itself "a two-way street: it is passive and active, a subjection to the world and an orientation toward it."[111] The difficult affects that Celan's formal difficulty produces are in this sense not just instances of passive suffering; they also testify to the fact that readers actively

engage with the text: Struggling with the difficulty of a text is a way of being oriented toward it—tending toward it and attending to it.

This chapter examines Celan alongside Hebrew poet Dan Pagis to argue that their poetry generates patience and that it does so not in spite of its diffuclty but precisely through formal elements that make the poetry challenging to readers in the first place. The reception of the Hebrew-language poet Dan Pagis is marked by sentiments similar to those we encounter in the reception of Celan. Anne Birkenheuer, one of Pagis's German translators, describes Pagis's poetry as "almost hermetic."[112] Tamar Yacobi speaks of the "at times almost anti-realist" dimensions of Pagis's poetry and the "efforts of interpretation that Pagis's poems continue to pose."[113] According to Michael Gluzman, Pagis followed a "poetics of empty spaces and empty signifiers,"[114] and Sidra De Koven Ezrahi observes that Pagis's poetry is often read as having sprung from an "as-yet-undeciphered source of a singular semiotic code."[115] As with Celan, these remarks indicate that the poetry of Pagis is difficult not only because of its subject matter but also because of its form. Instead of trying to resolve this difficulty or interpreting the difficulty itself as a symptom of history, I argue in this chapter that the formal strategies that create the sense of "difficulty" have an ethical effect: In Celan and Pagis, semantic indeterminacy, multilingualism, and intertextuality challenge a reader to face up to what is irresolvable and potentially disquieting. Poetic form tasks readers to bear with the discomfort of not fully understanding something or finding oneself disoriented. It extends a challenge to reaproach a poem from yet another angle in the effort of trying to get a hold of it and in doing so, stretching out the time that readers engage with a poem. Formal difficulty, from this perspective, asks a reader to stay with the texts—and the history they bear with them—through all the difficult feelings that might arise.

The ethical import of formal difficulty reveals itself in two ways. The first is "relational," tied to *how* we attend to difficulty. The second is "durational" revealing itself in the temporal duration of engagement that difficulty generates. These two dimensions come together in "patience"—the ethical tendency, which I focus on in this chapter. I begin first by turning to Celan's "Meridian"-speech, developing a critical lens onto the relational dimension of "patience" through the figure of Lucile—which Celan's borrows from Georg Büchner's *Danton's Death* (1835). I read Lucile as an embodiment of patience and her character then accompanies this chapter throughout. In a next step, I proceed to Celan's late poem "Sie haben dich alle gelesen" ("They have all read you") to consider the effects of Celan's "spectrality" (a form of semantic indeterminacy) on the reader's attention. The second part of the chapter moves on to Pagis. In a reading of his long poem "Ikvot" ("Footprints") I elaborate on the effects of what I describe as "poetic multiplicity." By this, I mean the layering of a plurality of perspectives, languages, and intertexts within the space of the poem—a multiplicity, which, as I argue, creates an experience of disorientation that demands a continuous readjusting of referential frames. Where both Celan's and Pagis's poems produce a sense of difficulty through formal *excess*, Pagis's famous poem, "Katuv be-iparon ba-karon he-ḥatum" ("Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway Car") allows me to highlight how its inversion—textual silence—can similarly become generative of patience. This last poem, I suggest, condenses the durational aspect of patience—and its ethical import—in an exemplary way. I end the chapter with another brief turn to Walter Benjamin, whose theory of attentiveness allows me to reflect on the limits of patience, or rather, the question of when a patient attitude of bearing with the difficulty of texts and of history tips over into action.

Patience bears a certain overlap with susceptibility. Like susceptibility, it entails a moment of passivity. Yet instead of asking readers to surrender, give up mastery, and follow the rhythms and directions of a text, the poems I read in this chapter require a continuous re-approaching and re-committing to the text. This too entails the acknowledgement that the text cannot be fully mastered, but it foregrounds the—at times unbearable—demand of poetry to stay with it and tarry with it nonetheless.

Lucile's Patience

Before confronting the difficulty of Celan's and Pagis's poetry, then, let me introduce a figure that engages with difficult speech in a peculiar patient manner. In Büchner's *Dantons Tod* (*Danton's Death*), a drama set against the backdrop of the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror, Lucile, wife of Danton's deputy Camille who is set to be executed, famously sees Camille walk up to the scaffold and cries out: "Long live the King!"—words that guarantee her own death in this revolutionary context.[116] When Celan introduces Lucile in *The Meridian*—the speech Celan gave upon receiving the Georg-Büchner-Prize—he highlights other aspects of this character, including her peculiar form of attentiveness that allows us to consider the character of Lucile as a lens onto the structure and stakes of "patience." Celan presents Lucile as follows:

> But whenever there is talk about art, there is also always someone present [*zugegen*] who ... doesn't really listen. More exactly: someone who hears and listens and looks [*jemand, der hört und lauscht und schaut*] … and then doesn't know what the talk was all about. But who hears the speaker, who "sees him speak," who perceives language and shape [*der Sprache wahrgenommen hat und Gestalt*], and also—who could doubt this here, in writing of this order?—breath, that is, direction and destiny.
> That person is—and you have known it all along, [...]—that person is Lucile. (M, 3)

Someone who "hears and listens and looks … and then doesn't know what the talk was all about": This description of Lucile echoes the position of the reader when it comes to the poetry of Celan and Pagis. At other moments of *The Meridian* Celan will insist that the poem is "breath," and "shape" and "direction," syncing with the particular fashion in which Lucile perceives speech. The poem "speaks," even if we do not know what the talk is "all about" and it is this perceptible speech that puts a claim on us and requires a particular kind of attention and presence. Lucile, from this perspective, becomes a figure for a mode of patient presence that does not give up on the other, stays with it through meaninglessness and moments of silence and incoherency. We can learn something about being and bearing with the difficulty of poetic language in the wake of the Holocaust from her character. Ultimately, however, the attitude of patience that her character embodies in this moment in which she listens without knowing what "the talk was all about," also reveals its ethical stakes beyond the realm of poetry: Lucile offers a model for how to relate to speech—poetic or otherwise—as difficult as it may be.

Within the context of oral testimonies of the Holocaust, one case that has seen repeated critical engagements with the question of witnessing and secondary witnessing particularly highlights the stakes of such patient forms of being with the words of another person without knowing what they are "all about." In 1980, Laurel Vlock and Miriam Posner interviewed Hanna F., a concentration camp survivor, for the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies. The interview became known not only for her remarkable story, but also through a series of

critical and conflicting engagements with the way in which these interviews were conducted. The only one of her family to survive the war, Hanna F. tells the story of escaping first from a forced labor camp near Parczwe, Poland, securing false papers that declared her to be non-Jewish and then being deported to Auschwitz after betrayal by a fellow worker. She escaped, but then was deported to Auschwitz for a second time before finally escaping Auschwitz, again, this time on a transport to Germany for non-Jewish prisoners. In the interview, the framework in which she tells her own story also turns into a story of miscommunication and the challenges of secondary witnessing. The following relates both the speech of the interviewee and the interviewer—as well as, in brackets, Lawrence Langer's comments on the interaction:[117]

> Interviewer: You were able to survive because you were so plucky. When you stepped back on the line …
>
> [meanwhile, the two interviewers are whispering audibly with each other off camera about this exchange, momentarily ignoring the witness, who wants to reply]
>
> Hanna F.: No, dear, no dear, no … no, I had no … How shall I explain to you? I know that I had to survive … especially the second part, the second time, being back in Auschwitz. That time I had determined already to survive – and you know what? It wasn't luck, it was stupidity.
>
> [at this, the two interviewers laugh deprecatingly, overriding her voice with their own "explanation," as one calls out, "You had a lot of guts!"]
>
> Hanna F.: No, no, no, no, there were no guts, there was just sheer stupidity. I just, you know …
>
> [more laughter from the interviewers, one of whom now stands up between camera and witness, locking our vision, silencing her voice, ending the interview. Why?]

Langer's comments relate the interviewers' responses to Hanna F.'s testimony as impatient and ultimately derogatory. Others have weighed in and expanded the analysis of this scene. Jill Stauffer questions Langer's judgment of the "deprecating" nature of the laughter of the interviewers, suggesting that one of them might in fact "want to support Hanna's strength in pushing her way through situations that many did not survive."[118] The interviewer honors her as "plucky" but Hanna F. hears "lucky" and a misunderstanding tips over into a scene of contesting accounts, ending when the interviewers turn off the microphone. Ultimately Stauffer too agrees with Langer's critique of the framework of the interview and states: "Interviewers set up a scene for hearing and then fail to listen. An irony."[119]

In an interview with the *New York Times*, Laurel Vlock, one of Hanna F.'s interviewers states: "Everybody talks about the unspeakable, but it is speakable, and when it is spoken, it has a force that isn't found anywhere else."[120] It is an important statement that—like Vlock' filmic work with survivors—creates a space for speech, for testimony, against the extensive discourse on the "unspeakable" nature of the traumatic events.[121] But, as the interview with Hanna F. shows, it is not enough that traumatic events are speakable. Speech needs the presence of an other who listens, someone who keeps the camera running, someone who has the patience to

bear with what is difficult, someone who is *zugegen*—like Celan's Lucile. In highlighting how the formal "difficulty" of Celan and Pagis becomes generative of an attitude of patience resonant of Lucile, my aim is thus to ask how, in reading, one negotiates and practices situations of being with and bearing with difficult speech, and how this practice might extend beyond the poetic text to the way one listens and attends to a person's speech—as difficult as it may be.[122]

Difficulty in Paul Celan

In what follows, I will hone in on one moment in one poem by Celan that crystallizes the relation between poetic form, difficulty, and ethical engagement. The poem that I propose to read, "Sie haben dich alle gelesen..." ("They have all read you…") foregrounds the problem of reading already in its title. It was written around the same time as the poems in *Schneepart* (*Snowpart*), which Celan had arranged as a manuscript, but never sent out for review and which consequently remained unpublished during his lifetime.[123] Like its contemporaneous collection, the poem "Sie haben dich alle gelesen" exhibits all the typical marks of Celan's late aesthetic—the pared down metaphoricity, the neologisms, the sense of "difficulty" produced through words and sentences that seem to resist conclusive understanding. Summarizing *Schneepart*'s early reception, Bianca Rosenthal notes that with this collection of poetry "the tendency toward linguistic reduction becomes even more accentuated. Celan tried to register his impressions in as concentrated form as possible." A "disintegration of style" was accompanied by "bizarre, frightening imagery."[124] In these late poems, reading is no longer a matter of walking, moving rhythmically through a terrain thick with the resonances of history as in his earlier "Engführung." Instead, single words now withdraw from understanding and the signifying power of a single line spirals into infinity. "Sie haben dich alle gelesen" begins—these words give it away—by addressing the process of reading directly:

SIE HABEN DICH ALLE GELESEN, jetzt tinten	THEY HAVE ALL READ YOU, now they ink
sie dran,	at it,
jetzt schröpfen sie ihr	now they apply suction to their
Feme-Pardon, bei Neonruch	Vehmic pardon, at Neonruch,
und zerstäubens:	and pulverize it:
das nennen sie Welt	this they call world,
davon	of this
galgts in den Happening-Harfen,	it gallows in the Happening-harps,
Schaufenster munkeln,	shop windows rumoring
Zufälle kunkeln—	coincidences scheming—
welch ein Reim, gassatim,	what a rhyme, gassatim,
jetzt kann der Reimlose hoch	now the rhymeless can upstand
hinaufstehn	high
in sich.	in himself.
Alles und nichts	All and nothing
füllt nichts und alles,	fills nothing and all,

draussen, inmitten,	outside, in midst,
verlässt der Herr seine Leere,	the Lord abandons his emptiness,
erkenns.	know it.

"They have all read you, now they ink / at it, now they apply suction to their Vehmic pardon": In the surprisingly few references to the poem that exist in the scholarship, this opening is read as a direct reference to critics who accused Celan of plagiarism.[125] "*Alle*," "all," in "*sie haben Dich alle gelesen*" reads most immediately as a qualification of "*sie*," "they," but, depending on the emphasis placed within the reading of the line it also resonates with the colloquial expression, "*jemanden alle machen*" (literally, "to make someone all"), meaning, to beat up or even destroy someone or something. The expression carries a connotation that transposes a moment of violence onto the act of reading: They have all read you, to the point of destruction. From there, the poem continues with a series of images that carry a dark, even violent undertone. "It gallows" is followed by the verbs "to rumor" and "to scheme." The German words "*munkeln*" and "*kunkeln*" rhyme—and invoke the absent presence of another term: "*dunkeln"* (darkness, darken).[126] A saying in German runs: "*Im Dunkeln ist gut munkel*" (or, alternatively: "*Im Dunkeln ist gut kunkeln*.") One equivalent in English is "Night is the friend of lovers" and yet the German terms "*munkeln*," and "*kunkeln*," also bear a darker undertone, of rumors spread, of suspiciousness, creating the sense of a toxic, dangerous environment.

At any point, the poem is exemplary of Celan's late aesthetic, in its resistance to allowing readers to make sense of its meaning, to enable an understanding of what it speaks of, what it is "all about." This difficulty peaks right in the middle of the poem, when a single line cuts the poem in half, ending on the strange word "*gassatim*." It is not the first moment of strangeness in the poem. With "*Feme*" and "*schröpfen*," the poem had already introduced archaic terms. "*Neonruch*" too does not have a clear referent—the preposition "*bei*" indicates that it is a place but no village or site by that name exists. Instead, "*neon*" a gaseous element, in connection with "*ruch*"—a word fragment that evokes both "*Geruch*," "smell," and "*Rauch*," "smoke," brings up memories of toxic gas. The proximity of "*-ruch*" to the Hebrew "*ruach*," "spirit" or "wind" introduces further layers of significance. The different associations do not cancel out each other, but enter into a dynamic tension: "*–ruch*" tips over to the German "*Rauch*" and back to the Hebrew "*ruach*." It is a tension that does not dissolve itself; rather, the semantic structure draws readers into a mode of bearing with the tension and folds history into the present along the way.

With "*Pardon*" and "*Happening*," the French and English language join in in the poem, words that are marked as "foreign." "*Gassatim*," in contrast, seems to be a referent without clear reference, an impasse in reading. Confronted with a situation where the word does not give away any immediate sense, the reading mind turns to others that appear embedded in or at least phonetically related to "*gassatim"*: "*Gasse"* (alley) and "*Gast*" (guest) come to mind, as well as "*Gas*" (gas), which echoes with the notion of "*Rauch*," "smoke" in "*Neonruch.*" These terms evoke the memory of the death camps so that eventually, the second and third syllables of "gass*atim*" echo back as "*Atem*," "breath."[127] By now, a number of associations hover around this word. Readers osciallate between them, turn back to a previous one only to ask anew what other meaning this word might still entail. With every other turn, the history of the Nazi genocide and the gas chambers reappears again, so that each reading pulls readers into a reengagement with this memory.

Eventually, Kluge's etymological dictionary reveals that "*gassatim*" stems from the term "*grassatim*," which is student slang for roaming the streets at night with the purpose of finding a love affair.[128] The Latin "*grassari*" turned into "*grassatum gehen*," to "roam about," ("*herumschwärmen*"). Given that the *Gasse*, the alley was the locus of these nightly meanderings, it became "*gassatim gehen*." Celan had marked this word in Gottlob Regis' Rabelais translation and in Jean Paul's *Titan*.[129] The knowledge of the word's meaning now in mind, a line opens up between "*gassatim*" and the words "*kunkeln*" and "*munkeln*" of the previous stanza, without, however, congealing into a clear meaning or message of the poem as a whole. Searching for the word in the French and English context, yet other dimensions open up. "*Gassatim*," one reads for instance in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is the root for the musical term "Cassation," an 18th century instrumental composition in several short movements that is similar in style to the serenade and often performed outdoors.[130] A French musicological study sheds doubt on this, suggesting that "cassation" could also derive from the Italian "*cassazione*," denoting "ending," "separation." The musical pieces were after all played at the end of the evening, signaling a rupture.[131] From within this constellation of different signifieds and associations, impressions arise. The image of an alley joins that of the gallows, of night, of voices that rumor and scheme in the darkness; *cassazione* further produces a sense of impending separation and of endings. Even after recuperating the dictionary definition of "*gassatim*," the terms "gas" as well as "breath" still linger on in the background, forming the silent backdrop of the poem, the felt weight of an historical referent, a sense of "aboutness" that is present in all of Celan's texts.

Roaming in Darkness

As if it were itself actualizing the semantic valence "roaming the streets at night," "*gassatim*" has readers wander in darkness. The movements of reading become akin to blind palpations—echoing the aesthetics of "Engführung." Caught up in the polivalency of "*gassatim*," a two-sided reading pace takes shape. While the difficulty of this word accelerates the process of trying to understand it, it also slows the reading down. "*Gassatim*" makes us pause, go back, read it again, look in the proximity of the word for any cues to understand it. Trying to establish a firm grip around what the poem means, identifying its "aboutness," language resists, breaks up the grasp of understanding from the inside. What does it mean? What did it mean? We test a word like "*gassatim*," turn it, reaching through time, as Celan's "Engführung" had it. "Gassatim gehen" used to have a meaning. "Who covered it up?" As much as the term invites paranoid habits of interpretation and impatient searches for "keys" to understanding, the poem ultimately challenges us to loosen our goal-oriented attention toward understanding and instead feel language pulsating, making small moves.

Even if we figure out the meaning of "gassatim," if we emerge from the dictionary search "successful," referent in hand, origin clarified, we are still far from steady ground. Following these movements of reading (walking?) the term "*gassatim*" in this impatient-patient way, the words of a different poem come to mind. "Kleide die Worthöhlen aus" ("Line the wordcaves"):[132] "Kleide die Worthöhlen aus / mit Pantherhäuten, / erweitere sie, fellhin und fellher / sinnhin und sinnher […], und lausch ihrem zweiten / und jeweils zweiten und zweiten Ton." (Line the wordcaves / with panther skins, widen them, hide-to and hide-fro, / sense-hither and sense-tither, […] and listen for their second / and each time second and second / tone.) Joris has read the term "*Worthöhlen*" as "*hohle Worte*," "empty words," an expression, which

visualizes to some extent the structure of signification of the word "*gassatim*." It is a word that at first appears empty, that has us wander in darkness. We follow its sense in one direction, and then the other, listening to its second tones. This word affords an unsettling sense of unrest both through what it signifies and the structure of signification itself that becomes ever more palpable the longer one is drawn to dwell with it.

This structure of Celan's language, the peculiar manner by which it means at once too little and too much has been approached from other angles before: Joel Golb, echoing Derrida, spoke of the "spectrality" and "radical polyvalency" of Celan's poetry.[133] Anders Olssen discussed Celan's semantic "over-layering," due to which it is "not enough to link together varying and often even contradictory readings one by one; rather, it is a question of retaining at least some of them in one and the same procedure."[134] These readings help understand the signifying structure of Celan's poetry. Wondering what is at stake in Celan's strategic pluralization of meaning, a turn to Merleau-Ponty once more proves helpful, providing language for what Celan's poetry does—and what formative, ethical potential might emerge from it. In an essay titled "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," Merleau-Ponty describes a scene in which a camera films the work of Matisse in slow motion, resulting in a "prodigious impression": "That same brush that, seen with the naked eye, leaped from one act to another, was seen to meditate in a solemn, expanded time […] to try ten different possible movements."[135] This process of slow motion "enumerates the possibilities" inherent in the single stroke of a brush—a movement of opening which, so Merleau-Ponty, is not limited to painting. He writes:

> The case is no different for the truly expressive word […] The expressive word does not simply choose a sign of an already defined meaning, as one goes to look for a hammer in order to drive a nail or for a claw to pull out. It gropes around a significative intention which is not guided by any text, and which is precisely in the process of writing the text. If we want to do justice to it, we must evoke some of the other words that might have taken its place and were rejected, and we must feel the way in which they might have touched and shaken the chain of language in another manner […].[136]

Merleau-Ponty speaks to language in general here when he gives us instructions: to evoke other words, to feel the way in which words might have touched and shaken the chain of language. Celan's poetry performs a similar movement. It suspends the move to leap from one word to the next, but instead of having readers meditate on the different possible words the poet might have chosen, one word such as "*gassatim*" unfolds in slow motion the multiplicity inherent in language.

In a sense, this experience of semantic plurality pushes what semiotics articulates as the poetic function of language to the extreme, transposing reading from a process that follows the syntagmatic axis of language to one that explores and experiences the semantic paradigm.[137] Instead of following the chain of language, we dwell within the different possibilities of a single word, feeling our way through its different layers, "groping around" a significative intention. What is perceived as Celan's "difficulty"—the strangeness and foreignness of his language, its resistance to giving away any single meaning—reveals itself not as a distancing movement but rather one that asks readers to stick around. In doing so, it unsettles the habitual ways of perceiving and understanding. We cannot read inattentively, trusting that the meaning of a word will make itself known within an existing system of signification. But we also never get to a point where we master it fully. Rather, the language compels readers to continue to reengage, to

continue to "grope around a significative intention," requiring persistence and patience. The ethical claim of the poem, then, does not come by way of its propositional content, (or at least not exclusively) but by involving readers in a practice of reading and relating ethically, continuing to stick with what is difficult and unresolved on the page.

Ethics of the Impasse

Thinking about the stakes of tarrying with the difficulty of one single word, Adorno's engagement with the hermeticism of Franz Kafka comes to mind. As Adorno puts it in his "Notes on Kafka," in Kafka "each sentence says 'interpret me', and none will permit it."[138] In Kafka's writings, "the contemplative relation between text and reader is shaken to its very roots. His texts are designed not to sustain a constant distance between themselves and their victim but rather to agitate his feelings to a point where he fears the narrative will shoot towards him like a locomotive in a three-dimensional film."[139] Speaking to the hermetic character of Kafka's works directly, Adorno notes that the "hermetic principle has […] the function of a protective measure […]" which he describes as follows:[140] "Kafka's works protected themselves against the deadly aesthetic error of equating the philosophy that an author pumps into a work with its metaphysical substance. Were this so, the work of art would be stillborn; it would exhaust itself in what it says and would not unfold itself in time."[141] Kafka's difficulty is certainly different from Celan's difficulty and Adorno's account of Kafka's difficulty might be of a different order altogether. But Adorno's account of the protective, and even life-sustaining function of hermeticism also provides insight into what might be at stake in the peculiar form of attention generated by Celan's difficulty, that is, an engagement with the text that does not "exhaust" the text, does not "read it all," but follows the call to "interpret me" and sustains a patient engagement with it.

"*Gassatim*" first seems to be an impasse, an empty word that does not mean anything, that leaves readers exasperated, not knowing what the talk is "all about." There might be a feeling of frustration or even a similar defensiveness to that experienced by a reader who experiences Kafka's narratives "shoot[ing] towards him." But then "*gassatim*," this "wordcave" also involves readers, draws them into its darkness, allows them to roam among possible meanings and in doing so, it allows the poem to unfold, to stay alive—the poem and with it the past. In this precarious rhythm between a readerly distance and closeness we find the precondition for an enduring engagement with the text. Knowing what the poem "was all about," would turn it into a static, even dead object. Not engaging with it at all, or taking the position of a contemplative, distant observer, would have the same effect. Which is to say that patience is not just passive but an active process that enlivens a text—and with it the history that is inscribed in it.

To tend to a text and thereby enliven it entails an ethical dimension of its own but the ethical import of the formative potential of Celan's difficulty ultimately extends further: It models a way of being with the speech of another person—as difficult as it may be. In a reading of Henry James's *Washington Square*, Judith Butler considers the ethical implications of "difficult" language, of a figure of speech that "doesn't quite capture the referent," and a character that is not fully explained, not rendered transparent, leaving the reader "in a sense, exasperated, cursing staring."[142] The focus here is on the character Catherine, whose actions are "virtually incomprehensible" to everyone and who exasperates her suitor, Morris, by not making any sense in her decision not to marry either him or any of the others she had rejected in his name. Here is someone who—like Celan's Lucile—doesn't quite understand his counterpart, but

unlike Lucile he leaves the scene, and stops attending to what is "incomprehensible." Sometimes, in reading Celan, we might find ourselves in the position of Morris rather than that of Lucile, a feeling of frustration growing as we are confronted with words that do not immediately give themselves to understanding. Butler explains the ethical import of this difficulty: In resisting both Morris's and the readers' understanding and judgment, the character Catherine "brings us closer to a different conception of ethics, one that honors what cannot be fully known or captured about the Other."[143] In her opacity, this character has the readers "undergo what is previously unknown, when we learn something about the limits of our ways of knowing; and in this way we experience as well the anxiety and the promise of what is different, what is possible, what is waiting for us if we do not foreclose it in advance."[144] There is a similar ethics entailed in Celan's difficulty. In reading, one confronts that which is different and possibly experiences discomfort. This effect increases if we consider that the word "*gassatim*" is not supposed to be strange. It is, after all, a German word in a German-language poem. Then, however, Celan's language also brings out a different dimension of this form of dwelling with uncertainty. Where James's character asks readers to "cease judging, paradoxically, in the name of ethics," Celan's language places this demand on the readers at the same time that it continues to draw them in, asking to be interpreted, asking to be understood and engaged with.[145]

Reading his difficult language becomes a process of approaching a possible meaning only to step back again, loosening the grasp on understanding, being thrown back to the uncertainty of not knowing. Patience emerges in the precarious rhythm brought about by a reading that stalls in frustration over a "meaningless" word or a disorienting break in linguistic registers, finds itself at the edge of giving up, and then tries anew. Like the poem that, as Celan says in the "Meridian"-speech, "stands fast at the edge of itself, […] calls and brings itself, in order to be able to exist, ceaselessly back from its already-no-longer into its always-still," (M, 8) such a reading suffers the possibility of its own ending and then returns, turning toward the text once more. It is a hermeneutic back and forth movement that entails the commitment to stay with the text in all its difficulty. This mode of reading, of bearing with the text and its difficulty, also becomes an instruction for a form of witnessing that exceeds its application in literary interpretation and extends to secondary witnessing at large.

Second Tones

So far, I have engaged with the structure and effects of the "spectrality" and "polyvalency" of Celan's language. This engagement focused on semantic structure, not—as "Engführung" taught us—a poem's breath rhythm or sound. Which raises the question of what a reading of the poem and the term "*gassatim*" specifically might look like if we turn to the somatic dimensions of it, and what it might do. In Celan's poem "Kleide die Worthöhlen aus," the "empty words" are not only read "sense-hither and sense-tither," they are given "panther-skins" and then brushed both with and against the direction of growth of their fur. In these images, reading becomes a matter of touching once more, which also reminds us to read Celan's poem and the word "*gassatim*" out loud. If we do so, if we listen in on its "second tones," we find yet other echoes: The sound of "*gassatim*" does come to sound like a Hebrew word. Its ending *–im* mimics the common masculine plural form for nouns in this other language. But to identify "*gassatim*" as Hebrew is an arbitrary reading—or hearing. After all, the term does not *mean* anything in Hebrew while it does so in German, even if this meaning was covered up through time and is not readily available to today's speaker. But then it is noteworthy that the very word that follows the iteration "what a

rhyme" rhymes only with very few words in German. There are of course words that end in "-*im*," but in a majority of them the letter "i" forms part of a gliding vowel (as in the word "Reim" itself), which results in a sound that does *not* rhyme with "*gassatim*." In Hebrew, by contrast, the majority of words, be it verbs, adjectives, or nouns end on "–*im*" in their (masculine) plural form. And while "*gassatim*" does not mean anything in Hebrew, staying with this language ultimately leads us to its phonetic anagram "*ta'ei gazim*" [תאי גזים]—the Hebrew term for gas chambers. Here, once more, we are reminded that it is not just the form that is hard to bear but the content that it transports as well and that the history of "that which happened" infuses layer after layer in this poem.

What is said "with," "*mitgesagt"* in the word "*gassatim*"? For whom is this word strange, for whom familiar? Who encounters familiar sounds, and who those of a "foreign" tongue? The German "*gassatim*" is stranger than the actual "foreign" word in this poem, that is, the English "happening." "*Gassatim*" is attuned to another language, follows its rhythms as it disrupts that of the German. And yet it does not resolve itself as a foreign word either. The presence of Hebrew in Celan's poetry in particular has at times been read as a form of *shibboleth*. Lydia Kölle for instance suggested that in Celan's poetry the Hebrew language "serves as a Shibboleth, dividing the group of readers into Jews and Goyim (Non-Jews)."[146] This approach contradicts Celan's insistence on the fact that the poem seeks an other, and that every thing, every person is for the poem a shape of this other—while also relying on an arbitrary identification of all Jews with Hebrew-speakers. While the realization of the anagrammatic meaning of "gassatim" might have a revelatory quality to it, it is also not the case that the memory of "gas chambers" emerges in the poem exclusively for Hebrew speakers; "*Neonruch*" and the echo of both "*Gas*," and "*Atem*," in "*gassatim*" brought up this association all along. There is, however, a political dimension to Celan's multilingualism. He estranges the German language from within, rendering it foreign to itself. The fact that the German word tips over into Hebrew gives the multiplicity of languages in this poem an edge that reverberates throughout. The German "wordcave" has received a panther skin of Hebrew sound. "Gassatim" is both a German word and also reverberates with the sounds and meanings of Hebrew. The *a*-poria of meaning, the resistance to access the sense of the word "*gassatim*," is not resolved through knowledge of that other language, but we find a sensual porosity in its multilingual quality that challenges readers to be with the text in its otherness. Like the tension between "*Rauch*" and "*ruach*," the spectrality of "*gassatim*" does not resolve itself. But precisely in this capacity it achieves an experiential effect: it places a burden on readers that remains unresolvable.

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To read a word like "*gassatim*," feeling one's way through folds of meaning, through different languages, across the uncanny resonances and familiar-unfamiliar sounds is a difficulty to be endured. This endurance constitutes a form of being with the text that is also a form of witnessing, of being with its history and with the dates that the poem itself bears. Celan's semantic spectrality enlists readers into a practice of bearing with the past. As frequent responses to his poetry affirm, this often comes with a negative affect of frustration or impatience. Tarrying with difficulty might hold the potential to shape a form of patience in the present of reading but it also takes time and effort. Reading, as this process highlights, is a form of labor and a work of care. If this is the case, however, if bearing with the past is a kind of labor then this raises the question who has to take up this work of carrying and enduring the poem's difficulty. Looking back to Celan's "Engführung" discussed in Chapter One, we have to ask if the concentration camp survivor has to walk "the terrain with the unmistakable trace." Confronting the difficulty of

"*gassatim*," we might ask whether the ethical imperative to bear with this word and all its echoes need apply to the person persecuted under the Nazi regime, whether a survivor has to confront the echo of toxic smoke and gas, or whether the term might also mobilize at this very point its other associations—*ruach*, "spirit," or *mitsagen*, "speaking with"—and carry and support a reader. Celan's poetry, unbearable as it might be, is not coercive. In the coda, I will reflect further on the labor of reading and remembering. For now, I continue the engagement with the ways in which forms of poetic difficulty can become formative of ethical relation, turning the attention to two poetic strategies in the work of Dan Pagis. In the work of the Hebrew-language poet, textual silence and a formal multiplicity turn into the formal engines for tending to the poem and the past patiently.

Disorientation in Dan Pagis

Dan Pagis was born in 1930 in Radautz, just miles away from Celan's hometown Czernowitz, and he shares with the latter an attunement to "the liminality and polylingualism of Romanian Jewish modernism."[147] Like Celan, he grew up among and was immersed in Yiddish, German, Russian, Romanian, and Hebrew. Like Celan, he survived the deportation and internment in the forced labor camps of Transnistria, but left for Palestine in 1946. And like Celan, he became known for poetry that conveyed the horrors of the Shoah in poetic form. His poem "Katuv be-iparon ba-karon he-ḥatum" ("Written in Pencil in a Sealed Railway Car) became part of the canon of Holocaust literature—much like Celan's "Todesfuge." Unlike Celan, however, Pagis turned to Hebrew as the language of his writing. It is unclear at what point exactly he learned Hebrew. While he upheld the narrative that he did so only at the age of 17, after his migration to Palestine in 1946, his wife Ada Pagis also relates that he did have a Hebrew tutor as a child.[148] One way or another, his poetry will go on to "bring about a revolution in Hebrew verse" that aided, as Robert Alter notes, "the perfection of a natural sounding colloquial norm for Hebrew poetry."[149]

While the description of a "natural sounding colloquial" language appears to be diametrically opposed to the language of Celan, their poetry does share some central stylistic features. Both of them open up a broad intertextual echo chamber, drawing in different registers of language, biblical idioms and citations, and layers of references to other literary and extra-literary contexts. As Eshel relates, both "Celan and Pagis were exposed to the narratives and moral codes of the Torah and to the biblical books of wisdom: Ecclesiastes, Psalms, and Job. Both poets were also well versed in Goethe's and Schiller's blend of enlightened humanism and aesthetic passion, as well as in the Romantic tradition epitomized by Friedrich Schlegel's wish to wed poetry and philosophy." [150] This shared literary, religious, and philosophical canon is present in the fabric of their poems and the commitments of their poetics. And then, there is in both their writing also a centering of what Eshel calls—following Jonathan Culler—"lyric enunciation," that is, the understanding that poetry requires participants "as do a ritual or a performance."[151] Both Celan's and Pagis's poetry, Eshel suggests, "draws us into a poetic event, renders us sensitive to our historical and moral circumstances."[152] Thinking about this relational dimension of their poetry in terms of questions of witnessing, we can note that Pagis publishes *Gilgul* (*Metamorphosis*) that contains "Katuv be-iparon" as well as poems like "Edut" ("Testimony") in 1970, the year of Celan's death. While Celan's poetry is thought to perform a movement of closing itself off, withdrawing further into obscurity with every newly published volume, Pagis poetry is thought to open up, finding new ways of speech. The difference in their

aesthetic might also have to do with the respective cultural contexts they are writing in. Pagis writes his "testimonial" poems at a time when the Eichmann trial had already brought a significant change in the public perception of Holocaust testimony.[153] This shift ultimately opened up a new way of writing for Pagis, legitimizing, for the first time "documentary" and "testimonial" modes of poetry. Ultimately, however, for both Pagis and Celan, these categories—hermetic, testimonial, accessible, obscure—do not map onto the poets' own words: Celan insisted that his poetry is "not at all hermetic" and Pagis resisted labeling his own as "testimonial literature." And so, as with Celan's late poetry, it helps to bracket the familiar identifications of what Pagis's poetry is and understand its relational dimensions from the perspective of its formal elements and the effects they have.

The poem I focus on is Pagis's "Ikvot" ("Footprints"), which the poet himself as Hannan Hever suggests might have considered to be his most important poem on the Shoah.[154] Where Celan's "*gassatim*" foregrounded the formative effects of an individual word's "spectrality," "Ikvot" allows us to see the effects of what I call "poetic multiplicity": The poem layers a plurality of perspectives, languages, and intertexts, challenging repeated changes in perspective, and in doing so creates an experience of displacement and disorientation.[155] Unlike Celan's late poems, Pagis's "Ikvot" does follow a narrative line—albeit an unstable and not immediately coherent one. But like Celan's, it confronts the readers with difficulties of interpretation and sense making. "Ikvot," so Hever is "complicated, fragmented," and "very hard to understand."[156] As with Celan's late poetry, then, the "difficulty" of this poem stems not only from its subject matter but also from its very form. In what follows, I trace the trajectory of the long poem, highlighting, at different points, formal elements that challenge a patient, enduring attitude from the reader. By paying attention to the effects of the formal elements in Pagis's poem we come to see them not as obstacles to a hermeneutic enterprise but rather as generative of an ethical relation between text and reader, extending a claim for a patient attentiveness that bears witness to the losses of the past.

Errant Footsteps

"Ikvot,"—which will extend over several pages—begins with an epigraph from the *Piyyut* (liturgical poetry):[157]

"מִשָּׁמַיִם לִשְׁמֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם מִשְׁמֵי שָׁמַיִם לַעֲרָפֶל" יַנַּיי	"From heaven to the heaven of heavens from the heaven of heavens to the fog" —Yannai

Following the epigraph, the poem's trajectory unfolds as the monologue of a disembodied speaker moving between earth and heaven. The words "From heaven to the heaven of heavens / from the heaven of heavens to the fog," will recur throughout, establishing a haunting rhythm of return while the poem as a whole affords a highly disorienting experience of reading. I quote the next stanzas at length to allow for a sense of the rhythms of displacement that structure the poem throughout:

עַל כָּרְחִי	Against my will
הָיָה לִי הֶמְשֵׁךְ בֵּעָנָן הַזֶּה: בָּהוּל, אָפֹר, מְנַסֶּה לִשְׁכֹּחַ בְּאֹפֶק, הָאֹפֶק נָסוֹג	I was continued by this cloud: restless, gray, trying to forget in the horizon, which always receded]

נְקִשַׁת הַשִּׁנַּיִם שֶׁל	Hail falling hard,
הַבָּרָד הַנְּקִשָּׁה:	like the chatter of teeth:
גַּרְגִּירִים פְּלִיטִם נִדְחָקוּ בִּזְרִזוּת	refugee pellets pushing eagerly
אֶל תּוֹךְ אָבְדָנָם	into their own destruction
בְּגִזְרָה אַחֶרֶת	In another sector
עֲנָנִים שֶׁטֶרֶם זֻהוּ.	clouds not yet identified.
זַרְקוֹרִים שֶׁהִצִּיבוּ	Searchlights that set up
צְלָבִים גְּדוֹלִים שֶׁל אוֹר לַקָּרְבָּן.	giant crosses of light for the victim.
פְּרִיקַת קְרוֹנוֹת.	Unloading of cattle-cars.
אַחֲרֵי כֵּן פּוֹרְחוֹת הָאוֹתִיּוֹת,	Afterwards the letters fly up,
אַחֲרֵי הָאוֹתִיּוֹת הַפּוֹרְחוֹת מָמַהֵר	after the flying letters mud
הַבֹּץ, מְכַסֶּה, מְכַסֶּה זְמַן מָה	hurries, snuffs, covers for a time
אֱמֶת, הָיִיתִי טָעוּת, נִשְׁכַּחְתִּי	It's true, I was a mistake, I was forgotten
בַּקָּרוֹן הֶחָתוּם, גּוּפִי	in the sealed car, my body tied up
בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים. צָרוּר.	in the sack of life
הִנֵּהַכִּיס שֶׁגִּלִּיתִי בּוֹ לֶחֶם	Here's the pocket where I found bread,
פֵּרוּרִם מְתוּקִם, כּוּלָּם מֵאוֹתוֹ הָעוֹלָם	sweet crumbs, all from the same world
אוּלַי יֵשׁ כָּאן אֶשְׁנָב, אִם לֹא קָשֶׁה לְךָ,	Maybe there's a window here—if you don't
חַפֵּשׂ בְּצַד הַגּוּף הַהוּא, אוּלַי אֶפְשָׁר	mind,]
קְצָת לְפָתְחַ.	look near that body, maybe you can open up
זֶה מַזְכִּיר לִי,	a bit. That reminds me
סְלִיחָה, אֶת הָבְּדִיחָה עַל	(pardon me) of the joke about the two Jews in
שְׁנֵי הַיְּהוּדִים בָּרַכֶּבֶת, הֵם נָסְעוּ לְ	the train, they were traveling to
אֱמֹר עוֹד מַשֶּׁהוּ, דַּבֵּר.	say something more; talk.
הַאִם אוּכַל לַעֲבֹר מִגּוּפִי וָהָלְאָה – –	Can I pass from my body onwards—
[…]	[…]

In these first stanzas, the poem does not confront us with the difficulty of Celan's language. No individual word poses an immediate impasse to understanding. If anything, the poem resembles Celan's "Engführung"—an expansive text spanning several pages, proceeding through a landscape marked by loss—but where "Engführung" withdrew images, in "Ikvot" surreal visions and images from the concentrationary universe flash up at every other step: Searchlights, cattle-cars, mud. Reflecting on the identity of the speaker that guides the poem throughout, Hever, has proposed to see in him the figure of Walter Benjamin's "angel of history," who, with his back to the future, sees the rubble of past destruction piling up in front of him.[158] Tamar Yacobi, on the other hand, subverts this proposal with her interpretation by suggesting that the speaker's "weightless hovering looks like the movement of the smoke rising from a crematorium in a Nazi

concentration camp."[159] It is hard to get a grasp on who speaks. The structuring element, then, is disorientation itself, which takes place on several levels.

First, we can note that the poem tracks a zigzag movement, moving between high and low, proximity and distance. After the first stanza sees the speaker "continued by a cloud," toward a "receding horizon," the second disrupts this outward movement abruptly: As if the cloud had changed its state of matter, from gaseous water to solid ice, hail returns to the earth, "refugee pellets pushing eagerly / into their own destruction." Following the threat of searchlights, stanza three closes in—violently—on the "victim," before the fourth stanza breaks out of the horizontal again, into a line of flight, "letters fly up," only to return, shortly after, to the claustrophobic vision of the speaker "forgotten / in the sealed car, my body tied up / in the sack of life." The errant trajectory of the poem continues; from the image of a tied-up body, "forgotten / in the sealed car [*nishkaḥti ba-karon he-ḥatum*]" the poem moves closer in, toward the pocket "where I found bread," and then outward again: The next stanza that focalizes the perspective from within the sealed railway car has the speaker searching, politely, for an opening, "[m]aybe there's a window here—if you don't mind." The poem moves abruptly between proximity and distance, horizontal and vertical, concentration and dispersion. Throughout these first stanzas, the errant trajectory of the poem is intensified through a multiplication of intertexts so that readers are not only asked to constantly switch perspective, but also find themselves thrown from one intertextual plane to another.

This process begins already with the epigraph. The lines from Yannai draw the tradition of liturgical prayer into the poem. At the same time, the specific verse that becomes a "pseudorefrain" throughout the poem is "taken from a *kerovah*, (*piyyut*) Yanai wrote to introduce the biblical story of the Tower Of Babel."[160] The textual horizon recedes and opens up as one intertext gives way to another. This intertextual multiplicity is not limited to the epigraph. When the poem moves to the "sealed car [*karon he-ḥatum*]" it pulls Pagis's own poem, "Katuv be-iparon ba-karon he-ḥatum" ("Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway Car") into the immediate proximity of "Ikvot," all while opening up to others: The lines "Here's the pocket where I found bread, / sweet crumbs," introduce an image that—in the context of this disorienting poem—recalls Grimm's fairytale of Hansel and Gretel, who, cast out into the dark forest, try to find their way back home by leaving crumbs of bread on the ground. In this German fairytale, the breadcrumbs are eaten up by birds and no longer fulfill their task of providing orientation for the children. Shortly after, the brief intertextual grounding is uprooted once more as the lines "the joke about the two Jews / in the train, they were traveling to" points to the tradition of Yiddish railway stories.[161] Throughout, the literary archive that the poem opens up appears entwined with the history of displacement and deportations all while unsettling the ground upon which readers tread. In Celan, we saw how the single term "*gassatim*" frayed toward different meanings and associations. Here, the conglomeration of biblical text, liturgy, German fairytales, Yiddish modernism, and the intratextual archive of Pagis's own poetry creates an intertextual fault zone. As readers move through this poetic space, they have to actively orient and reorient themselves amidst the intertextual multiplicity all while negotiating the difference that unfolds between individual texts and text traditions. Enfolded into this experiential space is the history of the Nazi genocide so that bearing with its demands on the readers' attention also becomes a way of bearing with history.

Language Threads

The disorienting effect of Pagis's poetic multiplicity is also sustained on other levels of the poem, including through a plurality of languages—and the destabilizing slippages between them. Following the stanzas quoted above, the poem continues its errant path. Lines like "maybe / the double citizenship will help, / the old passport," "here too of course / they take bribes," "the rain stole across some border, so did I, / on forbidden escape-routes" sketch out a trajectory of escape. Eventually, we reach another moment in which the speaker actively searches for orientation not only within space but also among languages:

[…]	[…]
אוּלַי עַכְשָׁו אֲנִי	Maybe now I'm
מְחַפֵּשׂ בַּגֶּשֶׁם הַהוּא אֶת חוּט הַשָּׁנִי	looking in that rain for the scarlet thread.
אֵיפֹה לְהַתְחִיל?	Where to begin?
אֲפִלּוּ אֵינֶנִּי יוֹדֵעַ לִשְׁאֹל.	I don't even know how to ask.
בְּפִי נִבְלְלוּ לְשׁוֹנוֹת רַבּוֹת מִדַּי.	Too many tongues are mixed in my mouth.
[…]	[…]

The notion of the "scarlet thread [*ḥut ha-shani*]" as a sign of orientation and recognition already appears in the Book of Joshua 2:18, when Rahab made herself known to two spies who promised her protection in the Israelites' advance on Jericho by tying a rope of scarlet thread in the window. At the same time, "*ḥut ha-shani*" also echoes the German "*roter Faden*" (red thread)—an expression that signifies a trace or guiding principle. First to use the expression in a figurative sense in the German was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in *Die Wahlverwandschaften*, *The Elective Affinities,* (1809) where a thread of affinities and attachments runs through the journal of character Ottilie, connecting all its fragmentary elements into a whole. In Pagis's poem, the speaker's search for the "red thread" in the rain weaves together three figures of speech: the metaphoric "threads of rain," "*ḥutim shel geshem*," become the threads among which the speaker searches the single scarlet thread that would provide orientation and safety while also opening up to a metapoetic reflection on the search for a unifying principle of the poem and the sense of textual cohesion.

Adding yet another moment of disorientation to the experience of reading, the transposition of the thread of rain with the figurative "red thread," brings about a moment of eerie hesitation. What does a red thread of rain look like? What rains down onto the earth? Just one stanza earlier, there was talk of blood—"But the kerosene disappears with the blood, the flame flickers—." As we are still looking for the red thread that guides us through the difficulty of Pagis's textual and historical landscape, a thin thread of blood moves into view. On yet another level, the constellation of the two expressions—"red thread" and "threads of rain"—also performs precisely the confusion of languages addressed in the next stanza—"too many tongues/languages in my mouth." Just as Goethe's "roter Faden" is somewhere in the back of the expression "*ḥut shani*," "*ḥutim shel geshem"* recall the German expression "*es regnet Bindfäden*," literally "it is raining twine," an expression, which carries the meaning of "it is raining cats and dogs." Unlike the "red thread," "*ḥut shani*," which functions as an expression both in the German and the Hebrew, the threads of rain constitute only a calque of the German.[162] Languages become entwined here, "stealing across borders." In the final line, "too

many tongues mixed in my mouth," "*be-fi nivlelu leshonot rabot midai*" the Hebrew "*nivlelu*," "mixed," through its root "ב־ל־ב־ל" (b-l-b-l) alludes to the story of the tower of Babel, mapping the confusion of tongues and the story of conflict onto this scene while also gesturing back to Yannai's epigraph that formed part of a commentary to the story of the tower of Babel.[163]

The slippage and confusion between different languages reads as a symptom of the historical experience of displacement. Experiencing it in the process of reading—being asked to sustain the linguistic crossings and entanglements—also has a readerly effect: Readers are asked to hold the plurality of language, a fullness that is pervasively interlaced with historical wounds.

Perspective

Eventually, the ongoing theme of disorientation and displacement culminates in the final stanza with the following image:

[…]	[…]
וְלִפְנֵי שֶׁאַגִּיעַ	And before I arrive
(עַכְשָׁו לְהוֹשִׁיט עַד הַסוף, לְהוֹשִׁיט)	(now to stretch out to the end, to stretch out)
כְּבָר עֵר, נִפְרָשׂ עַד קְצוֹת כְּנָפַי,	already awake, spread to the tips of my wings,
עַל כָּרְחִי מְנַחֵשׁ שֶׁקָּרוֹב מְאֹד,	against my will I feel that, very near,
בִּפְנִים, שָׁבוּי בְּתִקְווֹת, מְהַבְהֵב לוֹ	inside, imprisoned by hopes, there flickers
כְּדוּר הָאָרֶץ הַזֶּה,	this ball of the earth,
וּתְמֻצָּלָק, מְכֻסֶּה עֲקֵב.	scarred, covered with footprints.

The excessive scope of the ball of earth covered with footprints turns the idea of following someone's steps grotesquely surreal and makes the attempt to find one's sense of direction a futile endeavor. The footprints no longer provide the grounds upon which one might orient oneself. From the image of the retreating horizon in the first stanza to the final image of the ball of earth covered in footprints, the long poem repeatedly switches perspectives, moving through moments in which the dimensions are radically changed. Throughout, this switching of dimensions, abruptly moving from small details and enclosed places to the vastness of the heavens or to a bird's-eye view of the "ball of earth," creates the destabilizing effect of a camera zooming in and out, forcing the eye to re-adjust again and again. The perspectival tension maintains itself up to the final stanza. The speaker's wish "to stretch out to the end, to stretch out"—like the verse from the *piyyut*—sketches out an expansive reach toward unknown distances. But then the focus abruptly shifts, turns inward, "very near," "imprisoned," reverting back to a claustrophobic scene, only to rapidly zoom out again toward the bird's-eye view of the earth that 'flickers / this ball of the earth / scarred, covered with footprints." We are spatially removed from the earth yet the visibility of footprints defies this sense of location. Able to see the whole globe but also the small-scale traces, the poem condenses proximity and distance, bird's-eye-view and the close up of footprints, seen as if through a magnifying glass.[164]

This feeling of temporal and spatial disorientation is not unique to this poem. As Robert Alter suggests, "[d]isplacement would remain a governing concept in Pagis's poetry, from the repeated and often flaunted effects of defamiliarization in his imagery, to his eerie refractions of

the cataclysm that swept away European Jewry, to the global perspectives of his remarkable "evolutionary" and science-fiction poems, where time is accelerated, distorted, even reversed, and earthly existence is seen characteristically from an immense telescopic distance."[165] And Alter notes further: "In the poems that deal directly with genocide, [the] use of distanced and multiple voices is linked with an impulse to pull apart the basic categories of existence and reassemble them in strange configurations that expose the full depth of the outrage perpetrated."[166] We can see this displacement and pulling apart in "Ikvot" as perspectives and linguistic registers shift frequently and any certainty we have over who is speaking where and when is undone with every new stanza. In the poem, a plurality of languages and intertextual voices extend this sense of disorientation: These formal strategies not only make visible the perpetrated outrage but also draw the reader into an experience of displacement along the way.

Enduring tension

What is at stake in this disorientation? What ethical affordances does it entail? Writing on disorientation from a phenomenological perspective, Sara Ahmed notes the following on the effects of switching dimension:

> [M]oments when you "switch" dimensions can be deeply disorientating. One moment does not follow another, as a sequence of spatial givens that unfolds as moments of time. They are moments in which you lose one perspective, but the "loss" itself is not empty or waiting; it is an object, thick with presence. […] You experience the moment as loss, as the making present of something that is now absent (the presence of an absence.)[167]

Ahmed's account provides a language to describe the effect of the repeated switching of dimensions in Pagis's poem: "Ikvot" is disorientating. But even more so, the phenomenological perspective on the effects of this disorientation allows us to see an additional way in which loss inscribes itself in the poem. The poem invokes loss through images that index the loss of human lives in the concentration camps—the "long convoys of smoke," the "shoes" that "have been piled up below: / a great gaping heap," or the "Searchlights that set up / giant crosses of light / for the victim." But loss also finds a poetic correlative in unfinished sentences, as for instance at the end of the sixth stanza, when apparently colloquial, conversational lines end abruptly, leaving the sentence hanging in mid-air: "that reminds me / (pardon me) of the joke about the two Jews / in the train, they were traveling to—" The line and the ellipsis that follows constitute a poetic realization of the abrupt end that marked so many life journeys, as well as the near-extinction of the literature and speech community that this stanza references. Following Ahmed's reflections on the effect of disorientation, we come to see that loss also marks the phenomenology of reading the text. As the text zooms in and out, from the heavens to the claustrophobic spaces of the concentrationary universe back to a bird's-eye view of the ball of earth, switching between different intertexts and the textual traditions that they stem from, the disorienting effect of the poem is not restricted to the switching of dimensions by way of images that relate mimetically to space. It is also realized through a language that moves between different linguistic registers and national codes, across a rich network of references and allusions that open up to a vast intertextual echo chamber. A tradition of Yiddish storytelling stands next to German fairytales, lines from the *piyyut* weave into intratextual allusions to Pagis's own poems, all of which set the poem in motion and challenge readers to readjust their referential frame again and again. To

switch dimensions is disorienting and requires patience. To find one's sense of place, time, and direction again after a reshuffling of the perceptual field takes time and effort. Readjusting to a new perspective, to a new linguistic register requires flexibility, an openness to begin anew, to try to find one's way once more, from a new place. The disorienting, difficult nature of the poem not only indicates the violent crisis of history; it also makes it felt. And yet, perhaps the most disorienting feeling is that, even if loss becomes felt, whatever one does feel is only an aftereffect, a trace in sense perception carried over to the present of reading.

Bearing with Silence

From the semantic excess of Celan's poem and the multiplicity of Pagis's "Ikvot," I now turn to a final (short) poem of Pagis that allows us to see how textual silence, which is so often considered a *symptom* of historical trauma, inverts the signifying structure of excess and thereby sustains the capacity to have a similarly formative effect on the attention of a reader. Pagis's poem "Katuv be-iparon ba-karon he-ḥatum," "Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway-Car" might be his most famous poem—and one of the most famous Hebrew language poems to engage the memory of the Holocaust.[168] Much has been written on the short poem. I bring it in here because it crystallizes the relation between patience as a mode of being with a text and as a form of being with the past.

כתוב בעיפרון בקרון החתום	Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway-Car
כָּאן בַּמִּשְׁלוֹחַ הַזֶּה	here in this carload
אֲנִי חַוָּה	i am eve
עִם הֶבֶל בְּנִי	with abel my son
אִם תִּרְאוּ אֶת בְּנִי הַגָּדוֹל	if you see my other son
קַיִן בֶּן אָדָם	cain son of man
תַּגִּידוּ לוֹ שֶׁאֲנִי	tell him that I

Within the minimal space of this poem, the biblical story of Cain and Abel is mapped upon the history of deportation to and mass murder of European Jews in the Nazi death camps, constellating the first human murder with the crisis of humanity to come. We hear the voice of the mother, Eve, who is at once the biblical, mythic mother as well as the individual voice of a mother in a specific place and time in history—"here in this carload." With the last line, her voice breaks off and the poem opens up into silence. Her message, her story, is lost like that of millions who perished and were not able to testify to their own histories. If we were to invite Celan's Lucile to the scene, she would not find herself in front of words that appear to mean nothing, not knowing "what the talk was all about," but rather be confronted with the absence of speech altogether. How, then, to be with this interrupted speech, with this silence? How to bear with it?

"Katuv be-iparon" draws into focus the role silence repeatedly plays in the interpretation of literature in general and poetry in particular that engages with the memory of the Shoah. Textual silence—in form of gaps, ellisions, fragmentation—is in this context often read as a symptom of the crisis of language that saw reality become incommensurable with words, and of poetry, which, after "that which happened" could only relate by not relating. In such a symptomatic approach, the formal element of silence will be resolved into the greater sense

structure of the crisis of language after the Holocaust. Other readings, however, assume that the silence is not really silence, and that if we only listen in on its "second tones," as Celan's poem put it, we might be able to hear and understand more. Fellow Hebrew poet Tuvia Rübner, translator and long-time friend of Pagis, for instance, hears in the title's words "*karon he-ḥatum*" an echo of "*sefer he-ḥatum*," the "sealed book" in Isaiah 29, 11.[169] The relevant passage reads as follows: "And the vision of all this is become unto you as the words of a writing that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying: 'Read this, I pray thee'; and he saith: 'I cannot, for it is sealed'." The impossibility of reading that the poem will eventually produce through its own form is hence foreshadowed through the biblical intertext. Michael Gluzman, speaking at the Berkeley Taubman Lectures in 2016, revealed another powerful intertextual element of the poem. "*Katuv be-iparon*," suggests Gluzman, is a "coded and encrypted response to one of Bialik's poems 'I sowed to the wind my sigh,'" that begins as follows:[170]

זָרִיתִי לָרוּחַ אַנְחָתִי	I sowed to the wind my sigh
וַיִּרְוֶה הַחוֹל דִּמְעַת עֵינִי	and the sand drank my tear;
אָחִי הָרוּחַ! אִם תִּמְצָא אֶת-	Wind! If you find my brother
מָרְאֵ-לוֹ–אוּד עָשֵׁן הִנֵּנִי .	tell him—I'm a smoking ember.

We recognize in the third and fourth line of this stanza the words of the mother in Pagis's poem: The words "if you see my other son" echoe Bialik's "if you find my brother." But unlike the imperative that the mother in "Katuv be-iparon" issues, Bialik's poem gives us the content of the message: "I'm a smoking ember," "*ud ashen hineni.*" Anachronistic for Bialik, the image of a smoking ember holds significance within the context of Holocaust testimony: "smoking ember," as Gluzman emphasizes, is a term used to describe survivors of the Shoah. This image—a metaphor for Bialik—is, again according to Gluzman, a "chillingly concrete" reality for Pagis. The image's absent-presence in Pagis's poem draws the discourse on survivor testimony into the immediate context of the poem.

What Gluzman calls a "frozen testimony," however, is not just a breaking off into silence. Looking at the interrupted speech of the mother from yet another perspective, we can see that the poem, through its form, turns the silence into a perpetual call to pass on the testimony—even as its message is unknown. As Eshel notes: "[T]he Hebrew original allows the last line of the poem to connect back to the first (*tagidu lo she-ani; kan* …)." The Hebrew language does not use the verb "to be" in the same way as the English language does. The pronoun "*ani*" in the final line already implies the "I *am*," an aspect, which throws the reader from the final word back to the beginning in a circle: "Tell him that I [am] / here in this carload …" We can see in this element of form a mimetic strategy to mirror the movement of the railway. Throwing the reader back to the beginning again and again also conveys the claustrophobic situation of no escape, echoing that of the speaker trapped in a sealed railway car. Yet beyond this mimetic dimension, the formal elements hold implications for the way in which readers are involved in the testimonial process itself. For Eshel, the circular structure of the text "stresses the temporal unity of the events described and the reading process. Through this syntactical feature, the textual realm of this poem both presents the rupture—the broken sentence at the end, the silence engulfing Eve's message, […] and the fact that all readers can and should regard themselves as involved addressees."[171] Following this perspective, we can see the movement of the poem as an example of the effect of silence that is not a retreat from that which is unsaid or unsayable, but a call to an enduring attention. Where Celan's Lucile stands in front of the difficulty of not

understanding the speech of another, reader's stand in front of this broken off sentence, unable to receive the message and yet, supported by the circular form of the poem, they are drawn into an enduring form of bearing with it. "To look at something that's "empty" is still to be looking, still to be seeing something—if only the ghosts of one's own expectations," so Susan Sontag in a discussion of the "aesthetics of silence," and this holds true for poetic silences as well.[172]

Silence and absence can sustain a readerly engagement in a way similar to the excess of Celan's polyvalent words. Still looking, still seeing, still listening—even, or especially, in moments where the reading eye and the listening ear are confronted with absence and silence—this mode of enduring attention holds ethical stakes in that it sustains the commitment to dealing with that which withdraws from understanding. Pagis's silence thereby inverts the excess of meaning of Celan's "*gassatim*." By saying either too little or too much, the poems' formal elements ultimately both have a similar effect: They draw their readers into an ongoing practice of tarrying with difficulty all while folding the historical echoes into the now of reading. As the circular structure of Pagis's returns readers again and again to the poem's beginning, they are also challenged to confront what caused the interruption—of the mother's writing, of their journey and their lives.

Patient Action

In "Katuv be-iparon" silence generates a perpetual claim for attention and the difficulty of "Ikvot" affords a readerly experience by which loss becomes felt. As in Celan, the effects of these poems' difficult formal elements add up to more than simply mirroring historic violence. Difficulty is also the engine for readerly engagement. The patience demanded in all these poems thereby reveals a two-sided structure: the passivity of bearing with textual difficulty is accompanied by an active, persistent mode of (re)commitment to the text and the historical reality that it negotiates. In this final section, I want to reflect on the limits of patience by turning, once more, to the writing of Walter Benjamin. In his theoretical engagement with the problem of attentiveness, Benjamin highlights the peculiar passive-active character of attention, which marks the structure of patience, as a precondition for recognizing imminent danger—and potentially intervening to prevent it.

The concept of attentiveness shifts throughout Benjamin's work. Somehow counter-intuitively, it can entail distraction and habit, it appears as a matter of the mental faculties as much as of the body. Some of his writings negotiate this problem in a theological context, others foreground attentiveness's capacity to serve as a mode of response to historical crises. What persists in the different iterations of attention in Benjamin, however, is what Vivian Liska has termed its "dialectic:" For Benjamin, to be attentive means to negotiate a position that refutes both a "tacitly rapt, contemplative devotion to the world (*Welthingabe*) and a voluntaristic, focused mastery of its appearances (*Weltzugriff*) but retains moments of both of these modes through what he terms a "physical presence of spirit," (*leibhaftige Geistesgegenwart*).[173] Benjamin formulates this understanding of attentiveness in several texts. Among them is his essay on Goethe's *Wahlverwandschaften, Elective Affinities.* In the novel, which centers on a double "spiritual adultery" among four protagonists, the fate of the characters turns upon their ability to be attentive to signs in the room in a way that allows the characters not only to read signs but also to act upon them by cultivating a presence of mind that is neither too distanced nor too involved, neither exclusively a form of "silent contemplation" nor "interpretative fury," but develops instead a susceptibility toward the unknown.[174]

These two tendencies of relating to the world—of reading it—resonate with the common interpretative approaches to Celan's difficulty: Submission to the irresolvable obscurity of his late poetry on the one hand and the "interpretative fury" that tries to bring light into a poem's darkness on the other. Pagis for his part might not have engaged with Benjamin's theory of attentiveness directly, but it is noteworthy that this major scholar of medieval Hebrew literature formulated a critique of interpretative approaches with regards to the medieval Hebrew poetry in Spain that resembles Benjamin's skepticism toward both disengaged contemplation and textual mastery. Speaking to two different ways of engaging with the tradition's specific systems of *shibbuts* (literally insertion or the placement of a gemstone) and *remizah* (allusion), Pagis identifies two extremes. On the one end is a critic

> who sometimes claims to have fulfilled his exegetical task by supplying marginal notes [to identify] each and every [biblical] verse. At the other extreme is the exegete who is close to a homilist [*parshan she-hu karov le-darshan*]. He believes that almost every biblical fixed expression has to drag in with it into the world of the poem connotations of an entire [biblical] verse or even of an entire chapter.[175]

The forms of interpretation are specific to the literary tradition of medieval Spain and its formal traits but, as Chana Kronfeld notes: "If these habits of misreading sound disturbingly like some source criticism of modern literature, it is only because they are."[176] Pagis and Benjamin critiques echo with one another in their implicit understanding that to engage with a text in all its depth requires a balance between a distance that leaves the text altogether untouched on the one hand, and an excessive, overbearing reach on the other.[177] Celan's and Pagis's poetry demands a similar kind of engagement and this demand does not come to a reader as an external imperative. Rather, it emerges from the textual difficulty, engendered by the form of poetry. Poetic difficulty that generates an impasse of understanding constitutes the formal ground for the formation of this demand—and the readerly patience that might emerge in response. What I contend with regard to the poetry of Celan and Pagis, then, is that the writing itself—in its difficulty—might cultivate such a presence of mind that falls neither into the category of "interpretative fury" nor distant contemplation. This raises the question of whether it also holds a similar potential for an intervention in the present—"ready to act in a moment of danger"—as Benjamin envisions it in his analysis of Goethe's characters.

At this point, we can look back to Celan's Lucile once more. I framed her character here as a critical lens through which to consider the receptive mode of patience. Ultimately, however, Lucile is best known not for her "patience" but for what Celan calls her "counter-word [*Gegenwort*]": Lucile exclaims "Long live the King!" at the execution of her husband—an exclamation through which Lucile, on the Revolution Square, seals her own death. Celan interprets this gesture as an "act of freedom, a step" that confirms the "majesty of the absurd," that breaks "the wires of puppets and automatons." (M, 3) In this gesture, Celan's Lucile also points the way toward other kinds of tendencies, ones that actively challenge and potentially change existing automatic forms of attention. Whereas Chapter One and Chapter Two foregrounded tendencies that placed an emphasis on how to be and bear with the past, in Chapters Three and Four I will discuss the potentially disruptive and transformative capacity of poetic form and the readerly tendencies enabled by it.

BETWEEN: Poetry as Pedagogy

The root relation of the word poetry to the Greek *poiesis* points to the craft that goes into making poems.[178] In a letter to Hans Bender, Celan insisted in this sense that poetry is a form of handiwork. And in posthumously published notes he posed a series of questions that similarly reflect on what it takes to make poetry: "Poetry as handiwork?" "The handmade crafting of poetry? Does making poetry have any kind of duration? And in what relation to time, to one's lifetime does such duration stand?"[179] This dissertation inverts this question and points it to a new direction by following what poems—made by hands—do through form, how they come to touch and potentially shape a reader. With "Engführung," we saw how poetry could affect the readers' breath, lead them into a different terrain of thought and sensory perception. The "spectrality" of Celan's "*gassatim*" asked readers to bear with the poem and its history. Pagis's density had readers switch directions and dimensions until loss became felt, a thick and weighty presence that left an imprint on the present of reading, like a hand.

To think about what poetry makes, how it is involved in a process of *gestalten*, forming and shaping, how it is not only made by hands but extends a hand, invokes the echo of W.H. Auden's line, "Poetry makes nothing happen."[180] Celan, of course, author of *Die Niemandsrose* (*The No-One's-Rose*) taught us through his poetry just how much "nothing" can be.[181] Auden too added that poetry, making nothing happen, survives—"a way of happening, a mouth."[182] The question then is what poetry does make happen, what emerges in the encounter with a poem. This is not a question that comes through Celan's poetry alone or is limited to the historical context of poetry written in the wake of the Holocaust. But if poems were crafted by the hands of a poet at a particular time in history and under its influence, then the formative capacity itself carries the touch of the past, bringing it to bear on the present. What kind of "shaping" takes place here? What form of *Bildung* does reading poetry entail—beyond its content? Can we think of poetry—or the reading of poetry—as a form of pedagogy that cultivates and shapes a disposition toward the world?

Celan suggests as much when he writes in 1960 that the poem "is by its essence and not first by its thematics—a school of true humanity: it teaches understanding of the other as the other […], it demands brotherliness with [respect for] this other, a turning toward this other, there too where the other appears as the hooknosed and misshapen […]." (M, 130) The figure of the "other" in Celan, long discussed as echoing the ethics of Emmanuel Levinas and his turn toward the "face of the Other" here—in a rare case—receives a concrete shape, with the words "hooknosed" and "misshapen" echoing the anti-Semitic and racist ideological underpinnings of Nazi physiognomic typologies.[183] Eshel comments on this passage in the following words: "Expanding through its eccentricity the range of what we are willing to listen to, poetry also prompts us to consider our willingness to broaden the circle of our experience, to view those people who were expelled from or were never a part of the circle of the "we" as part of what Celan calls "humanity." It is in this sense that poetry can be a "school": Paying close attention to its form and content, we may learn something new."[184] My argument that poetic form can be formative of ethical tendencies in the moment of reading extends this argument: Poetry's form not only teaches us something new *if* we pay attention, it also teaches us *how* to pay attention in the first place—or at least opens up the possibility for such a form of learning.

In the last chapter, I discussed the case of Hanna F. in order to draw an analogy between the scene of secondary witnessing, which her testimony brought about, as well as the poetic scene in which readers bear with the difficulty of a text. I proposed that confronting difficulty in

a poem might allow us to practice being with difficult speech in other situations too. Robert Simon suggests that the pedagogical value of testimonial literature—like any testimonial account—lies with the information it transmits regarding the past and the way by which it "keep[s] specific events before one's eyes thereby instantiating their significance for current and future generations."[185] But testimony too entails at times elements that are quite unlike historic accounts and closer to the formal excesses or silences of poetry and these "poetic" elements themselves have their own "pedagogical value." We can see this in another famous testimony archived in the Fortunoff Collection, in which a woman relates the events of the October 1944 revolt in Auschwitz through a vivid account of four chimneys going up in flames. Dori Laub relates her words as follows: "All of a sudden […] we saw four chimneys going up in flames, exploding. The flames shot in the sky, people were running. It was unbelievable." [186] While historians identified this account as factually inaccurate—not four but one chimney were set on fire by the resistance, Laub provides an account that ultimately highlights the truth value of it: "one chimney going up in flame was as inconceivable as four and in relating the story of the explosion of four chimneys the woman was truthful to the radical nature of the event itself.[187] Such excesses are, so Simon, "encountered in the multidimensional texture of testimony, in its emphatic marks as well as its silences, in its outbursts as well as its hesitations, in it pronouncements as well as its uncertainties, in its narrative elisions as well as its exaggerations." [188] Celan's and Pagis's poetry—in its silences, excesses, its errancies and uncertainties bears a similar structural multidimensionality. By guiding its readers through them, they might open up a space to practice being with this form of speech, attending to it ethically. The difficulty we encountered in the last chapter is in this vein not an obstacle to be overcome. Rather, poetry teaches us something precisely through the irritation and impatience it generates. It provides a space to learn not only about the past but also about ways of being with it.

Whether or not this formal teaching "succeeds" and what successful teaching means in the first place is open. Poetry as pedagogy is not dogmatic and to think about the way in which it "schools" readers in forms of attention also comes with the insight that its greatest lesson might come in moments of unlearning, in which the reading of poetry undoes what is preconceived and taken for granted to allow for a way of seeing the world otherwise. The next chapter will turn to the writing of Charlotte Delbo and, once more, to Celan's "Meridian"-speech, taking into focus the way in which what I argue to be the poetic strategies of this speech can disrupt habitualized forms of perception. The question what kind of ethical teaching these formal strategies effect continues to operate in the background of the analysis.

3. HESITATION

They cannot possibly see me, or they wouldn't stand there gaping.

— Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*

Attentiveness is not a technique of observation.

— Paul Celan*, The Meridian. Final Version, Drafts, Materials*

The two epigraphs above point to failures of responding to an other: Merely gaping at someone does not amount to "seeing" this person, and observing does not automatically equal being attentive to someone or something. They echo the case of Hanna F.'s testimony, in which the interviewers listened to her story but did not necessarily hear what she had to say; the interviewers' techniques of listening were not attentive to her reality. They also recall Celan's preparatory notes to *The Meridian* that convey a struggle with being heard. Celan wrote: "You don't hear me any longer [*du hörst mich nicht mehr gut*], therefore I will confront you with silence." (M, 161) But the notes also indicate that he initially started with a different formulation: "You are no longer addressable [*ansprechbar*]… therefore I will confront you with silence." It is a small alteration Celan made from "you are no longer addressable" to "you don't hear me any longer," but it seems significant as it shifts the responsibility—minimally at least—away from the one who speaks toward the one who listens. (M, 161) On yet another level, these moments resonate with a problem that accompanied this dissertation from the beginning: When Celan noted the disparity between an official commitment to the memory of the Nazi genocide and the actual absence of "real attentiveness," he foregrounded a gap between a merely observant form of remembrance and a truly responsive—and responsible—one. Together, these different examples highlight habits of looking at the world that fail to see, ways of listening that know already in advance what they want to hear, institutions of remembering that proceed without critical reflection. They show that it is possible to listen and not really hear what a person says, possible to look and yet not see, and possible to forget all while remembering.

In this chapter, I make the argument that poetry can open up a space for changes in hardened, sedimented, unresponsive patterns of perception by introducing a moment of hesitation. This argument entails two dimensions. For one, I focus on formal strategies of delay

and repetition as the grounds to generate forms of hesitation in a reader or an audience. Both these strategies slow down or stall forward movement, making readers hesitate. Second, I claim that the "ethical tendency" to hesitate holds a critical potential in the wake of the Holocaust as it opens up a space for the transformation of ways of seeing and listening to an other. To consider the transformative capacity of "hesitation," a notion that derives from "*haerere*," "to adhere, stick, cling" and which brings to mind forms of indecision, tethering, and irresolution might seem counterintuitive at first. In my argument about its transformative potential, I draw on the thought of Alia Al-Saji who in her "phenomenology of hesitation" articulates hesitation as the locus for a "potentially critical and ethical" corrective to reifying structures of perception.[189] Her theory of hesitation is in turn developed against the background of the thought of Merleau-Ponty, who, in his lecture course on "The Problem of Passivity" describes how every vision "is already an institution—how there is a socially, historically, and habitually sedimented normative structure or level according to which we see […]."[190] In Merlau-Ponty's own words, "institution" refers to

> those events in experience which endow it with durable dimensions, in relation to which a whole series of other experiences will acquire meaning, will form an intelligible series or a history—or again those events which sediment in me a meaning, not just as survival or as residues but as the invitation to a sequel, the demand for a future.[191]

What Celan called *Kulturbeflissenheit*, "cultural business" or what he considered techniques of observation that are not attentive—all of these are in this sense "institutions," ways of perceiving and relating to the world that proceed according to established patterns and always already prescribe the next step. Lisa Guenther has described this structure of duration in Merleau-Ponty as the "establishment of a rhythm that organizes both the meaning and the materiality of existence. This rhythm may be already felt in our bodies and our world, but it must be picked out and invested with durable dimensions in order to establish itself as institution."[192] Or, once more in Merleau-Ponty's words, we can think of it as a "sedimentation of our life: when an attitude toward the world has been confirmed often enough, it becomes privileged for us."[193]

In their respective engagements with this dimension of Merleau-Ponty's thought, both Al-Saji and Guenther are concerned with what they identify as "racialized patterns of seeing," a perceptual practice that relies on seeing people through habitualized, sedimented frames. In that context, hesitation now emerges as a particular perceptual mode with critical potential: Hesitation slows down and delays habitual action in a way that not only opens up a space for transformations of the perceptive field but also makes visible what constituted this institutional framework in the first place. Hesitation thus "make[s] felt the historicity, contingency, and sedimentation of habitual actions and perceptions, as well as their plasticity" and thereby "opens up routes for feeling, seeing, and acting differently."[194] Just because actions or thoughts are habitual, they do not have to prescribe the future. Things could be otherwise from hereon.

If we accept this ethical potential of hesitation, the question remains what brings about hesitation to begin with. In other words, how do we come to hesitate in a way that allows for the suspension of existing institutions that structure our ways of seeing, listening, remembering, perceiving? In what follows, I examine the potential of poetic form to generate hesitation. Poetry—a form of language that is uniquely tied to rhythm—can disrupt that "establishment of a rhythm" that regiments the forms of perception that Merleau-Ponty called "institution." In the first chapter to this dissertation, we have seen how a poem can draw readers into its rhythm.

Here, we will see how poetry can become a counter-rhythm: As we give ourselves over to the rhythm of a different voice in reading, there may be a moment of freedom from the rhythms of the institutions, those frameworks that structure how we see the world, allowing us to unlearn habitualized ways of reading and to read differently—poetry and beyond.

The two examples to which I turn are, somewhat counter-intuitively, not poetry in a generic sense, but they enlist the formal resources of poetic writing to change habitualized forms of perception, of seeing and listening. In the first part, I read "Un Jour" ("One Day"), a short piece of poetic prose from Charlotte Delbo's genre-defying *Auschwitz et après*, *Auschwitz and After*.[195] "Un Jour" highlights the complexities of ethical seeing under the specific regime of attention perpetuated by the concentration camp. After an initial engagement with the way in which the text thematically negotiates the stakes of failing to "see," I attend to the text's formal strategies. In Delbo, temporal delay and slow description become strategies of hesitation, I argue, through which Delbo's own writing reorganizes the field of the visible for the reader and opens up the potential for seeing otherwise. In the second part, I turn to Paul Celan's "Meridian"-speech. The speech—and the extensive notes that Celan wrote in preparation to it—has already accompanied much of this study in the previous chapters. Here, I will consider the speech *as* speech, as performed rhetoric with a poetic character to it. In doing so, I first propose that the manner in which the speech differentiates "poetry" from "art" entails an understanding that poetry is precisely that which holds a critical potential akin to that of "hesitation." Poetry, according to *The Meridian* "cuts the wire" of instruments and automatons and in doing so, it holds the potential to break through "institutions" of perception. This non-generic definition of poetry also reflects back onto the first section of this chapter and the poetic dimensions of Delbo's writing, retroactively crystallizing what is "poetic" in her "poetic prose." In Celan, this hesitant poetic mode repeats in the rhetoric of the "Meridian"-speech itself. Working with strategies of repetition and delay, the speech feels its way forward, tentatively, hesitantly—an aspect that, beyond the speech's content, opens up critical potential in the moment of its performance. At a time when Celan found himself frustrated with the complacency of post-war Germany toward the persistence of anti-Semitism as well as an institutional landscape in which former Nazi functionaries continued to work in and shape public life, I not only read the speech's "counter-rhythmic" rhetoric as a poetological statement, but also as an element of a poetic performance that has the potential to unsettle received ways of thinking and complacent forms of attending to the past in the poet's own present.

Seeing Otherwise in Charlotte Delbo's *Auschwitz et Après*

"Try to look. Just try and see." "*Essayez de regarder. Essayez pour voir*." This line reappears at the end of three texts in *Aucun de nous ne reviendra* (*None of us Will* Return), the first volume of Delbo's trilogy *Auschwitz et après*.[196] Each time, the line is slightly set apart from a preceding text that captures a scene like a photograph, flashes of memory from Auschwitz, textual vignettes that are at once frozen, immobile and piercing in their clarity. The following, for instance, appears midway through *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*: "Throughout the roll call, we never looked at them. / A corpse. The left eye devoured by a rat. / The other open with its fringe of lashes. // Try to look. Just try and see." (*Un cadavre. L' œil gauche mangé par un rat. L'autre œil ouvert avec sa frange de cils. // Essayez de regarder. Essayez pour voir*.)[197] The language of these texts works differently than the "obscurity" and formal difficulty of Celan. Nothing in these textual

snapshots seems to challenge interpretation. They do not unfold into multiple meanings, do not pulsate with difference down to the level of individual words, like Celan's poems do; they do not require patience. What seems to echo throughout them, however, is the line from Celan's "Engführung:" *Read no more, look*! Delbo's texts confront readers with images from within the concentration camps that seem almost too close up for close reading.

The writing of Charlotte Delbo, who was a member of the French resistance and survivor of Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, pays testimony to the experience of the concentration camps in a way that is, as Michael Rothberg puts it, "at-once emotionally searing and formally challenging."[198] Formally challenging, because her writing cannot be reduced to a single genre, switching from documentary-style accounts of the concentration camps to fragmented poems, moving between different perspectives, between different modes of witnessing. Delbo wrote *Auschwitz et après* in the immediate years after the war, following her return from Auschwitz and Ravensbrück. With the support of Genevieve de Gaulle, herself a survivor of Ravensbrück, Delbo was able to spend time in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1946. In Les Hortensias, a house dedicated to the recovery of returned deportees, Delbo completed the volume in a short amount of time, withdrawing and throwing herself into work. Upon completion, however, she did not attempt to publish the texts, chose not to make them public, not even talk about them. The writing, she insisted, had to stand the "test of time."[199] Eventually, she decided to publish only in the 1960s, with the three parts of *Auschwitz et après* appearing between 1965 and 1971.

The urgency of "giving to see" that returns as an imperative to the reader in the short vignettes in *Aucun de nous ne reviendra* constitutes the core of Delbo's poetic endeavor: The principle "*il faut donner à voir*," has often been described as her "mantra": one has to make visible, give to see.[200] Her English translator Rosette C. Lamont recalls the urgency of this demand that Delbo placed on her own writing: "'*Je veux donner à voir*!' she kept on repeating." "I want to give to see." Giving to see and trying to see are two central imperatives that Delbo extends to herself as author and to her reader respectively. Among the growing number of scholarly articles and books on Delbo, a majority develops readings of her work against the background of this imperative and turns to discuss the role the visual plays for her. Brett Ashley Kaplan, for instance, focuses on Delbo's use of "metaphor and moving imagery" in her study *Unwanted Beauty: Aesthetic Pleasure and Holocaust Representation* as well as in a short article on Delbo's "Visualities of Memory."[201] Annette de la Motte, in an engagement with what she terms Delbo's "strategies of effect"—that is, strategies that are set to "operate on the reader"—dedicates one segment to Delbo's particular strategy of "showing instead of telling." Showing, as De la Motte argues in dialogue with Ludwig Wittgenstein, steps in where telling fails in confrontation with what is unsayable.[202] Michaela Hulstyn takes yet another approach to the intertwined problematics of visuality and testimony: Somewhat in opposition to De la Motte, she points to the limitations of literature's visually figurative capacity, arguing instead that "careful mental listening" is required "to fill the gaps left by mental looking."[203] If Celan's language renders the limits of sense-making and understanding palpable, Delbo's writing highlights and complicates the capacities of rendering the experience of the camps visible. There is the sense that Delbo shows us the unspeakable, making her own voice discreet, giving room to images—just as there are moments where vision recedes, and voices and sounds become more palpable.[204]

Against this background, I now propose to read her emphasis on "giving to see" in a different way: Not in opposition to but in extension of the role, which the visual plays for her, I suggest that at stake in her emphasis on seeing is a form of ethical attention that is responsive—and responsible—to another person. What the English translation relates as "Try to look. Just try

and see," similarly carries in the French a subtle differentiation between looking and seeing, *regarder* and *voir*. The original, formulating it as "Essayez *pour* voir" (my emphasis) projects seeing as an end to looking, *Try to look. Try in order to see*. I hence suggest that seeing emerges in Delbo as something that entails a change of perception, of consciousness, an understanding on part of the reader. To look is merely to register. "Seeing," on the other hand, constitutes an ethical response, not only a form of "looking at" but an awareness of and response to the suffering of an other. Delbo's emphasis on the effort of "giving to see" through her own writing can be understood in relation to her effort to render something visible and, indeed, her language again and again pushes toward an almost photographic rendition of scenes in the camps. But her writing also makes a claim to enlist poetic language in order to generate an ethical encounter in the moment of reading, extending an effort to change the way we see in the first place—an effort to change frames of perception and disrupt habitualized forms of attention. Seeing, in this sense, is to attend to the world differently.

*

Wondering why Delbo eventually published *Auschwitz et après* almost twenty years after having written it, the cause for her decision remains speculative. It is not certain why she found, at this particular moment, that the account had stood the "test of time," and yet there are reasons to believe that it was not coincidental. Rothberg, for instance, proposes that "[w]hile there is no reason to doubt Delbo's claim that she let her Auschwitz memoir sit for twenty years in order to see if it would stand "the test of time," the evidence of the social and political context of her publishing history suggests a supplementary reason why she finally began to publish: the urgency of the charged political climate of the 1960s, with its anticolonial struggles that tore at the fabric of postwar Europe."[205] 1961 is the year Delbo published *Les Belles Lettres*, a collection of correspondences regarding the Algerian war, and it is in the same year that Delbo wrote, in a letter to Odette Boubou, "I have written a book on Auschwitz – it is terrible and it is the only thing I ever did that I truly care for. Unfortunately, the editors don't want it, even as they recognize its qualities."[206] There is hence an argument to be made that Delbo's effort to publish at this specific historical moment was also a response to the Algerian war and the injustices she perceives around it: the persistent presence of the concentrationary regime, sixteen years after the liberation of the camps—the persistence of violent institutions. If we follow Rothberg, we find in this text an example for what Pollack and Silverman defined as "concentrationary memory," that is, a memory that refuses "boundaries that enclose the past as an event of history, [speaking] instead of leakage and contamination to which the present must become alert."[207] For Delbo, the texts do not only testify to and commemorate the past, they speak to the present, constituting a force for a different kind of seeing and attending to the world. Giving to see is not just tied to the problem of how to represent the past but also to the problem of how this past might speak to the present. The epigraph to *Aucun de nous ne reviendra* reads: "Today, I am not sure that what I wrote is true [*vrai*]. I am certain it is truthful [*véritable*]."[208] The writing that follows these lines brings the weight of this truthfulness to bear on the present of reading, so that, as Delbo kept on insisting, "such a horror would not happen again."[209] In the attempt to "give to see," Delbo's writing seeks not only to make the world of the camps visible for the readers but also to change the readers' field of vision in which we perceive them in the first place.

Looking, Seeing

"Un Jour" is one of the first texts in *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*. It begins by zooming in on the following disquieting scene:

> Elle était accrochée au revers du talus, accrochée des mains et des pieds au revers du talus couvert de neige. Tout son corps était tendu, tendues ses mâchoires, tendu son cou désarticule en cartilages, tendu ce qui restait de muscle a ses os. (40)
>
> She was clinging to the other side of the slope, her hands and feet grasping the snow-covered embankment. Her whole body was taut, her jaws tight, her neck with its dislocated cartilage straining, as were her muscles—what was left of them on the bones. (24)

"She," as slowly becomes clear throughout the account, is a woman who stepped out of the ranks at roll call. Wanting to quench her feverish thirst with fresh snow, she has fallen into a ditch and is now struggling to get out of it. The narrator herself is among the women still standing, observing her, freezing and exposed to the cold of the winter, frozen into inaction by the presence of the surrounding guards. Slowly and persistently, the description continues to document the movements of the woman, commenting on her efforts in an at once detached and disturbingly proximate way:

> Elle était arc-boutée de l'index à l'orteil mais chaque fois qu'elle soulevait une main pour s'agripper plus haut et essayer de gravir le talus, elle retombait. Son corps devenait d'un coup flasque, misérable. Puis elle relevait la tête et on suivait sur son visage le travail mental qui se faisait au-dedans d'elle-même pour réajuster ses membres a l'effort. (40)
>
> She was arched from her index finger to her big toe, but every time she raised her hand to grip something higher in order to scale the sharp slope she'd fall back. Her limp body was pathetic. When she raised her head one could read upon her face the mental processes going on within as she mustered all her energy for a final effort. (24)

The voice of the speaker tracks every move and every part of the woman's body—"[wi]th her teeth clenched her chin grew sharp, her ribs protruded like staves under her skin garment"—following effort after effort, before the narrator eventually remarks "[f]inally the woman fell to the bottom of the ditch." (24)

The account is slow in these first four, short paragraphs, moving at a speed that appears distanced from the fervent struggles of the woman but also uncomfortably close to her "slow and awkward" movements precisely in its way of persistent detailing, before this narrative gesture suddenly comes to a halt. As if the fall of the woman had triggered a release in the narration itself, the account abruptly shifts to the present tense, draws the face of the woman into focus:

> Elle tourne la tête comme pour mesurer le chemin, regarde vers le haut. On voit grandir l'égarement dans ses yeux, dans ses mains, dans son visage convulsé. (41)

> She turns her head as if to measure the distance, looks upward. One can observe the growing bewilderment in her eyes, her hands, her convulsed face. (24)

What the narrator had, earlier, detailed as the "mental processes" that one could "read" on her face, now become audible as the account changes focalization, switching from the observing women at roll call to the struggling woman herself. No longer the distanced object of attention in the field of vision of the observing women, the narration now gives voice to the single woman who confronts the onlookers' gaze, extending an accusatory, desperate claim toward them:

> "Qu'ont-elles toutes ces femmes à me regarder ainsi? Pourquoi sont-elles là et pourquoi sont-elles rangées en lignes serrées, et pourquoi restent-elles là immobiles? Elles me regardent et elles semblent ne pas me voir. Elles ne me voient pas, elles ne resteraient pas ainsi plantées. Elles m'aideraient à remonter. Pourquoi ne m'aidez pas, vous qui êtes la si près? Aidez moi. Tirez-moi. Penchez-vous. Tendez la main. Oh, elles ne bougent pas." (41-42)

> "Why are all these women looking at me like this? Why are they here, lined up in close ranks, standing immobile? They look at me yet they do not see me. They cannot possibly see me, or they wouldn't stand there gaping. They'd help me climb up. Why don't you help me, you standing so close? Help me. Pull me up. Lean in my direction. Stretch out your hand. Oh, they don't make a move." (24-25)

After the first paragraphs of the text maintained a distance from the woman, these lines not only shift the focus, revealing her thoughts but also introduce an emotional anguish and affective appeal that breaks out of the numbness that dominated the preceding paragraphs. If the text previously allowed readers to look at the woman, her words now expose the difference between looking and seeing. From her perspective, the other women *look* but do not *see*.

In the introduction to the English version of *Auschwitz et après*, Lawrence Langer suggests that Delbo's imperative to "give to see," "*donner à voir*," points more to a "deep meaning of *voir* than to a particularly visual mode of transmission."[210] In Langer's words: "The Holocaust experience is the gadfly of the modern imagination, chafing memory to pursue the true meaning of *voir*, 'see.'"[211] Hulstyn, as one of a number of scholars who engaged with the problem of "seeing" in Delbo, translated this "true meaning of *voir*" as a "complex mental imagining [that] cannot be achieved by the visual alone."[212] Langer himself also ties the "true meaning of *voir*" to imagination. Delbo's reader, Langer writes, "depends on Delbo's prose sculptures to gain access to [an] inconceivable reality."[213] What these approaches have in common is that they ultimately highlight the effort of "giving to see" as a process that attempts to achieve an image of the camps that approximates their reality. Where visual language fails, an effort to stretch the mental faculties needs to step in. Giving to see, in this sense, is an effort to overcome the claim that what happened in the camps is unimaginable and unrepresentable. As discussed in the introduction, there is another dimension to "seeing" that posits a different ethical challenge: What if it is possible to speak of the unspeakable, to give an account of unimaginable events that took place in the camps or even give an image of them, but no one will listen, respond, and see? What if the problem is not the ability make something visible, but the ability to truly see in response?

We can return here for a moment to Delbo's poem, which I cited in the introduction and which echoes the ethical challenge to truly see—or hear: "You'd like to know / ask questions /… but if we gave you an answer / you still don't know how a day was spent / and assume we don't know how to answer."[214] What this poem questions is not so much the possibility of speaking of the camps but rather the potential to communicate the experience and knowledge, for instance, of "how a day was spent." With its final, sobering lines "you … assume we don't know how to answer," comes an implicit accusation and a push toward a shift in understanding where exactly this "failure" of communication is located. Where the dominant discourse around the unrepresentability and unspeakability of life within the concentration camps turns to the texts and their authors in the attempt to locate the moment of failure, Delbo's poem—and, as I would suggest, her writing more generally—give reason to rethink this logic. Even if accounts from the camps exist, even if there are images, there is no guarantee that people *see* in a way that responds and takes responsibility for the suffering, and this might then not be the failure of language (or, consequentially and problematically, the fault of the author) but a failure of responding to what one sees. This, I propose, is the challenge that "Un Jour" confronts us with—albeit under fraught conditions. From the perspective of the woman fighting to save herself and climb out of the ditch, the women still at roll call "look" but "do not see." That is to say, they look at the suffering right in front of them and yet they do not react and this is not primarily a failure of visibility nor a failure of imagination but an ethical problem. Where "looking" merely registers, "seeing" implies an acknowledgement of the pain of the other, a shift in the mode of perception and understanding, an affective response. Seeing entails being moved and moving to respond. Seeing means action, a stretched out hand, a gesture of help. To withdraw it defies logic: *They cannot possibly see me, or they wouldn't stand there gaping.*

That said, it is important to acknowledge that the women at roll call might in fact "see," but, standing at roll call, the movement to action would mean their own death. In this sense, the scene also pays testimony to the cruelty of the concentrationary logic, which severs looking at another person's suffering from any immediate response of feeling or acting upon it. The women at roll call might be unable to act even if they see. To the struggling woman, it appears as if they were just looking, as if they would look and not see. This failure to see and respond to the suffering of another person constitutes a central parameter of the logic of the concentrationary universe. It played out when people looked away or did look but not "see" when concentration camps were built in their immediate surroundings, when neighbors were deported never to return—people who did so from within a position where they, unlike the women at roll call, might have had the opportunity to respond differently.[215] It is a logic that then comes to dominate the concentration camps themselves, weighing on those who might at any given moment be in a "safer" position than others, but who are robbed of the possibility to help the ones suffering next to them. This formulation of course puts strain on the meaning of the word "safe;" being "safer" might just mean being an inch further away from death. As much as seeing ethically might be a force against the logic of the regime of the camps, it is also not available for those submitted to it under threat of death. Delbo's text is hence fraught with the difficulty of coming to understand what it means to see ethically all while acknowledging that this response might not be possible for everyone under all conditions. But from within this complexity, the text still draws our attention to the difference between looking and seeing, highlighting the ethical dimensions of seeing, drawing attention to the fact that a full image might not be enough to cause an ethical response. In highlighting the difference between looking and seeing, "One Day" reveals the stakes of Delbo's own aim to "give to see," that is, to write in a way that would not allow for

anyone to stand, distantly observant, in the face of suffering, and not stretch out a hand. To write in a way, that is, that would allow for a moment of hesitation, for a shift in perspective, an opening in the present of reading toward alternate perspectives.

Before turning to the question how Delbo's writing itself shapes patterns of seeing and perception, I want to return to "Un Jour" and address another layer of the dynamics of looking, seeing, and attending to another person that the text confronts us with. As the narrative progresses, the text further complicates what it means to look at an image of suffering on the one hand, and what it means to see it on the other. The text shows us that while looking does not equal seeing, not looking also does not equal not seeing—an insight that suggests we might be able to see and respond to the past even if we do not have access to a full image of it, resonating with the kind of susceptible attention discussed in Chapter One.

Turning Away

Following the description of the women's painful efforts to climb out of the ditch, the perspective switches from the third person singular to her own voice, before it eventually moves on to the first person plural, the collective of women at roll call and then finally to the voice of the narrator:

> Je ne la regarde plus. Je ne veux plus la regarder. Je voudrais changer de place, ne plus voir. Ne plus voir ces trous au fond des orbites, ces trous qui fixent. Que veut-elle faire? Veut-elle atteindre les barbelés électriques? Pourquoi nous fixe-t-elle? N'est-ce pas moi qu'elle désigne? Moi qu'elle implore? Je tourne la tête. Regarder ailleurs. Ailleurs. (44)

> I no longer look at her. I no longer wish to look. If only I could change my place in order not to see her. Not to see the dark holes of these eye sockets, these staring holes. What does she want to do? Reach the electrified barbed-wire fence? Why does she stare at us? Isn't she pointing at me? Imploring me? I turn away to look elsewhere. Elsewhere. (26)

The vocabulary that the text employs here is again resonant of Emmanuel Levinas's ethics that locates the ethical encounter in the claim that the face of an "Other" places upon a subject. But in this twisted logic of the concentration camp, the ethical demand that the face of another person makes on the women at roll call turns into a vision that inflicts pain. The problem here is not *not* seeing the other but seeing the other and not being able to act on it. Seeing ethically, responding to the pain of the other becomes a torture of its own. And so in this moment, the speaker tries to actively withdraw her attention, an attempt to stop seeing by looking away, a tenacious attempt to resist the persistent demand for attention exerted by the presence of the woman in the ditch that ultimately fails. "I no longer look at her"—this constative statement falters in the following sentence recoiling into no longer "wishing" to look and the subsequent subjunctive mood: *if only I could change my place in order not to see her… Not to see the dark holes of these eye sockets*. The initial constative strength of the statement "I no longer look" has given way to a desperate resignation. Just as looking does not equal seeing, looking away is not tantamount to *not* seeing. The presence of the woman exerts a gravitational pull on the narrator that resists her attempt not to look in order not to see.

As if this wasn't already enough to bear, the narrative reveals another dimension of what it means to look attentively, to be present to one's surroundings and potentially responsive to an

other. In the segment quoted above, the narrator attempts to withdraw her attention but this attempt is not only disrupted, it also reveals another problem of attention. *I turn away to look elsewhere. Elsewhere*. With these words, the narrator forces her attention away from the struggling woman, only to be confronted with another unbearable image:

> Ailleurs—devant nous—c'est la porte du block 25.
> Debout, enveloppé dans une couverture, un enfant, un garçonnet. Une tête rasée très petite, un visage où saillent les mâchoires et l'arcade sourcillière. … Il veut agiter les bras aussi pour se réchauffer. La couverture s'écarte. C'est une femme. Un squelette de femme. (44-45)

> Elsewhere—ahead of us—is the gate of block 25.
> Standing, wrapped in a blanket, a child, a little boy. A tiny shaven head, a face with jutting jaws and a salient superciliary arch. … He also waves his arms to keep warm. The blanket slips open. It's a woman. A female skeleton. (26)

The turn away from the gaze of the woman in the ditch is momentary. It provides no relief, not only because her presence is still felt, but also because in turning away, in altering the field of vision, what exposes itself is yet another image of suffering. What moves into view is block 25, the so-called block of death, and another person who struggles for survival. If the beginning of the text is a lesson in what it means to see, this moment in the text confronts us with the limits of seeing from a new perspective. The presence of the person "elsewhere" puts another claim on the narrator and in bringing this to our attention, Delbo's text highlights the limits of the readers' own economy of attention.[216] Even as we focus, following Delbo's voice, on the woman struggling to survive, we, like Delbo herself, have overlooked another scene, not paid attention to someone else. The field of attention is never able to cover everything and behind the actual attention that we give to someone or something is a larger field of unrealized forms of attentive relations. There is always another elsewhere. In reading Delbo's writing, we might feel this as a gravitational pull, as the subtle sense that there are more stories playing out at the same time, stories that we do not see, that we do not get to look at, that were not told, but whose presence might be felt in this moment in which we are alerted to the limits of our perceptive and receptive field. It is a peculiar sense of condensation, of *Verdichtung*, that is happening here, as "Un Jour" brings the presence of different "elsewheres," which demand to be seen to our attention. The awareness of this presence is not a reason for resignation faced with an impossible task, nor an excuse for not seeing. Instead, it entails the urgent imperative to look and listen and see more, to keep our attention at once flexible, vigilant, and careful, not hardened, "sedimented."

If the imperative to "look, in order to see" is Delbo's "mantra," core to her writing, "Un Jour" encapsulates the complexities of both looking and seeing against the background of the world of the concentration camps. The text is a lesson in ways of seeing, in the stakes of attending to an other against the pressures of a visual field dominated by the concentrationary logic. The problems of looking and looking away, of seeing and not seeing—or, also, seeing too much, more than one can bear, these problems are foregrounded throughout other writings in *None of Us Will Return* as well. The question of what it means to look and see against the background of the concentrationary universe is present, for instance, in "L'Adieu" ("The Farewell"), a text that confronts readers with an arresting image of women being forced on a truck that would bring them to block 25, the gas chamber.[217] One of the woman turns to look at

the overseer, "with hate, scorn, a scorn that should kill" and then, "as the truck pulls away, she waves a farewell and laughs." The text ends shortly after in Delbo's own voice: "I no longer look," "*Je ne regarde plus*." It is a problem articulated in "Le Mannequin" ("The Dummy"), which portrays the image of an SS dragging a woman through the gravel, ending on the lines: "Do not look. [*Ne regarde pas*.] Do not look at this dummy being dragged on the ground. Do not look at yourself."[218] We find it in a poem early on in *Aucun de nous ne reviendra* that asks "Did you know that you can see your mother dead and not shed a tear?"[219] In any of these moments, the problem at stake is not only the problem of what can be imagined or what cannot, even though this too is brought to the foreground again and again, but also the problem of responding to what one sees. The problem of the visual in Delbo is a cognitive and imaginative problem that links to the question of what can be represented and captured by words and images. But more than that, the problem of looking and seeing—Delbo's "Un Jour" impedes us to see—is a problem of attending to someone's pain, of taking up an ethical response.

Reading, Seeing

The "unrepresentability" of events of extreme violence and the effect this has on language in general and poetic language in particular is, as discussed in the introduction, a central paradigm of writing after the Shoah. The insufficiency that marks any relation between language and reality is exacerbated by experiences that cannot find a referent in existing language. Confronted with the immensity of the atrocities gathered under the "chiffre" of Auschwitz, language—especially poetic language—often finds that silence, spaces of absence in the writing can hold space for memory of the events where words fail. Throughout my reading of the first segments of "Un Jour," I have already intimated that this text works differently. We can still speak about the incomprehensible nature of the events and also consider the role of certain formal elements against the backdrop of this paradigm of unrepresentability. That said, this text does ultimately not confront readers with a problem of representation, or a crisis of language. Within a few sentences, it builds up a proximity to the object in a way that, as Delbo's translator Lamont states, renders language "unobtrusive, almost transparent." As Lamont explains: "Because [Delbo] wrote from the extreme edge of being, she sought never to attract attention to the manner in which she expressed herself. How she said was important only because of what she had to say."[220] Her language does not draw attention to itself. It is thus with some extent of hesitation that I draw attention to her style, to the ways in which her writing makes us attentive, draws us in, brings us closer to the past, challenges a form of attentiveness in the present. I do so against the background of the lessons of Delbo's own text, which alerts us to the fact that what we see and how we respond to it is context dependent: The way we come to see differently through her writing is due to her language and the poetic strategies she employs. Again, the challenge here is not so much or at least not only that the events cannot be represented, but that if they are represented, there is still no guarantee that they will be seen. What if we speak of the events and no one listens? What if we do find words that can give an image of the camps and no one will see, no one will feel something, no one will stretch out a hand, and no one will help?

Attempting to understand the conditions of possibility of "seeing" by way of the literary text, trying to articulate the difference between looking at an image in reading and experiencing an affective and perceptual response, I find a helpful language in what Merleau-Ponty in his late lectures on *Institution and Passivity* describes as an "unassimilable event."[221] Unassimilable

events disrupt our vision, they do not fit into an existing schema of perception, threatening a "division of self from self" in its unassimilable character. The confrontation with the images from Auschwitz might be such an "unassimilable event," pushing readers to confront the limits of their framework of perceiving and understanding, challenging an undoing of the self. And yet, as Al-Saji—writing on Merlau-Ponty—notes, this response is not automatic and guaranteed. Unassimilable events are "not sufficient in themselves to generate critical awareness and change." As she emphasizes: "It is always possible to refuse to see events deemed unassimilable, to abide in a kind of affective and ethical closure toward others and the world."[222] With this, we are back to the earlier question: What if the challenge is not how well events can be represented, but how we respond? The challenge of poetic language, then, is not only to represent the past but to disrupt the existing regime of attention, of vision, and perception that structures our ways of seeing in the first place so that "such a horror would not happen again," as Delbo put it.[223]

In the study on *The Juridical Unconscious* that considers the transformative effects of the adjudication of collective traumas ranging from the Dreyfus case to the Eichmann trial, Shoshana Felman turns to a case that seems at first distant from Delbo's piece, but ultimately helps to further understand the structure of ethical seeing it confronts us with. Writing on the jury decision in the case of the beating of Rodney King that acquitted the officers of all charges, Felman analyzes the response of the jury to watching the videotape of the beating in the following words: "[T]he jurors in the Simi Valley trial (all white), *did not see the beating* (of the black [man]). The jury watched the film but claimed it *did not see* police abuse and acquitted the four white policemen."[224] Felman charges the jury then with a "failure to act as eyewitnesses to the (physical and moral) violence whose literal invisibility cannot be dispelled in court, in spite of the most probatory visual evidence […]."[225] Writing on the same case, Butler adds an additional perspective on this "failure to act as eyewitnesses" when she notes that the possibility of seeing is itself structured by a given field of vision, which, in this case, is determined by the factors of race and racism.[226] Visibility is hence not guaranteed but pre-determined by a given horizon of perception, in this case a racist "disposition of the visible." But if seeing is dependent on context, on the schema within which it plays out, changing this schema can create a possibility for looking at evidence otherwise, and possibly *seeing*.[227] This, then, is ultimately my claim regarding the work of Delbo. Her writing entails not only an effort to depict the reality of the camps but also an effort to reorganize the field of the visible, to change structures of attention in a way that allows for ethical seeing. Aware of the fact that one can look at an image and not see, listen to a story and still not hear, her writing sets out to open up ways for transforming looking into seeing, for paying attention and tending to the pain of an other. And so with the next step, I move to a discussion of Delbo's textual strategies, considering the effects her writing has on readers, how they are enlisted into a form of looking that might ultimately tip over into seeing. My focus lies on two strategies: First, I consider temporal condensation as something that effects a moment of hesitation in the present of reading. Second I consider how slow, retarding description turns into a mode by which the text not only paints an image of the past but also allows the weight of the past to bear upon the reader.

A Break in the Clouds

Following the moment in "Un Jour" when the narrator "turn[s] away to look elsewhere," the scene that moves into view—Block 25, the female skeleton, jumping up and doing "with a frenzy like that of some barbaric dance"—is arresting in its grotesque terror. Then, with this

image present before our eyes, Delbo's narrative suddenly suspends the given time frame and disrupts the vision of "living skeletons that dance" with the following words:

> Et maintenant je suis dans un café à écrire cette histoire—car cela devient une histoire.
> Une éclaircie. Est-ce l'après-midi? Nous avons perdu le sentiment du temps. Le ciel apparaît. Très bleu. D'un bleu oublie. Des heures sont écoulées depuis que j'ai réussi à ne plus regarder la femme dans le fossé. Y est-elle encore? Elle a atteint le haut du talus … (45)

> Presently I am writing this story in a café—it is turning into a story.
> A break in the clouds. Is it afternoon? We have lost all notion of time. The sky appears. Very blue. A forgotten blue. Hours have passed since I succeeded in not looking at the woman in the ditch. Is she still there? She has reached the top of the slope… (26-27)

It is a disorienting narrative move that throws readers out of the state of mind established by previous descriptions of the struggle of the woman in the ditch. "Presently, I am writing this story in a café"—this shift from description to the metanarrative statement on the writing of the account itself, from the concentration camp to a café disrupts the weight that built up. For a moment, readers are allowed to look away. For a moment, the presence of the woman recedes in awareness. A brief interlude, that is less a moment of respite, however, but rather a disorientation that seems to make the new turn to the woman all the more forceful. The tension recedes, only to dart back with new intensity: "She has reached the top of the slope…Her hands are drawn by the glittering snow. She takes a handful of it…"

In her study on the "writing of silence" in 20th century French literature that dedicates a chapter to Delbo, De La Motte differentiates between the "epic" and the "lyric" passages of Delbo's work, with the latter taking up the work of "touching" the reader.[228] In the lyric passages, "it is no longer a matter of convincing the reader, of explaining the inexplicable to him."[229] Rather, the poetic segments evoke that which cannot be said, approaching that which seems unapproachable from within moments of silence. "Un Jour" complicates this division, constituting neither a poetic "writing of silence" nor an attempt to "explain the inexplicable." "Un Jour" describes, chronicles minutely, but it also involves readers in sudden perspectival shifts that might "touch" them as they put pressure on their sense of time. The move from the present of writing in the café back to the scene at roll call occurs in a way that destabilizes for a moment not only the distinction between the time of the camp and the present of writing but also collapses the "we" of the women at roll call with the narrator—and her readers. Following the observation of the break in the clouds and the question "Is it afternoon?" the statement that "[w]e have lost all notion of time" might well refer to the women at roll call. But in the present of reading, it holds for the narrator and the readers too, the narrator who, all while sitting in a café writing, has been drawn back into the past, taking the readers with her. And this ambiguity of space and time is maintained for a little longer when the focus moves to the sky, "[v]ery blue. A forgotten blue." At this point, the text leaves open whether it is in fact the blue above the café or above the camp. At the same time, two "I"s are—temporarily—superimposed: The "I" "presently," writing the story in a café and the "I" who will eventually state that "[h]ours have passed since I succeeded in not looking at the woman in the ditch." In this ambiguity, the distinction between both past and present is rendered porous. Then, beginning with the sentence quoted a moment earlier, the narration returns to the scene in the camp:

> Y est-elle encore? Elle atteint le haut du talus–comment a-t-elle pu ?—et elle s'est arrêtée là. Ses mains sont attirées par la neige qui scintille. Elle en prend une poignée qu'elle porte à ses lèvres avec un geste d'une lenteur exaspérante qui doit lui coûter une peine infinie. Elle suce la neige. (45)
>
> Is she still there? She has reached the top of the slope—how was she able to do this?—and stopped there. Her hands are drawn by the glittering snow. She takes a handful of it, bringing it up to her lips in exasperating slow motion which must require infinite effort. She sucks the snow. (27)

The break in the clouds that coincides with a shift of both time and place in the text is a visible instantiation of the way in which Delbo's writing puts pressure on the perception of the reader. In reading, we suddenly lose ground, are thrown out of the state in which any action seemed suspended, where the scene taking place inside the camp unfolded like a film that is at once too slow and too fast, the audience unable to move and turn elsewhere. "Presently, I am writing this story in a café" is a jolt out of one framework of seeing, a shift in perception. The superimposition of two temporal moments—the "I" in the café and the "I" in the camp—holds this tension open, before it settles back into the scene at roll call.

Reflecting on the conditions of possibility to form an ethical response to suffering across as spatial distance, Butler notes the following:

> [E]thical relations are mediated […] [a]nd this means that questions of locations are confounded such that what is happening "there" also happens in some sense "here," and if what is happening "there" depends on the event being registered in several "elsewheres," then it would seem that the ethical claim of the event takes place always in a "here" and "there" that are in some ways reversible; but that reversibility finds its limit in the fact that the body cannot be relieved of its locatedness, its exposure, through its mediated transport.[230]

Reading Delbo against the background of this consideration of the possibility of ethical relations across space, I want to ask how such a mediation happens not only across a spatial difference but also a temporal one. As the narration switches from the time in the camps to the present of writing, opening up into a moment in which the precise time and place is unclear. "There" and "here," "then" and "now" become confounded—a confusion that extends to the reader who is drawn into this zone of uncertainty and hesitation. *We have lost all notion of time*: This sentence speaks to both the immediate experience of the reader who was just confronted with the temporal disjoint of the narration as well as to the situation of the women waiting at roll call, for whom time stretches out indefinitely. This confusion and the reversibility between "then" and "now," "there" and "here" does find its limits in the body. As much as we can emphasize literature's capacity to bend linear time, these historical events are irrevocably in the past and there is ultimately no way of responding to the suffering of the woman, to reach out a hand. Whatever ethical response to the suffering in the camps might open up in the moment of reading does in a sense come too late. And yet the occurrence of an ethical encounter in the present of reading is not only measured by the way we respond to the past but also by the way in which this encounter with the past reconfigures our relation to the present. The past must form an ethical imperative

that we can hear, register, at the level of senses, so that, as Delbo kept insisting, "such a horror would not happen again." The experience of and the immediate response to the particular kind of suffering that the name Auschwitz stands for is sealed off to readers, limited by their spatial and temporal locatedness. Delbo's language is not automatically bound to fail speaking of this experience and to us. In this reading that ruptures our orientation in time, we do not only get to see images of the past but, with our orientation unsettled, our attention displaced toward the presence of different "elsewheres"—hesitating in this way—we feel the weight of the past manifesting itself as the pressure on our perception. Potentially, her writing might bend our perception, loosening it, effecting a probe of the present, so that the present might perhaps be encountered differently as a result of reading.

In the following I want to turn to another textual strategy in Delbo's text that runs throughout the greater part of this text and that seems at first opposed to any effort to involve or affect the reader in any way, namely, description. I will consider both its role within the scene itself as well as the role it takes on as a poetic strategy for Delbo.

Describing, carefully

In a 2016 special issue of *Representations* dedicated to description as a critical practice, Cannon Schmitt summarizes the oppositional stance to description in the following words: "For its opponents, description equals death: death of critical responsibility, death of political engagement, death of relevance."[231] Schmitt here describes a position that finds an antecedent in Georg Lukács who famously articulated the aesthetic superiority of narration over description in his 1936 essay "Narrate or Describe?" Description is a "filler," it is a "still life," it does not involve readers in any action, it does not generate an "experience" on the reader's part.[232] Narration relies on action and it is through this element of action that "fiction itself becomes transitive rather than intransitive. Narration transforms reading from (passive) witnessing to (active) experiencing."[233] These discussions of description oppose it not only on aesthetic grounds but also on ethical ones. Description makes nothing happen, it appears, it does not seem to be able to touch or involve readers and surely not change their visual fields. In fact, there is the sense that description is somehow the mode most appropriate to the concentrationary logic that plays out in Delbo's texts, by which the subjective capacity to respond to the pain of an other is numbed by the regime of violence perpetuated in the camps. Description is perceived as "static, dead," summarizes Schmitt. Frederic Jameson observes that "description, as a dominant mode of representation, is the sign that some vital relationship to action … has broken down," and even Heather Love, who reevaluates the potential of description, calls it "thin and dead."[234] The descriptive voice of the narrator, slowly tracking the moves of the woman in the ditch, documenting every detail of her struggling body, observant yet distant, perceiving the scene as if through a wall of ice, numb, with slight delay, seems to encapsulate these aspects of description. The text ends on a final harrowing image that congeals the deadening passivity that ran throughout the text. In it a dog attacks and kills the woman:

> Le chien bondit sur la femme, lui plante ses crocs dans la gorge. Et nous ne bougeons pas, engluées dans une espèce de visqueux qui nous empêche d'ébaucher même un geste—comme dans un rêve. (48)

> The dog leaps on the woman, sinks its fangs in her neck. And we do not stir, stuck in some kind of viscous substance which keeps us from making the slightest gesture—as in a dream. (28)

Description is the narrative mode fit for the heavy, viscous state of numbed passivity that the concentration camp creates. Yet, in addition to reflecting the state that the narrator finds herself in, description also takes on a different function in Delbo's text. Returning to the scene at roll call, I want to show first that the act of description constitutes a form of distant yet sympathetic relation to the suffering woman—even as the narrator, submitted to the violent pressure of the camp—is unable to help her. Turning to the level of reading, I argue that description, as a textual strategy reveals a capacity that differs from the "deadening" effect it has been so often ascribed: Description unfolds the critical potential that Al-Saji assigned to hesitation. From within stasis and inactivity, it opens up the possibility to make the readers feel the weight of the unassimilable event, a feeling that puts pressure on our perceptual field, and encites the reader to respond.

Going back to the beginning, then, the text starts out by chronicling minutely the movements of the woman in a manner that is at once disturbingly close and distant, when the narrator states, for instance, that "it was difficult to grasp why she needed to work so hard, quite out of proportion to her enterprise, her weightless body." But as the account continues, staying close to the woman even as the narrator tries to turn her attention away, it also builds up a strangely sympathetic relation to her. With the narrator paralyzed into inaction under the regime of concentrationary terror, the detailed description becomes a means of accompanying, being *with* the suffering of the woman. "Each of her movements was so slow and awkward," notes the narrator and the text follows these movements, slowing down the observations to the point that the narrative itself resembles a film in slow motion—a gesture that in turn resembles the movements of the woman: "Her every act falls apart in unbearable slow-motion sequences." In the absence of a possibility to intervene, description turns into a mode of witnessing—or *withness*-ing—for the narrator. Its rhythm falls in line with the movements of the woman, mobilizing a form of being present to the other. As the account moves on, the sense of a sympathetic relation between the women at roll call and the single woman in the ditch intensifies, plays out on different levels. From the beginning, for instance, the description of the woman provided less a visual image of her but rather an account of the sensations of her body: "Her whole body was taut, her jaw tight, her neck with its dislocated cartilage straining, as were her muscles—what was left of them on the bones." It is exactly those sensations that recur shortly after when the account turns to the description of the women at roll call, from whose perspective we have previously seen the struggling woman.

> Nous étions là toutes, plusieurs milliers, debout dans la neige depuis le matin […] Immobiles depuis le milieu de la nuit, nous devenions si lourdes à nos jambes que nous enfoncions dans la terre, dans la glace, sans pouvoir rien contre l'engourdissement. Le froid meurtrissait les tempes, les maxillaires, à croire que les os se disloquaient, que le crâne éclatait. (42)

> All of us were there, several thousand of us, standing in the snow since morning […] Standing motionless since the middle of the night, we had grown so heavy on our legs that we sank into the earth, the ice, unable to fight off numbness. The cold bruised our

> temples, our jaws, making us feel that our bones were about to break, our craniums to burst. (25)

The description of these sensations—the bruised jaws, the bones about to break—mirrors the description of the woman in the ditch—her tight jaw, the dislocated cartilage. Later in the text, the observation of the woman sinking down, huddling in the snow will mirror the description of the women "standing in the snow since morning" who "so heavy on our legs … sank into the earth." Eventually, this dynamic of mirroring descriptions will tip over into a direct identification:

> Un seul cri qui déchire l'immobilité de la plaine. Nous ne savons pas si le cri vient d'elle ou de nous, de sa gorge crevée ou de la notre. Je sens les crocs du chien à ma gorge. Je crie. Je hurle. Aucun son ne sort de moi. Le silence du rêve. (48)
>
> A single scream tearing through the immobility of the plain. We do no know if the scream has been uttered by her or by us, whether it issued from her punctured throat, or from ours. I feel the dog's fangs in my throat. I scream. I howl. Not a sound comes out of me. (28-29)

To point to the sympathetic dimension of the narrator's description does not lessen the cruelty that weighs down on the scene, the suffering of the woman in the ditch, the inability of the women at roll call to help her, the pain of these women themselves. But it complicates the idea of the distant, inactive, deadening character of description. Description, in this account, is a form of attending to the suffering woman against the deadening pressure of the concentration camp.

Describing, hesitating

Turning to the level of reading itself now, description reveals a force of its own. Most immediately, the primary role of description seems to be to document a scene from within the camps for the readers in all its detail, to paint an image of that which is unimaginable. Maybe description succeeds at this task when it has come as close as possible to the object it addresses. And maybe the image of the past is enough to elicit an ethical response. Maybe what "is there" in an image when we look at it is just what it needs to make readers see the injustices of the past. And what "is there" in Delbo's images is often almost too much to bear and it is hard to imagine how writing could bring the images of the camps even closer to us. But, as Delbo's text itself reminds us, looking at an image alone does not equal seeing, and there is the possibility that people look at these images without being moved to respond. The images from Celan's "Todesfuge" circulated (and still continue to circulate) in German postwar society while his insistence on the persistence of anti-Semitism was (and continues to be) neglected or blatantly discarded as "paranoid." Images can—to use Merlau-Ponty's language—constitute "unassimilable events" and as such, we can "refuse" to see them, even if they are right in front of us, available to be looked at. As he writes in *Institution and Passivity*: "there are events whose historical inscription we can prevent only by refusing to see them, events, that are unassimilable for our system, that refuse our *Sinngebung*."[235]

Delbo's own writing, I propose, mobilizes formal resouces to reshape the framework by which we encounter such events in the first place. Expanding on Merleau-Ponty's notion of

"unassimilable events," Al-Saji highlights hesitation as a practice by which the perception of these events itself might be changed by opening up structures of seeing. As she writes: "When hesitation is held open, the normative level according to which one sees can itself be transformed in response to unassimilable events."[236] In Delbo's "Un Jour," the strategy of description works to this effect. The confrontation with the image of the woman struggling to climb out of the ditch is both slow and relentless through its way of minute detailing. Again, this can be seen as an effort to achieve a close-enough image of the past. But it also, in its slowness and relentless detailing, introduces a temporal expansion into the process of reading that exerts a pressure on the reader. Description not only creates an image, it also brings about a particular readerly experience: In the descriptive passages, the woman's weightless body gains weight. With every new turn to it, every new layer of description of her struggle, her presence thickens, a presence that exerts its weight on the reader. Even as our attention turns to a new scene, even as the temporal frame is momentarily broken open, the account returns to her, settles back into the mode of description, extends the descriptive moments to the point where, in reading, her presence becomes felt and one might also want to turn away, not look and not see.

What Lukács took as a sign that some vital link to action has been broken, emerges in Delbo as a strategy that effects a perceptual change on the part of the reader precisely by hesitating, forcing the reader to stay with the scene over a period of time. Description is a form of hesitation that works in a way similar to the "spectral" unfolding of different meanings in Celan's poems, it is a hesitation held open, both attending to something but also in hesitant attendance in front of what imposes itself as unassimilable event. This hesitation produced by description challenges readers to undergo what Merleau-Ponty calls a "division of the self from the self."[237] This, then, is an effect that is ethical. By challenging a form of attendant hesitation, description opens up the possibility that we might undergo, in reading, an undoing of our existing field of vision, an undoing of our self in response to a claim from an unassimilable event.

That said, there is no guarantee that this opening of the self might in fact take place. Description is not a tool taken up by Delbo with the certainty of achieving a given end. It might not even be a "tool" taken up by her in the first place. My own reading of her text is descriptive too. It relies on a subjective perception of the effects Delbo's writing has on a reader. If I propose to understand description as a strategy for changing a reader's field of vision, it is an attempt to make sense of elements of her writing against the background of her insistence on "giving to see," of having the past speak to the present. When Merlau-Ponty writes on "unassimilable events," it is specifically in relation to memory and what he calls the "weight" of the past, which is able to shift perceptual and affective frameworks of seeing. As he writes: "[i]t must be the case that what no longer is, *is* in order to act."[238] This language describes the effect of Delbo's writing beyond the content of her images. Her way of presenting the images of the past to the reader puts pressure on the affective field, it holds the potential, to use a formulation by Al-Saji once more, to shift "zones of tension and comfort," so that we not only feel "answerable for the past," but motivated to "a different way of living the present."[239]

*

With her writing, Delbo both navigates the difficulty of making visible that which seemed "unimaginable" and draws our attention to what it means to see and understand and respond in the first place. In "Un Jour," the woman's accusatory claim that "they look but do not see,"

confronts us with the difference that exists between the two ways of perception. With the lines "if we gave you an answer / you still don't know how a day was spent," Delbo's poem redistributes the responsibility for the failure of communication after the Nazi genocide toward her audience, shifting it away from the one who tells the story to the ones who listen. From different angles, these moments in her writing highlight the risk of a failed link between looking and seeing. But Delbo's writing is also working to strengthen this link, to facilitate the conditions for a reality in which looking becomes seeing and seeing means being moved and involved. It is not a matter of "re-establishing" a moral logic. Even "before" or "outside" of Auschwitz, this link was and is not always in place. Against the danger of not seeing, then and now, Delbo's writing maintains the effort of making literature a space where this link holds and where readers might be able to look and see and be moved while at the same time realizing and confronting the fragility of this ethical relation and the break-down that Auschwitz in particular meant for it. At stake in her writing is not only to make us see what she and others lived through but to change our way of looking and the very way we see, understand, and act in the world, to feel the pressure of the past weighing against the present, to not only see the image of the past but to hesitate and thereby experience its affective and perceptual effect in the present.

Listening Otherwise in Paul Celan's *Meridian*

From Delbo's poetic prose, I now return once more to a text that has accompanied much of the considerations of poetic attention in this dissertation so far, namely, Celan's "Meridian"-speech. *The Meridian*, as well as the extensive notes that Celan took in the months ahead of receiving the Georg-Büchner-Prize, provide a fragmentary archive of poetological reflections.[240] At this point, I take the speech into focus not only as a poetological reflection but also as performed speech that draws on elements of poetic language.[241] In doing so, I find in it a broader response to the question how poetry can open up critical interventions in the present by disrupting established habits of perception. Delbo's text formally generates an attitude of hesitation, a form of slowing-down that reveals an ethical potential by allowing for ways of seeing—ethically. In *The Meridian*, as the following pages show, this critical—and ethical—potential of hesitation reappears on two levels. For one, it is a central feature of what Celan refers to as "the poem" allowing us to see the transformative potential that Celan assigns to poetry. Second, the rhythm of the speech itself becomes hesitant through strategies of delay and repetition, opening up a transformative potential both for Celan's immediate audience in 1960—as well as for every subsequent reading of it.

In order to understand this, we can begin by noting that if Merleau-Ponty speaks of "institutions," Celan too has language to describe that, which is hardened, habitualized, sedimented. In *The Meridian*, it is art itself, which takes the form of that which is institutionalized or, as Celan puts it, automatized. "Art, [*die Kunst*]," hence the very beginning of the speech, "is a puppet-like, iambically five-footed […] being." Shortly after, Celan introduces—by way of Büchner's "Leonce und Lena," "two world famous automatons […] nothing but art and mechanics [*Nichts als Kunst und Mechanismus*] […]!" (M, 2) These reflections on art as that which is automatic, mechanic, akin to puppets held by strings and wires continues throughout the speech, eventually opening up to the question whether poetry follows the pattern of art:

> Wer Kunst vor Augen und im Sinn hat, der ist [...] selbstvergessen. Kunst schafft Ich Ferne. Kunst fordert hier in einer bestimmten Richtung eine bestimmte Distanz, einen bestimmten Weg.
> Und Dichtung? Dichtung, die doch den Weg der Kunst zu gehen hat? Dann wäre hier ja wirklich der Weg zu Medusenhaupt und Automat gegeben.
>
> He who has art before his eyes and on his mind […] forgets himself. Art creates I-distance. Art here demands in a certain direction a certain distance, a certain route.
> and poetry? Poetry which does have to tread the route of art? Then this would really be the route to the Medusa's head and the automaton. (M, 6)

Art moves according to prescribed rules, its "route" is automatic. Poetry, this statement implies, is at risk of treading that same route, habitually, automatically. At this point, however, something intervenes and interrupts the habitualized, sedimented path: For, as we saw in Chapter 2, "whenever there is talk about art, there is also always someone present [*zugegen*] …" and that is the character of Lucile who perceives language otherwise, for whom language has something perceptible, person-like. The appearance of her character on the scene introduces a different form of attentiveness. And eventually, her exclamation "Long live the king!" according to Celan, "tears the wire," the string of "puppets and automatons:

> [A]ls rings um Camille Pathos und Sentenz den Triumph von "Puppe" und "Draht" bestätigen, da ist Lucile, die Kunstblinde, dieselbe Lucile, für die Sprache etwas Personhaftes und Wahrnehmbares hat, noch einmal da, mit ihrem plötzlichen „Es lebe der König." […] Es ist das Gegenwort, es ist das Wort, das den „Draht" zerreißt, das Wort, das sich nicht mehr vor den „Eckstehern und Paradegäulen der Geschichte" bückt.
>
> [W]hen all around Camille pathos and sententiousness confirm the triumph of "puppet" and "string," then Lucile, one who is blind to art, the same Lucile for whom language is something person-like and tangible, is there, once again, with her sudden "Long live the king!" […] It is the counterword, it is the word that cuts the "string," the word that no longer bows down before the "bystanders and old war-horses of history." (M, 3)

At this point, Lucile, who I have previously read as embodying a form of patient attentiveness, becomes a counter-figure to what Merleau-Ponty called "institutions." She steps up, disrupting the puppets and wires, countering history's bystanders and old war-horses; bystanders, we can imagine, who observed without "seeing," and "old-war horses" that trot to the rhythm history's institutions.

Remarkably, then, Celan goes on to give Lucile yet another name. As he states, this interruption "has no name fixed once and for all, but I believe that this is … poetry [*Dichtung*]." (M, 4) What Celan proposes here is a definition of poetry that does not adhere to any conventions of genre. Rather, he frames poetry as precisely that which walks the route of art but then interrupts its habitual rhythm. And in fact, if we look at Celan's description of "the poem" throughout, its mode of being seems to be defined precisely by the tentative, hesitant, yet keenly relational structure that this chapter has defined as a counter-force to "institutions" of perception—a structure that we can call, echoing Lucile's "counter-word," "counter-rhythmic." This critical potential of hesitation then comes through in two different ways in the speech: For

one, as I argue, the speech figures the poem as something that holds the potential to disrupt that which is habitualized, automatized, creating an opening out of moments of hesitation. In addition, the rhetoric of the speech itself is characterized by a hesitant rhythm, moving through detours, tarrying, pulling back repeatedly and repeating itself, before moving ahead again. Instead of treading the route of art, the speech walks the path of poetry. And the audience, those who listened to Celan giving the speech in 1960 and later on his readers are challenged to follow the path, possibly experiencing a shift in frames of perception on the way.

The Path of the Poem

It is difficult to pin down one narrative or argumentative line in *The Meridian*. From the beginning, it is filled with voices of others, with direct and indirect citations, references, echoes. We remember that Celan's reference to Malebranche's notion of attentiveness is quoted by way of Benjamin's essay on Kafka and such detours and delays structure the speech throughout.[242] On a thematic level, Celan shifts from reflections on art to engagements with figures from Büchner's plays, then to poetry, to the structure of time and the singularity of historic "dates" back again to Büchner and forward again to the notion of utopia and the idea of an encounter with the "other." If there is a red thread running through this speech, it is the engagement with the poem and what we might call its "path."[243] As Celan presents it, the poem is "*unterwegs*": "The poem is lonely. It is lonely and *en route*. The poem wants to head toward some other …." (M, 9) On its path, the poem bears a certain passivity at the same time that it is keenly relational. In this sense, we hear for instance: "The poem tarries or tests the wind … but heads straight for the other." (*Das Gedicht verweilt oder verhofft ... aber es hält unentwegt auf jenes "Andere" zu*.) (M, 8) The poem waits, awaits and attends, tending toward an "other," maintaining—from within this precarious state—a patient, wakeful, committed attentiveness toward "everything it encounters." And the poem hesitates: "[The poem] stands fast at the edge of itself; it calls and brings itself, in order to be able to exist, ceaselessly back from its already-no-longer into its always-still." (M, 8) Much like the mode of patience in the reading of Celan and Pagis that finds itself frequently challenged by impatience, the hesitant nature of the poem is at times countered by a mode that appears to be more haste than hesitation, "poetry hurries ahead [*Dichtung eilt voraus*]." (M, 6) And then, the poem also doubts, it questions, "*zweifelt*": Poetry has to return to a "radical calling-into-question of art, a calling-into-question from that angle […] A calling-into-question to which all of today's poetry has to return, if it wants to question further." (*Eine radikale In-Frage-Stellung der Kunst, eine In-Frage-Stellung aus dieser Richtung […] Eine In-Frage-Stellung, zu der alle heutige Dichtung zurück muß, wenn sie weiterfragen will.*") (M, 5)

Celan way of speaking of "the poem" in the "Meridian"-speech is strange; the poem appears animated, taking shape in front of the reader's eye even as it never resolves into one single figure. We learn how it moves, what its rhythm feels like, what it tends toward. If the poem bears with it a mode of hesitation, then we can see now how, at the heart of it, it also contains the potential that Al-Saji identifies as "critical"—the potential to question what is there and imagine it differently.[244]

We find an echo of the tentative, receptive path of the poem in the language of Ingeborg Bachmann who, in her *Frankfurt Lectures on Poetics*, *Frankfurter Poetik Vorlesungen*, speaks to the capacity of art to effect change and expresses the need for a kind of thinking that, at its beginning, does not have a clear direction but retains an openness toward the unknown. Bachmann describes this form of thought as "Denken, das zuerst noch nicht um eine Richtung

besorgt ist, ei[n] Denken, das Erkenntnis will und mit der Sprache und durch die Sprache etwas erreichen will," a way of thinking "which initially is not concerned with its direction, a thinking that wants knowledge and wants to attain something with language and through language."[245] Bachmann's definition of "art" in this context approximates what Celan defines as precisely the opposite of art, that is poetry. In Bachmann, art possesses the non-automatic, perception-changing qualities that Celan's concept of "art" in *The Meridian* excludes. She writes that art does not "progress horizontally" but by moments of "vertical" openings: "The changing effect that comes from new works instructs us in new forms of perception, new feelings, new consciousness."[246] What Bachmann describes here is less the—possibly timeless—impact of an individual work of art but that which is new in artworks, which supersedes what was previously modern as the new contemporary. Shortly after, however, she shifts the object of concern and explains that the public has become numb to experiences of suffering. Resonant of Hermann Broch, she states: "[W]e are asleep. We are sleepers from fear of having to perceive ourselves and our world." [247] Here, the search for new forms of perception, new feelings, new consciousness receives an acute urgency. Artworks need to bring about changes in perception; they need to maintain a flexibility and critical self-reflection in the present and an openness toward the future. Art, we can then say with Celan, needs to proceed poetically, interrupting habitual rhythms, moving things into a new light—tentatively at least.

Walking Poetry's Path

The Meridian figures the poem as that which is delayed, slow and hesitant at times and then again as moving forward, rushing ahead. The precariousness of its path speaks to the precarious state of poetry after crisis and maybe the nature of crisis as such—a breakdown of routines and habits in the aftermath of disaster. But just as the term crisis shares its etymological root with "critique," both deriving from the Greek *krisis* (κρίσις) whose semantic range includes "turning point"—this hesitant, errant poetry in crisis can bring the historical crisis to bear onto the present as a form of critique. Poetry, as Celan had it, can be a breathturn.

From this argument about the critically and ethically pertinent "hesitant" nature of poetry, I now want to turn to a closer analysis of the way in which this critical potential unfolds in the hesitant rhythm of the speech. As Celan's "Meridian"-speech follows the poem's path, the speech's rhetoric mirrors its errant rhythm, its moments of hesitation and multiple detours, actualizing the potential of hesitant, tentative thought in its own form. That is to say, the speech brings what is a general potential of poetry into the present of its own performance.

The Meridian opens, like so many other speeches, with a commonplace: the apostrophic claim "Ladies and Gentlemen." (*Meine Damen und Herren*.) A common address to the audience, it is also a call for attention that draws the audience into a form of listening that is habitualized, tapping into a tradition of public speeches. The "Ladies and Gentlemen," know what they attend to. Then, however, the speech moves on to unsettle any stabilization of attention. The line "Something intervenes [*Es kommt etwas dazwischen*]" (M, 2) marks not only the end of the opening paragraph but speaks to the rhetoric as a whole: *The Meridian* repeatedly interrupts its own ways of attending to something, displaces and disperses the attention of the listeners or readers through its extensive use of ellipses and citations, it takes a step ahead, turns, re-turns. If the poem is *en route* then so is the speech, which Celan structures and describes as a movement and search along an errant path. Throughout, the speech is punctuated by self-reflective observations that track the movement of the speech—dashing forward, announcing an end but

then pulling back again, hesitant to conclude. The following excerpts are just some of the moments in which the speech signals and actively reflects on its own errant path:

> Ich habe vorgegriffen, hinausgegriffen—nicht weit genug, ich weiß—, ich kehre […] zurück […].
>
> Finden wir jetzt vielleicht den Ort, wo das Fremde war, den Ort, wo die Person sich freizusetzen vermochte, als ein—befremdetes--Ich? […]
>
> Toposforschung? […]
>
> Welche Fragen! Welche Forderungen!
> Es ist Zeit umzukehren.
>
> Meine Damen und Herren, ich bin am Ende—ich bin wieder am Anfang. […]
>
> Ich bin, auch hier, in Ihrer Gegenwart, diesen Weg gegangen. Es war ein Kreis. […]
>
> Meine Damen und Herren, erlauben Sie mir, da ich ja wieder am Anfang bin, noch einmal, in aller Kürze und aus einer anderen Richtung, nach dem Selben zu fragen. […]
>
> Meine Damen und Herren, ich finde etwas, das mich auch ein wenig darüber hinwegtröstet, in Ihrer Gegenwart diesen unmöglichen Weg, diesen Weg des Unmöglichen gegangen zu sein. […]

> I have anticipated, reached beyond—not far enough, I know, I'll return … […]
>
> Can we now perhaps locate the place where strangeness was, the place where the person was able to set himself free as an—estranged—I?
>
> Topos research? […]
>
> What questions! What claims!
> It is time to turn back.
>
> Ladies and gentlemen, I am at the end—I am back at the beginning. […]
>
> I took this route, here too, in your presence. It was a circle. […]
>
> Ladies and gentlemen, permit me, as I am back at the beginning, to ask once more, in all brevity and from a different direction, the same question. […]

In this speech that winds and unwinds rhetorically, these sentences function as signposts but also undo the possibility of any linear orientation. In the disorienting shifts that they perform, we

perceive an echo of the disorientation produced by Pagis's poetry. And in the strange figuration of the walking poem, there is also an echo of Celan's "Engführung" and its imperative to "read no more… walk!" With *The Meridian* too, it is not clear where Celan is heading. All throughout, the many quotations weave voices of others into the present, expanding and unsettling the listeners' attention. The above "signposts" of the poem's errant path allow us to see what Bernhard Waldenfels in his *Phenomenology of Attention* (*Phänomenologie der Aufmerksamkeit*) calls a "story of attention [*Aufmerksamkeitsgeschichte*]." A phenomenological structure rather than a narrative, a "story of attention," in Waldenfels's definition, is what unfolds when an existing order of attention is repeatedly disturbed, when the "iron shell" of an established mode of attention—what he calls "*Aufmerksamkeitspanzer*"—is interrupted, undone, by moments of noticing something new or differently:

> This can mean that something becomes noticeable differently, that the topic changes; or it can mean that everything attracts attention in a new way, that everything moves into new light and what was unheard-of now claims to be heard. … The world of attention is set into movement, it takes on the form of a "story of attention" with its own stops and turning points.[248]

Waldenfels notion of an "iron shell of attention" adapts Merleau-Ponty's notions of the "institution" and "sedimentation" of habitualized perception for the specific phenomenality of attention. Attention sediments, cements the way in which we attend, what we attend to, what receives time and care and energy. Paths of attention—ways of paying attention—can become well-trodden paths, where practices of attention sediment and cement until their status is no longer questioned.

Against the background of the strange path of the poem and Celan's reflection that, in speaking to his audience, he has in fact "walked" along a certain path in their presence it is interesting to note that Waldenfels locates a potential to break the "iron shell" of our habitual perception precisely in the act of walking.[249] Drawing on Paul Valéry's reflection that "intentional delay" might support attention, he suggests that habitual attention can be interrupted through "forms of movement such as the hesitant gait, the roaming about, wandering about, or strolling, [forms of movement] that proceed without goal, yet carried by a rhythm that produces an underlying order."[250] This resonates with what Lutz Koepnick, speaking to a modernist aesthetic more generally, has highlighted as the potential of slow walking to suspend regimes of "linear, teleoglogical, goal oriented time" and to "perceive the world as one structured by open-ended potentialities and principally unpredictable relationships."[251] And so maybe the very fact that Celan asks his audience to walk with him on that "impossible path" of poetry is already the precondition for the moment of interruption of the route of the automaton. Something intervenes, interrupts the habitualized, sedimented path. This interruption is produced through the rhythm of the speech itself—both in its spoken and written form, creating a "story of attention," as it moves through detours, "turning points," as Waldenfels puts it, or "breath turns," in Celan's language, unsettling common ways of seeing and understanding. This "story of attention" that we find in the rhetoric of *The Meridian* is not a narrative but a movement that—grounded in the formal elements of the speech—extends to listeners and readers, involving them on the way. *The Meridian*, we can see at this point, does not only speak of attention; it also shapes the attention of its audience, in reading or in listening to it.

The speech eventually ends with a series of acknowledgements that at first seem to follow all the norms and habits of a prize speech. Celan thanks the persons and institutions that enabled the prize, but then turns to the audience with a final—subtly strange—statement. He concludes: "Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your presence [*Anwesenheit*]." (M, 13) This, at first, does not seem all too disruptive of the usual rhetoric of a price speech, but in the context of *The Meridian* that reflected repeatedly on "attention," "Aufmerksamkeit," it makes us hesitate; we could have expected Celan to thank the audience for their "attention." In 1959, the year before Celan received the Georg Büchner prize, Günther Eich concluded his speech with the words "Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your attention." (*Meine Damen und Herren, ich danke Ihnen für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit*.) Erich Kästner's acceptance speech in 1957 ended on: "And lastly and finally, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you all for your attention." (*Und schließlich und endlich, meine Damen und Herren, danke ich Ihnen allen für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit*.) And in 1970, Thomas Bernhard will conclude his speech with the words: "I thank the academy, I thank you for your attention." (*Ich danke der Akademie, ich danke für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit*.)[252] Instead of following this tradition, Celan ends his speech on a different note and concludes with the sentence "Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your presence." (*Meine Damen und Herren, ich danke Ihnen für Ihre Anwesenheit*.) "Anwesenheit," "presence," is underlined in the second preserved draft version of the speech, indicating that Celan consciously decided on this term. In this moment, Celan displaces the commonplace one would have expected, interrupting once more the "route of the automaton," making readers or listeners hesitate, opening up the space for a minimal disruption of existing norms.

Zeitkritik

If Celan's speech makes readers hesitate and thereby stages an intervention in the present, causing his audience to listen otherwise, what are the "institutions" that Celan seeks to disrupt in 1960? I addressed the historical context in which Celan found himself writing *The Meridian*—as well as the extensive preliminary notes to it—earlier in the introduction to this dissertation. To recall: At the time when he received the news of the award and began writing, Celan knew, as Eshel relates "that many of the attending dignitaries had participated knowingly or involuntarily in the Nazi endeavor."[253] In this context, Celan pins down reflections such as "The Nazi tone survives the Nazi vocabulary," (M, 173) or the following note, which rephrases this sentiment:

> Es ist kein Zeichen von Umkehr, wenn ~~im~~ mit denselben [mit anderen] Worten aber im selben Tonfall wie gestern, ~~von dem~~ die Dinge und die Menschen gelobt werden, die man gestern verdammt hat.
>
> It is not a sign of reversal when ~~in~~ with the same [with other] words but with the same intonation as yesterday, ~~by which~~ things and humans are praised that were damned yesterday. (M, 173)

Ultimately, this "persistence" of existing structures—of institutions and old habits—is not just a matter of tone: After the end of the war, only a fracture of persons implicated in the crimes of German National Socialism were taken to responsibility whereas the broad majority was quickly rehabilitated—and the cultural sphere proved no exception to this rule. His critique of the

existing "cultural busyness," "*Kulturbeflissenheit*" that I discussed at greater length in the introduction returns once more here:

> We have been, each in his own way, witnesses of a process, which has led us to this circumstance from that which only fifteen years ago still lay true and heavy on our heart: talking of the turning [*Umkehr*] instead of change itself, supposed engagement and commitment instead of real responsibility, cultural busy-ness rather than simple attentiveness. (M, 169)

Fifteen years after the end of the war, change has not happened, and instead of real responsibility, the memory of "that which only fifteen years ago still lay true and heavy on our heart" has been integrated into the cultural discourse, without, however, changing the parameters of the discourse itself. In the 1990s, Y. Michal Bodemann—echoing Celan's puppets and automatons—will coin the term "theatre of remembrance," "*Gedächtnistheater*," to describe Germany's outward performance of responsibility toward the history of National Socialism that covers over ongoing neglects of persistent forms of anti-Semitic and racist violence.[254] Another three decades later, Czollek and the collective of writers surrounding the journal *Jalta* will similarly point to the perfunctory cultural busyness at the heart of Germany's culture of remembrance—all of them pointing to what is sedimented, automatized, institutionalized, all of them searching for ways to undo it.

Celan's preparatory notes to *The Meridian*—notes critical of the cultural and social climate Celan found himself in in 1960, critical of the literary and cultural institutions, critical of the very group of "distinguished professors" that make up the price committee—eventually did not make it into the final version of the speech. But, as Celan's speech involves an audience in its movements, having his listeners and readers partake in its rhythms of haste and hesitation, the potential for critique becomes visible on another level: In its errant rhetoric, its detours and delays, the speech performs its work upon the audience, opening up a space for shifts in habits of perception and understanding. Or at least, this is what the poem and the speech hope for. In the following final part of this study, I shift away from the historical framework of the 1950s and 1960s and forward in time toward the 1990s and 2010s, looking to ways in which two other poets—May Ayim and Max Czollek—enlist poetic language to reveal the counter-rhythmic potential of the past in their own present.

4. WAKEFULNESS

The attentiveness a poem devotes to all it encounters […] is a concentration that stays mindful of all our dates.

— Paul Celan, The Meridian

In the wake, the past that is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present.

— Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*

What does it mean to be in the wake of the Nazi genocide, of "that which happened" as Celan called it? We commonly speak of literature in the wake of the Holocaust, poetry in the wake of the Holocaust, ethics in the wake of the Holocaust. That place and time and position of being "in the wake" of this historical event expands, appears in new constellations, and emerges in new presents. Are we ever not in its wake?

When Christina Sharpe mobilizes the term "wake" in the context of the aftermath of slavery, she unfolds its different registers: "Wake" as in "the path of a ship" speaks most immediately of the slave ships and the history of the Middle Passage, but also extends its reach to today's "ongoing crossings of and drownings in the Mediterranean Sea;" "Wake" as in the practice of keeping watch with the dead speaks of "rituals through which we enact grief and memory;" "Wake" as in "being awake" signals a form of coming to consciousness.[255] Sharpe addresses a different context than I do here, but when she explains that "in the wake, the past that is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present," this temporal structure of the wake resonates with the words of German-Jewish poet Max Czollek who insists, in 2020, that in Germany "the past is not past."[256] To understand the past as not being past speaks to practices of remembrance that perceive the past as present and thereby keep it animated (Chapter One foregrounded such a temporal co-presence). At the same time, to see the past as "not past" also entails an acknowledgement of the ways in which structures of past violence still persist into the

present, how elements of the "concentrationary universe" remained in existence even after the closure of the concentration camps.

In this final chapter, I make the case that poetry—in the wake of the Holocaust—can bring about a state of wakefulness that guards against the recurrence or persistence of past violence. This poetic wakefulness has a peculiar two-sided structure. For one, to be wakeful is to be alert. Wakefulness in this sense is the form of attention within this study that most directly reminds us that the German "*Aufmerksamkeit*" (attentiveness or attention), also contains the verb "*aufmerken*:" to jostle someone into a state of alertness, to make someone notice something, as well as "to rise up." Wakefulness describes a form of attention that keeps the focus open for what is yet to come, or what might return—or for that which never quite went away in the first place but which fell into oblivion. As a second dimension, wakefulness entails what Celan called being "mindful of all our dates." It is an ethical tendency that turns toward and attends to the fullness of history. To be wakeful is to see different times drawn together and acknowledging the continuities and resonances between them. Wakefulness in this sense responds to history not as what Benjamin called "homogenous" and "empty" time, but rather what he envisioned as history "filled with the present of the now."[257] This perception of time, for Benjamin, ultimately constituted the condition for recognizing "histories of past oppression" "in a moment of danger."[258] These two aspects of wakefulness—attentiveness toward the fullness of history as well as vigilance in the present—are not separate commitments; they form part of the same attentive mode. Poetry, which allows us to encounter the past in its fullness and not as empty and homogenous time, also challenges us to be vigilant, on the lookout: For the moment when the "old monster of the camps" rises from the rubble, as Resnais's *Nuit et Brouillard* had it, but also for the many ways in which elements of violence that allowed for and sustained the camps persist or reappear in the contemporary.

Like the tendency that it engages with, this chapter too will draw different times together. It begins once more with Celan, specifically his poem "In Eins" ("In One") (1963), which—true to its title—pulls together a number of singular events and in doing so also highlights their intricate entanglements. I bring "In Eins" in dialogue with the poem "Deutschland im Herbst" ("Germany in Autumn") by Afro-German poet May Ayim, which constellates the memory of "*Kristallnacht*," the anti-Semitic pogrom of November 1938, with the racist murder of Amadeu Antonio Kiowa in November 1990. I show how both Celan and Ayim mobilize a formal tension between singular historical events on the one hand and broader systemic structures of violence on the other, in order to push against and unsettle the present. In the second part of this chapter, I then turn to the work of Max Czollek to demonstrate how his poetry opens up the historical density within language to reflect critically on the present. In Czollek, constellations of different historically charged words unsettle what he describes as the "sedimented violence" within language, opening up to a state of wakefulness. "Wakefulness" at this point intersects with what Czollek calls *Gegenwartsbewältigung*, that is, a form of remembrance, which—unlike *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* that implies the "overcoming of the past"—does not assume the past *as past* but addresses the persistence of the past in the present—and works through it.

Wakefulness, in this sense disrupts what this dissertation's introduction described as "memory in a vacuum." Employing different poetic techniques, the three poets I read in this chapter all break up the temporal isolation of past and present and thereby engender forms of remembrance that work against forgetting. "The present" means something different for each of them: The contemporary moment that shines through in Celan's poem is the end of the Algerian war and the protests around it. Ayim refracts the long history of racism in Germany through the

contemporary prism of the country's reunification. Czollek writes against the backdrop of Germany's political landscape in the late 2010s that is marked by the trials of the National Socialist Underground (NSU) murders and the resurgence of the far right. For all of them, these different contemporary moments stand in dialogue with the history of the Holocaust.

By bringing Celan in relation to Ayim and Czollek, this chapter not only moves the discourse on "poetry after Auschwitz" into the present. It also crosses discursive boundaries by analyzing the specific position of poetry written in the wake of the Holocaust in dialogue with philosophical thought that examines the aftermath and afterlives of other historical trauma—US/North American slavery and colonialism. In this sense, my methodology enacts the trajectory of the poetry I discuss. All the poems I read in the following pages work through connections between different histories of violence. The methodology, then, raises the same question as the poems do: To what extent can different histories be related? When do gestures of relating between different historic events result in a competition between them? When does reading one history alongside another erase the singular character of each one of them? The poems by Celan, Ayim, and Czollek all engage with the plurality of remembrance in different ways, but for all of them the fullness of the past becomes a resource for probing the present for emergent or persistent forms of violence in the now. In these poems, time appears akin to what Debarati Sanyal, addressing "the wake of shattering events—slavery, colonial conquest, occupation, war, dictatorship, apartheid, genocide," has described as a "changing, many-stranded, and *entangled* phenomenon."[259] Celan, Ayim, and Czollek all actualize this understanding of time in their writing. Through formal strategies, they enmesh readers in the tensions and entanglements between different times in a way that implicates their own contemporary moment, so that readers might—potentially at least—reconsider their own present in light of the past.

"A Concentration Mindful of All Our Dates": Paul Celan and May Ayim

We have heard in earlier chapters that for Celan, poetry bears its "dates" with it, and that "poetry today" is marked by January 20th, the date of the Wannsee Conference, carrying this history with it into the present. Celan once suggested that poetry is a "message in a bottle," and we might think of its "dates" in the same way, being carried through time before washing upon the "heartland" of our own contemporary moment.[260] But borrowing this image of a bottle that gets carried through time does not quite do justice to time as an entangled, relational, even messy phenomenon. The past is never isolated by glass, carried over to the present. By the time it arrives (whatever "it" was—one date, one instant, one event?), the past has entered into a multiplicity of relations and has shaped the times to come. The present cannot be thought of without the past, cannot be thought in a vacuum, lest we forget it. Celan's poetry, time and again, unsettles this isolation of the past, revealing it as embedded in relations that ultimately extend to always new presents of reading. A poem that exemplifies this more than any other is Celan's "In Eins": It shows us how each word, each date, carries a plentitude of historical references and moments with it, generating not only a remembrance of "all our dates" but also a wakefulness toward the present and future.[261]

In One

In Eins

Dreizehnter Feber. Im Herzmund
erwachtes Schibboleth. Mit dir,
Peuple
de Paris. *No pasarán*.

Schäfchen zur Linken : er, Abadias,
der Greis aus Huesca, kam mit den Hunden
über das Feld, im Exil
stand weiss eine Wolke
menschlichen Adels, er sprach
uns das Wort in die Hand, das wir brauchten, es war
Hirten-Spanisch, darin

im Eislicht des Kreuzers "Aurora":
die Bruderhand, winkend mit der
von den wortgrossen Augen
genommenen Binde — Petropolis, der
Unvergessenen Wanderstadt lag
auch dir toskanisch zu Herzen.

Friede den Hütten!

In One

Thirteenth of February. Shibboleth
roused in the heart's mouth. With you,
peuple
de Paris. *No pasarán*.

Little sheep to the left: he, Abadias,
the old man from Huesca, came with his dogs
over the field, in exile
white hung a cloud
of human nobility, into our hands
he spoke the word that we needed, it was
shepherd-Spanish, and in it

in icelight of the cruiser "Aurora":
the brotherly hand, waving with
the blindfold removed from
his word-wide eyes — Petropolis, the
roving city of those unforgotten,
was Tuscanly close to your heart also.

Peace to the cottages!

The title "In Eins" indicates a movement of condensation, tightening, or clustering and the poem throughout exhibits a fullness, excess even, in different ways. It is, for one, immediately striking in its constellation of five different languages within the first stanza alone: German, French, Spanish, the Hebrew "Schibboleth" and the Austrian-German "Feber." "In Eins" itself—while German on the surface—can also be read as Yiddish, in which it becomes a rallying cry for solidarity. Under this title and from within the richness of different languages, the poem moves to a dense network of names, images, and watchwords, a tight-knit web of moments of anti-fascist resistance, workers' movements, and anti-war protests.[262]

Almost every element of the poem can be matched to a particular historical event or personal anecdote, gathering historical moments of resistance into one. The poem was written in the Spring of 1962 and February 13 speaks to this immediate historical context, to the day when the people of Paris marched by their thousands at the funeral for the victims of the repressed anti-OAS demonstration that ended in a massacre at the Métro station Charonne on Feburary 8, 1962.[263] This event, in turn, also points back to the violent repression of the demonstration on October 17, 1961 and the killings of Algerian protesters, directed by the same person, Maurice Papon, who would later be convicted on charges for his role under the Vichy regime.[264] At the same time, we also hear in Celan's strange use of the Austrian word for February, "*Feber*," an echo of his poem "Schibboleth," which registers the memory of the Viennese workers uprising on February 12, 1934 and so the echo of the Austrian refracts the memory of that event and that history onto 1962. Celan sees his own contemporary moment and this vision is suddenly overlayed with the uprising of 1934. Attending to Celan's present—the year 1962—also becomes an act of tending toward and to the year 1934. What I discuss in Chapter Two as the

"spectrality" of Celan's language, that is, the way in which individual signifiers unfold into different meanings, now reappears as a temporal structure: Individual dates come to reference different events and thereby draw them together, *in one*.

This pattern of dated signifiers refracting into a plurality of events and places continues throughout the poem. In the last stanza, the name "Petropolis," the "roving city of those unforgotten," points us at once to Osip Mandelstam's Sankt Petersburg, to Petropolis in Brazil, the city where Stefan Zweig died in exile, and finally to a publishing house for Russian exile literature in Berlin during the interwar period by that same name.[265] At least three different stories cluster around the name "Petropolis." The poem as a whole multiplies the connections even further through other cross-references, intertexts, and echoes. The line "*Toskanisch zu Herzen*," which Michael Hamburger translates as "Tuscanly to heart," for instance, reveals the poem "Do not compare" by Osip Mandelstam as an intertext. This poem, so Clare Cavanagh, points toward Dante's native Tuscany—whose identification as "the landscape of all longing" works on a pun in the Russian language: the word "*toska*" designates a "form of acute homesickness and yearning."[266] The single word "toskanisch" hence oscillates in the intertextual contact zone between Celan's own poem, Mandelstam's poem, and Dante. Following Svetlana Boym, "*toska*" is a Russian "untranslatable."[267] But if this is the case, Celan's "*toskanisch*" can also be read as a composite of Russian and German and would then point back to the experience of exile that inscribes itself in the poem in the mention of the old, exiled shepherd from Huesca, to Zweig's Petropolis, or to the white cloud which "stood in exile"—which in turn recalls the pillar of cloud accompanying the Israelites through the desert in Exodus [13:21]. In this play of references, languages are once more "stealing across borders," as Pagis's poem had it.

The structure of "In Eins" is excessive. As much as the poem gathers events and voices and languages into one, it also explodes from within its "oneness" to speak to a multiplicity of other contexts, events, and people, with new stories and connections being revealed at every turn, all while implicating the present and future in it. In maybe the most famous interpretation of this poem, Jacques Derrida finds in the spectral character of its language the ground for his own reflections on the "date," which always comes to haunt its own occurrence. He calls this gathering of singular events under one date—the Paris protests, the Austrian workers uprising—a "con-signing and co-signing of a multiple singularity."[268] In reading, the openness of individual dates toward others spins into a perpetual claim for attention, asking for a continuous reengagement. But as we turn our attention to one event—such as the demonstrations for Algerian independence—more than witnessing a co-signing of different events—we also feel language and time give way, opening up passages between different moments in time. It is a structure that recalls what Gayatri Spivak in "The Politics of Translation" calls—via Freud—*frayages*, that is, moments in which the "language-textile" and its selvedges give way, unraveling "into frayages and facilitations."[269] At stake in Celan is not translation between different languages, but Celan's dates are fraying toward other referents and historical events, fraying toward the present moment, opening up passages between times and thereby allowing for gestures of solidarity between them. It is a messy structure. What from one perspective looks like contingency of meaning—the poem could be speaking of Zweig's Petropolis or reference that of Mandelstam—exposes itself as a situation of contact, con-*tangere*, where different historical events touch upon another. Being in the wake of one February 13 is also to be wakeful toward other February 13s, those past and those yet to come, and those that might not even carry that temporal marker, but find common ground in other ways. As different pasts merge, and readers

are asked to hold the fullness of time in their own present, this fullness—potentially—opens up a movement of unrest that engenders a wakefulness in the present.

U-Not-Y

Thinking about dates and the different events that any single one of them can refer to and hold "in one," there is perhaps no single date in the German past that is as heavy with history as November 9th. Famously known as "*Schicksalstag*," "Day of Fate," November 9th was the date of a series of critical events, including the end of the monarchies and Karl Liebknecht's proclamation of the "Free Socialist Republic of Germany" in 1918, Adolf Hitler's failed "Beer Hall Putsch" in 1923, the anti-Semitic pogroms of 1938, and the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. From Celan, I now move "forward" in time to the immediate aftermath of November 9th, 1989, to see how May Ayim's engagement with this fateful date takes history out of the vacuum and traces its reverberations in the present. Ayim—poet, essayist, activist—began publishing and performing poetry in the 1980s, in dialogue, among other, with Audre Lorde and the group of women Lorde brought together during her time at FU Berlin.[270] Ayim's poem, "Deutschland im Herbst," written in the wake of the German reunification, turns to the memory of the anti-Semitic pogroms of November 1938, highlighting continuities between past and present "autumns" in order to generate a vigilant attitude toward winters yet to come.[271]

Deutschland im Herbst	**Germany in Autumn**
es ist nicht wahr	it is not true
daß es nicht wahr ist	that it is not true
so war es	that's how it was
erst zuerst dann wieder	first at first and then again
so ist es	that's how it is
kristallnacht:	"kristallnacht":
im november 1938	in november 1938
zerklirrten zuerst	first shattered
fensterscheiben	were windowpanes
dann	then
wieder und wieder	again and again
menschenknochen	human bones
von juden und schwarzen und	of jews and blacks
kranken und schwachen von	of the weak and the sick
sinti und roma und	of sinti and roma and
polen von lesben und	poles of lesbians and
schwulen von und von	gays of and of
und von und von	and of and of
und und	and and
erst einige dann viele	first a few then many
immer mehr	more and more
[…]	[…]
schon wieder?	again?

ein einzelfall:	a singular incident:
im november 1990 wurde	in november 1990
antonio amadeo aus angola	antonio amadeu from angola
in eberswalde	was murdered
von neonazis	in Eberswalde
erschlagen	by neo-nazis
[…]	[…]
im neuvereinten deutschland	in the newly united germany
das sich so gerne	that so much likes to
viel zu gerne	likes too much
wiedervereinigt nennt	to call itself re-united
dort haben	it happened
in diesem und jenem ort	that here and there
zuerst häuser	it was first houses
dann menschen gebrannt	then people that burnt down
erst im osten dann im westen	first in the east then in the west
dann	then
im ganzen land	the whole country
erst zuerst dann wieder	first at first and then again
es ist nicht wahr	it is not true
daß es nicht wahr ist	that it is not true
so war es	that's how it was
so ist es:	that's how it is:
deutschland im herbst	autumn in germany
mir graut vor dem winter	i dread the winter

Where Celan's poem opened up a view on the anticolonial struggle over Algeria in 1962 while also letting the memory of the anti-fascist uprising in Vienna in 1934 shine through, Ayim's poem, written in the wake of the German reunification, draws a line from the pogroms of November 9, 1938 to November 1990, to the story of Amadeu Antonio Kiowa, who was attacked by a group of Neo-Nazis in Eberswalde and died days later from his injuries. The poem spans a loosely chronological line across other unnamed dates. Again and again, it tells us, windowpanes are shattered, and then human bones, listing different groups who were subject to this violence "jews and blacks / the weak and the sick / sinti and roma…" The temporal arch of the poem and the rhythmic recurrence of "again and again" is loose enough to blur our understanding whether this "again" is situated in the immediate aftermath of the 1938 pogrom, hence speaking to the persecution under National Socliaism or rather already referencing other post-war realities. Or both. From within the historic fullness, the poem testifies—in a boundless manner—to the persistence of violence in Germany. And so the poem, precisely through this formal loosening, also puts pressure on that other November 9th of the German reunification 1989, fracturing its unity.

The murder of Kiowa, committed by a group of Neo-Nazis out to "hunt" "foreigners" comes at a time when the reunified country registered an increased number of reports of racially motivated attacks.[272] In an essay published in 1993, Ayim herself reflects on the aftermath of the reunification in the following words:

> When the wall came down, I was afraid for some time that someone would beat me to death. […] In the first days after November 9, 1989 I noticed that few immigrants and Black Germans were to be seen in the city, or at least few of those with darker skin colors. I asked myself how many Jews were (not) out in the streets.[273]

The sense of solidarity among different minorities that are excluded from the newly reunified Germany is both acutely present, emerging against the background of her own contemporary moment but also deeply historical, as it points to the persistence of concentrationary structures through time. The contact between different dates in Ayim's poem, then, has different effects. For one, there is the warning that emerges from within the recognition of legacies of violence in Germany. If the autumn of 1990 returns the memory of autumn 1939, this poem tells us, then there is reason to be on guard against what the winter brings. At the same time, this historic fullness that acknowledges the entanglement of histories of violence builds up a structure of solidarity. By turning to the fullness of history, the poem exposes the "emptiness" of Germany's "(re)unification." When it turns to the "newly united Germany," we are able to see who is left behind and not included. Ayim calls the new unity in this sense "*Scheinheit*"—drawing the word "*Einheit*" (unity) together with "*Schein*," (appearance or make-believe.) (In her own translation of the poem into English, Ayim renders this as "U-Not-Y."[274]) Her poem disrupts this self-declared notion of unity from within at the same time that it foregrounds an attentive solidarity among the groups excluded from it.

The historic "fullness" of this poem is not limited to the period between 1938 and 1990. The title of the poem marks another date, "Germany in autumn" and while this appears immediately tied to the autumns of 1938 and 1990, in the poem's final anticipation of winters to come we can also hear an echo of Heinrich Heine, whose *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen* (*Germany. A Winter's Tale*) reflected on the poet's homeland from a position of exile in France, satirically and critically questioning narrow, empty notions of German identity. Heine's poetic commentary connects with Ayim's own through time. As much as the poem relates the violence of 1938 to that of 1990, it also makes visible that both of these histories are entangled with earlier forms of exclusion from German national unity. And this pattern of relating between different historic events reaches further. The temporal marker "germany in autumn"—more immediately so than that of any November 9th—recalls the events of the "German autumn" (*Deutscher Herbst*) in 1977 as well as the 1978 film by that very name, *Deutschland im Herbst*, a collaborative production by eleven filmmakers within the New German Cinema.[275] Broadly, the German autumn refers to a series of events in September and October 1977, ranging from the Red Army Faction's (RAF) kidnapping of wealthy industrialist and former SS officer Hanns-Martin Schleyer, to the hijacking of a Lufthansa airplane by the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), to the deaths of Gudrun Ensslin, Andreas Baader, and Jan-Carl Raspe in Stammheim prison.[276] The issues that defined the German autumn and which come together in the film resonate with the efforts of Ayim's poem to lay bare the continuities between Germany's Nazi past and the present: from segments that relay the "symptomatic complicity between the fascist past (Schleyer's collaboration during the Third Reich) and government approved capitalist "adventurism,"" to an episode that shows a school teacher digging for German history in the forest we recognize the preoccupation with the persistence of fascist structures in contemporary Germany.[277] At the same time, the poem echoes the film by the same title not only through its thematic concern, but also through its form. *Deutschland im Herbst* is

notorious for its formal eclecticism, a mix of documentary footage, interviews, fictional elements, and historical reconstructions. As Marc Silberman writes of the film:

> *Germany in Autumn* in its entirety defies the linearity of historical representation. Rather, the associative nature of its editing juxtaposes and foreshortens events and thereby resists the totalizing illusion of the chronicle. The system of visual and aural linkages may produce an effect of coherence within a segment, but in fact, coherence in the enunciation of the film must be provided by the spectator.

And further, "What seems at first to be a mere potpourri or at most a series of loosely connected themes, in fact constitutes a formal vehicle by which the spectator's habitual ways of seeing history are disrupted."[278] This then, is also one of the affordances of Ayim's formal strategy of connecting the different dates of November 9, 1938 and November 1990: It unsettles what, by then, had become a habitual way of seeing the "unified Germany" after the fall of the Berlin wall, the formal structure of the poem performing critique beyond the semantic content. The past is mobilized to interrogate the present, questioning what forms of violence and oppression persist, and so "remembering" becomes an active form of critique. As the repetition of "again and again," "of and of / and of and of / and" and the recurrence of dates "9. November 1938 / November 1990" builds up to a recurring rhythm, the interjection "*ein einzelfall*," "a singular case" has its meaning undone—the singular being exposed as part of an ongoing thread of violence at the same time that the poem also asserts the uniqueness of Amadeu Antonio through the mention of his name, retaining the singularity amidst this "gathering" of different dates. As readers are moved through the rhythm of her poem, they are also tasked with holding the connections between different moments, holding history's fullness—continuities of violence but also of solidarity—and understanding themselves as implicated in the entanglements of history.

Do Not Compare

Relating between different histories of violence as both Ayim and Celan do in their poems, does not come without potential for conflict. Sanyal explains this in the following words:

> Memory's entanglement of distinctive and asymmetrical sites of trauma (slavery, the holocaust, colonialism, or terror) can shake up established traditions of remembrance and belonging, allowing new ones to emerge. Yet it can also drive us to dangerous intersections, where difference is eclipsed into sameness, where identification leads to appropriation, or where political uses of memory collide with the ethical obligations of testimony.[279]

Looking to Ayim's poem, we can note that the third stanza most directly draws continuities between experience of different groups—"jews and blacks / of the weak and the sick / of sinti and roma and / poles of lesbians and / gays […]." The list structure of the poem and its repetitive rhythm conveys equivalence between different groups who were targeted under German National Socialism and excluded by National Socialist ideology. What from one angle builds up to a sense of solidarity appears, from another, as the erasure of difference. Polish people were not persecuted in the same way as Sinti and Roma, lesbian women not as gay men, and Jews faced exceptional violence and persecution as the group that was targeted for complete annihilation.

This is of course further complicated by the fact that these groups might not be separate to begin with, that there were those who were sick and Roma, Polish and lesbian, gay and Jewish. This tension between different unique positions and shared experiences expands in the move toward the present, in which the groups that Ayim names face forms of violence and marginalization from a German mainstream society again—or still—albeit in ways that are different from the past. The problem of relating between different experiences at different times and in different contexts multiplies. And so this poem also raises the question about the risks of thinking wakefulness in this way, guided by the understanding that the past is not past and that being in the wake of the Holocaust also means attending to new and old forms of concentrationary violence in the present. Does this expansiveness risk erasing the singularity and particularity of each event in comparison? In other words, if we see the return of a past November 9 in November 1990, do we pay less attention to the former? Similarly, in Celan, what gets lost if we relate an anti-fascist uprising to protests for Algerian independence?

The title of Mandelstam's poem "Do Not Compare"—a shadow text in Celan's poem—refracts a silent question onto the plurality within both Celan's and Ayim's poems, which both associate and relate events intensely within the minimal space of the poem or even the minimal space of a single signifier or single date. In an effort to conceptualize what happens when "different histories of extreme violence confront each other in the public sphere" Michael Rothberg has coined the term "multidirectional memory."[280] Such a form of memory, he argues, stands in opposition to "competitive memory," that is, the understanding that "memories crowd each other out of the public sphere – for example, too much emphasis on the Holocaust is said to marginalize other traumas or, inversely, adoption of Holocaust rhetoric to speak of those other traumas is said to relativize or even deny the Holocaust's uniqueness." [281] Unlike this "competitive" approach to thinking the co-presence of and relation between different memories within the public sphere, multidirectional memory "juxtaposes sympathetically but does not reduce to sameness. Such multidirectional acts of memory need not create equations that erase the particularities of different histories. At their best, they can create new cross-minority solidarities by bringing together differentiated historical memories."[282] Following the logic of memory as "multidirectional," then, remembering November 9, 1938 on the occasion of a racialized murder in November 1990—one of many not only in those early days of a reunified Germany but before and after—ultimately increases the attention paid to both events. Thinking of that one February 13th on the occasion of another makes it more likely that the memory of an event distant in time returns and is kept awake in the present. Rothberg highlights the potential inherent to interrelations between different events: to remember "multidirectionally" will allow for more awareness toward *all* the events that are placed in relation to one another.

And yet it strikes me that the poetry of Celan and Ayim confronts us with something messier than Rothberg's "multidirectionality" of memory or Derrida's "gathering" mentioned earlier, and that their poetry ultimately foregrounds the complexity and stakes of remembering in the wake of the Holocaust in a different manner. In Celan's poem, the excess of historic references multiplies the attention given to each event but it also requires time and labor to move between events and contexts and to interrogate what else might be contained in the poem. What other February is not accounted for; what other Petropolis is held within the space of the poem? What else has been missed and left unseen? Different times are not simply positioned in relation to one another like players on an open field. Rather, they intersect, weigh down on each other, push into one other. "Multidirectional memory" thinks relation between "differentiated historical memories" but in these poems, the differentiation itself is rendered blurry as various memories

crowd single signifiers. Rather than splitting history into separate yet related or relatable differentiated historical events, individual events crystallize out of a web of relations without ever isolating. Ayim's poem moves outward from November 9th, 1938, "forward" to the present in which the past still reverberates. Celan's poem creates ripples across different times through signifiers that hold within them different events, names, and places. Both of them highlight the singular—that which only occurred once and does not repeat, but by placing the singular within historical constellations, they open up a space where history can swell to a point at which the singular becomes visible or palpable in larger structures, allowing us to see and sense the outer edges of the concentrationary universe in the present and possibly act to challenge this persistence of violence.

This understanding of the deeply relational entwinement of different historical events ties into Alia Al-Saji's proposition of time as "an interconnected and internally differentiated whole—a network or whole of relations."[283] Al-Saji considers this structure of time in the specific context of what she calls "colonial duration," that is, the many forms in which histories of colonialism continue to affect the present, in a way that she explains as follows: "[T]he colonial and racial past [is not] a circumscribed set of events that can be quarantined, or to which the "rest" of the past could remain impermeable; […] it is a matter of historical contingencies that are ontologically structuring and interlocking."[284] The present is hence not removed from the messy space of memory but shaped by it. In a related manner, Al-Saji proposes curiously to think of time as akin to "folding dough," a process, which "not only fragments the past but also brings different regions into contact. Between the folds, different relations may form, producing a qualitative change in the relational whole"—all while conserving the past in the very relations that unfold.[285] My proposition, then, is that these poems task readers with a labor akin to folding dough. Guided by the formal strategies of Celan's and Ayim's poems, by the density of individual signifiers, by the rhythm that embeds the singular in a greater structure of recurrence, readers relate events, get into the thick of history's entanglements. They work through the living matter of history and in doing so, they give it air to breathe and keep it alive. The practice of reading entails a work of tending to the layers of time, revealing itself as a practice of dynamic remembrance along the way. In turning—or rather returning to—the writing of Max Czollek, we see, in the next step, how the density of language itself gets shaken up and awakens in the process of reading.

Language "Full of Sedimented Violence": Max Czollek

Czollek, who begins performing and publishing poetry in 2009 in the context of G13, a collaborative endeavor of young poets in Germany, cites both Celan and Ayim as models for his own work in different contexts. In his 2018 book-length manifesto *Desintegriert Euch!*, *De-integrate Yourselves!* that invokes the work of both Celan and Ayim, Czollek makes a case for resisting the role that German mainstream society has assigned to Jewish Germans within the country's culture of remembrance, which he—following Y. Michal Bodeman—calls a "theater of memory." His call for "de-integration" emerges from the specific position of a Jewish minority, but also extends to other marginalized groups. In this context, Czollek invokes Ayim as an example for how art and activism can resist attempts of a mainstream society to subsume and thereby silence marginalized voices by integrating them into narratives of German national identity.[286] Celan, in turn, is acknowledged as an earlier example of an artist who found himself marginalized by the very same culture that tried to "domesticate" his poetry. This relation to both

Celan and Ayim is not limited to Czollek's essayistic work but extends to his poetry as well. In what follows, I consider the means by which his writing—like that of Celan and Ayim—generates wakefulness in the present. While earlier sections have highlighted how Celan and Ayim mobilize the fullness of historic dates in order to unsettle the present, the turn to Czollek allows us to see how poetry works through the potentially forgotten historic fullness of language and perception.

In a 2015 interview Czollek reveals his own approach to the temporality of being in the wake of the Holocaust and the role that language plays within it. He explains: "Our contemporary German language is full of references to the past. There is a lot of sedimented violence. Central topoi of the Romantic period, such as the German forest, stars, hair, nudity, etc. collapse under the reservoir of imagery associated with National Socialism and the Holocaust."[287] This recalls Celan's words, about sixty years earlier, on the occasion of the reception of the Literature Prize of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen in 1958:

> Only one thing remained reachable, close and secure amid all losses: language. Yes, language. In spite of everything, it remained secure against loss. But it had to go through its own lack of answers, through terrifying silence, through the thousand darknesses of murderous speech. It went through. It gave me no words for what was happening, but went through it. Went through and could resurface, 'enriched' [*angereichert*] by it all.[288]

This figure of language as "enriched," a belly full of history, resonates with Celan's other notion of a "concentration mindful of all our dates," as well as with the understanding that time itself can be "full" in opposition to what Benjamin called "empty, homogenous" time. Language itself condenses and integrates, is full in the wake of the disaster of the Holocaust. Czollek's concept of "sedimented violence" now concretizes the idea that language is "enriched" by having passed through the history of the Nazi genocide. This might ultimately exceed or differ from the manner in which Celan envisioned this "enrichment." For both, language carries the past with it, in its texture and semantics. More so than Celan's "enriched" language, however, Czollek's specific figure of the "sedimentation" of violence in language conveys that this fullness can also be subject to forgetting. Violence can be buried, turning into unseen and untended sediments. What Czollek's poetry does, then, is to unsettle that which has become sedimented, awaken the fullness of language in the wake of the Holocaust, or rather—awaken the readers to this fullness.

Concentrationary Constellations

In order to understand the wakeful effects of Czollek's form, I begin by pointing out one specific poetic strategy that recurs throughout his poems. Repeatedly, his poetry will actualize the "sedimented violence" within language by constellating different words so that the resonances between them expose history's traces. The poem "herbst vor weimar," "autumn before weimar," for instance, begins with the following two stanzas:[289]

herbst vor weimar	**autumn before weimar**
ragen buchen warm	beeches towering warm
in das aug wächst	goethe's garden house
goethes gartenhaus	grows in the eye

durch rosen stapfst	through roses you tramp
rechts links die alpen	right left the alps
träume deiner eltern	your parents' dreams
im märchensaum	in the fairy tale's hem
[...]	[…]

Autumn, warmth, roses, the Alps, dreams, Goethe's garden house, fairytales—with these terms the poem seemingly leads its readers into the great German poet's writing retreat on the outskirts of Weimar, to "*goethes gartenhaus*," where he used to grow roses. It is an idyllic space. But there is in the catalogue-like constellation of the names "*weimar*" and "*buchen*" from the beginning an echo of another historic site in close proximity to Weimar, namely Buchenwald concentration camp.[290] The violence at the heart of this landscape also flashes up in the conjunction of "*alpen*" and "*träume*"—terms which independently designate the Alps and dreams but—read as enjambment—resound the term "*Albträume*," "nightmares." Prosody here does the aesthetic and political work of revealing nightmarish realities behind dreamlike Alpine landscapes. The nightmarish undertones strengthen in the third and final stanza with the following lines:

verhakelte beine	hooked legs
schornsteingestrüpp	chimneybrambles
wo du fürchten lernst	conceal words
die worte verstecken	where you learn to fear

From the "fairy tale's hem" we are suddenly confronted with hooked legs and a shrubbery of chimneys "where you learn to fear." The vision of Buchenwald concentration camp, intimated through the constellation of "Weimar," "Buchen," and "*Albtraum*" is now complemented through the dense, fearful "chimneybrambles [*Schornsteingestrüpp*]." The notion of "*verhakelte beine*," "hooked legs," which might compel a vision of intimacy in one context, now conjures the vision of mass graves, dead bodies interlocking. The echo of "*Haken*" in "*verhakelt*" further extends the sense that this poem is situtated in the shadow of the swastika, "*Haken*kreuz." Different words that in isolation do not immediately appear to relate to the Nazi past, produce sudden mnemonic effects through their constellation in the poem. The poem thereby asks readers to activate the sedimented violence within the German language (and landscape) not through its content but through formal strategies that compel a wakeful engagement in the moment of reading.

This formal strategy recurs throughout the poetry of Czollek. In the poem "reichsautobahn 26," for instance, the lines "vielleicht ist das Deutschland da / hinten / geduscht und kahlrasiert / dämmerung am oberarm," ("maybe that is Germany / back there / showered and shaven / dusk on its upper arm,") evoke visions of the concentrationary universe as the words "*geduscht*" ("showered") and "*kahlrasiert*" ("shaven") produce a tension with the notion "reich."[291] In addition, "reichsautobahn 26," also generates a mnemonic effect through its rhythm. The poem ends on lines that echo Rilke's "Das Karussell," "The Carousel," in which the recurrence of the line "und dann und wann ein weißer Elephant," ("And one white elephant shows now and then") mirrors the rhythm of a carousel while involving readers in it.[292] The end of Czollek's poem reads: "darin / fährt landschaft ab und dann / und wann ein kreuz im 4/4."

("[T]herein / landscape departs and now / and then a cross in 4/4.") Within a poem that, by its very title, is situated on the "reichsautobahn," the familiar rhythm of Rilke's poem merges with another rhythm: Those kilometers of the German Autobahn built during National Socialism are recognizable by their sound pattern. Largely constructed by laying down 25-meter long concrete slabs (a technique later discontinued due to its propensity to crack in harsh weather conditions), the end of each slab creates a short, bouncing sound that builds up to a steady background rhythm while driving on it. In Czollek's poem, the rhythm of Rilke's "carousel"—a "breathless, blind game" as its final stanza has it—merges with that of the highway. In this constellation of rhythms, the poem asks us to consider what else is blinded out and remains unseen. Like streets that are being used over and over until we forget who built them and under what conditions, the memory that language harbors too can recede into the background as words are used over and over until the traces of the past are no longer felt. Czollek's poetry disrupts this habitualization, de-automatizes our perception of the German language and landscape and thereby alerts us that the past is not past in the first place. His poetry, to echo the words of the last chapter, can become a counter-rhythm.

In *Druckkammern*, we see how German history is sedimented in language, marking everyday speech. With his 2019 collection *Grenzwerte*, Czollek's aesthetic shifts: the volume includes a broader variety of styles including, for instance, short, dated miniatures of poetic prose, titled "Notizen aus Marathon" ("Notes from Marathon.") Yet his writing continues to challenge a wakefulness in the present of reading as the unrest of the past extends to reflect critically on the present. In the following section, I turn to one last poem that highlights not only how poetry unsettles the sedimented violence within language, but also foregrounds how perception itself is formed by the past, opening up another dimension through which poetry can reconfigure the present in reading.[293]

A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis

persepolis	**persepolis**
europäisch ist:	being european means:
erst verbrennen wir die akropolis	first we burn the acropolis
dann zerstören wir persien	then we destroy persia
um uns zu rächen	to take revenge
eidechsen wie diogenes	lizards like diogenes
fangen erst an zu sprechen	speak only
wenn du ihnen in die sonne trittst	when you stand in their sun
bist du ein könig auf dem feldzug?	are you king of this excursion?
möglich, die säulen	it's possible, the columns
sehen nicht nur aus wie schornsteine	don't merely look like chimneys
sind teil einer nekropole	but are part of a necropolis
deren bewohnerinnen darüber spekulieren	whose inhabitants take wagers on
was nach dem tod kommen wird	what's coming after death

The poem—like Celan's "In Eins"—ties together a net of histories and stories, times and places. Persepolis, the Greek name of the capital of the ancient Persian Empire, burned to the ground by Alexander the Great. Here, the historic violence gets fractured: The Acropolis gets burned down, then Persia is destroyed in an act of revenge. Czollek writes this poem on a trip that he takes to Iran in 2017. It is a poem that asks about Europe from a geographic distance but this distance collapses in the final stanza, when the poem extends an uncanny suspicion, which suddenly overlays the vision of pillars with the memory of the European death camps through the following lines: "it's possible, the columns / don't merely look like chimneys / but are part of a necropolis." In order to reveal the logic behind this suspicion, the poem has to be considered in the broader context of Czollek's 2019 collection.

Czollek's volume *Grenzwerte* is divided into subsections and the section that Persepolis appears in is titled "Conspiracy Theories," with each poem extending a suspicion about the true state of affairs. In one poem, for instance, the speaker ponders the fact that laundry racks look a lot like fences and whether, therefore, there is a laundry rack lobby that has a hand in European border policies. In that poem, then, the sudden vision of the European border fence in the mundane laundry rack generates this paranoid vision. In "persepolis" the speaker utters the suspicion that the pillars—of Persepolis or the Acropolis—are actually part of a necropolis. What is interesting in this paranoid leap is the logic that establishes this connection in the first place: The speaker suspects that we might be looking at a necropolis *because* the pillars look *like* chimneys. "Chimney [*Schornstein*]," the word and the vision, are heavy with the memory of another "city of dead," that is the concentration camps, that is Auschwitz, and reading the word "chimney" next to the word "necropolis" opens up this uncanny return of memory. As chimneys point us to a necropolis, this poem actualizes what Czollek himself describes as the sedimentation of history not only in language but also in perception. The Acropolis, heart of Greece, heart of the cradle of European culture, overlays with that of Persepolis before the constellation of the words "necropolis" and "chimneys" eventually actualizes the memory of the European death camps, not through naming but by waking up the traces that are left on our perception itself. This poem, I suggest, creates a visual effect in which the pillars of Acropolis and the pillars of Persepolis generate a visual echo, a rhyme of sorts with familiar images of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The following images help to visualize this effect:



Fig. 1, Parthenon, Acropolis



Fig. 2, Persepolis



Fig. 3, Auschwitz-Birkenau

Spread out on a page like this, the three photographs depicting three different geographical and historic sites hold apart what the poem draws together in the reader's mind: The image of one European necropolis is rhyming with that of Persepolis and that of the Acropolis and in these visual rhymes, layers of time and place come in contact with each other. Czollek's "persepolis" highlights and upsets not only the sedimentation of the past in language but in forms of perception themselves. The poem visually links the concentrationary landscape with the Greek Acropolis and thereby exposes and critiques the National Socialist's pseudo-history, which appropriated Greek culture as the origin of Arian superiority. Remembrance, here, does not only happen through content but also through the very way in which we perceive the present. As we look out onto the remains of the Persian city and the Parthenon, seeing pillars like chimneys, the past shapes the way we see the present—weighing down on it, but also buoying it up. "*Europäisch ist*," with these words, the poem declares that it will communicate stable knowledge, stable values, but then this gets destabilized, unsettled throughout the poem, reflecting back as a question: What is European? What are the pillars of Europe?

This mode of critical questioning also marks other elements of the poem. Other memories work their way to the surface, other moments in which the past expands its reach into the present. There is, for one, the mention of Diogenes, the ancient philosopher who rejected societal norms and told Alexander the Great, famously, not to stand in his sun. In "persepolis," Diogenes appears as a point of comparison: Lizards, *Eidechsen*, "like Diogenes" would only begin to speak once you step into their sunlight. This constellation—of the philosopher-like lizard that appears in the midst of Europe's historic sites—in turn contains an echo to Heinrich Heine's "Die Bäder von Lukka" ("The Baths of Lucca").[294] In this other travelogue by another German-Jewish poet who reflected critically on German national identity and its aims for what Ayim ended up calling "U-Not-Y [*Scheinheit*]" Heine finds himself in the company of a talking lizard who lays out a philosophy of language resonant of Walter Benjamin, derides "Schelling and Hegel," and eventually states that the one single true philosophy one would ever need is written "in eternal hieroglyphs on my own tail."[295] Diogenes, the cynic philosopher, and Heine, the cynical Romantic poet cross paths here in this poem, which—part of the volume *Grenzwerte* and the cycle titled "conspiracy theory poems" extends its own form of critique against existing values and reflects critically on the question what might be European values.

As the vision of the concentration camps returns amidst that of the Acropolis and Persepolis, the poem finally also brings back the memory of Sigmund Freud, another traveler across Europe. In "A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis," written in the form of a letter to

Romain Rolland in 1936, Freud recounts travelling to the Acropolis for the first time, where the "disturbance of memory" occurs in form of the sudden thought that "all this really *does* exist, just as we learnt at school!"[296] The text tarries with the relation between the individual's memory, historical reality, and one's perception of it: Freud is surprised to realize that he might, in the past, have doubted that the Acropolis existed even as he learned and knew of its existence in school. Its reality was covered over by disbelief or distrust and removed to a sphere of "belief." Czollek's "persepolis" (and his poetry more generally) creates its own "disturbances of memory": it tests readers' relation to the perception of the past and has them asking whether—even though they learned about the past in school—they do indeed believe that it exists and are mindful of it.

While poems like "herbst vor weimar" highlighted the sedimented histories of violence within individual words, "persepolis" makes felt how not just language but perception too is full of the memory of the past. Remembrance is in this sense not only defined by what we see but also by how we see. The past affects, to speak once more with Al-Saji, "the structure of possibility of the phenomenological field of the present," shaping our ways of perceiving the world.[297] And so we see the pillars of Persepolis, of the Parthenon, as the chimneys of the burned down barracks in Auschwitz-Birkenau, a constellation that requires the reader's work to hold the tension that emerges between these images.

In language and perception, layers of different pasts stick together. To attend to one instance of historic violence within it, then, is to unsettle and possibly disturb another that does not simply lie dormant underneath but has morphed into the former layer, both mixing, adhering to one another. Sedimentation occurs through time, through forgetting, but also through willed ideological narratives: Nazi ideology morphed classical Greek culture and its histories of conquests into a genealogy to justy Auschwitz. By producing a perceptual mapping in the moment of reading, Czollek's poem now asks us to tend to this fullness, making the past felt, perceptive through an attentive reconfiguration that implicates the present. Poetic form opens up a critical potential in the present: That we might ask where and in what way the past is with us, that we test existing societal norms and values, that we remember in a way that connects the past actively to present realities.

Dealing with the Present: *Gegenwartsbewältigung* as Wakefulness

"Gegenwartsbewältigung" according to Czollek, "means an attempt to shape our present in a way that will make the violence of the German past impossible to repeat. Gegenwartsbewältigung therefore does not aspire for normality or catharsis, but rather for the awareness that both we, ourselves, and our society require ongoing attention and care."[298] In opposition to the notion that the past can be overcome and brought to a point of conclusion or resolve as implied in *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, *Gegenwartsbewältigung* emerges out of the consciousness of past violence and then emphasizes an attentiveness toward the present. It is anti-linear in its persistence on guarding against return—without, however, assuming a cyclical recurrence by which the same historic reality returns in the exact same shape time and again.

This vigilant present recalls Benjamin's notion of "Jetztzeit"—while also differing from it in important ways. When Benjamin in his "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" ("On the Concept of History") speaks critically of the historicist view which "contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history," he turns against a perception of time, which is "homogenous" and "empty."[299] Instead, he positions history as "the subject of a

structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [*Jetztzeit*]." He charges the "historical materialist" with the task to "blast open the continuum of history" and to "grasp the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one," redeeming histories of past oppression by recognizing their memory "in a moment of danger." The poetry of Czollek—as that of Celan and Ayim—foregrounds time in a way that is precisely not homogenous, not empty, but "full," and this understanding of history's fullness extends to the present. These poets challenge their readers not only to see the fullness of the past—in opposition to approaching it as "homogenous and empty" but also to be attentive to its continued presence or its reappearance in the future—potentially in an altered shape. If the past is to be understood as part of the "now," it might be so in ways that are different from before.

To be wakeful in the present necessitates breaking with the historicist paradigm not only by avoiding the search for the past "as it really was" *in the past*, but also to avoid seeking the past "as it really was" *in the present*. That is to say, in order to avoid the recurrence of past violence, one has to be attentive toward a recurrence of the past in ways that are not necessarily known in advance. The past might return in new shapes and new places, which in turn requires making the watchword "never-again" that is central to the culture of Holocaust remembrance into an expansive notion that acknowledges the possibility that "again" might look different from "the way it really was." "*[S]o war es, so ist es*," "that's how it was / that's how it is," writes Ayim and that statement, as her poem has foregrounded, contains the possibility that "the way it is" is different from "the way it was" and yet they form part of the same historic truth, *Wahrheit*: "*es ist nicht wahr daß es / nicht wahr ist / so war es*" ("it is not true that it / is not true / that's how it was").

The poetry that this chapter engaged with draws on formal strategies, which resist the empty and homogenous perception of the past—in the present. They task readers with the work to blast open the continuum of history, unsettling the sediments of history, turning our attention toward a present that is not simply "*Gegenwart*" but—like Benjamin's "*Jetztzeit*"—a dynamic constellation of different times that upends the stagnancy of the present moment. Celan and Ayim draw our attention to the fullness of individual dates—February 13th, November 9th and alert us to the ways in which the past pushes against the present. Czollek's poetry finds history's fullness in language itself—language that, as Celan put it, *went through the innumerable darknesses and resurfaced, "enriched" by it all*. His poems highlight how the past structures our ways of speaking and perceiving in the present. It shakes up the sediments of language to make the past visible as part of the now. The poetry of Celan, Ayim, and Czollek does not aspire for normality or catharsis. At the heart of them stands the aesthetic potential to generate a form of wakefulness in the present of reading.

CODA

Tending: The Labor of Reading and Remembering

The art project *Stolpersteine* (*Stumbling Stones*) initiated by Gunter Demnig has become a familiar sight in German cities. In front of houses whose former inhabitants were persecuted and deported during National Socialism, small bricks cast in gold brass commemorate their lives. These *Stolpersteine* are integrated into the sidewalk and become an element of the urban environment and yet they also stand out. People passing by might find themselves interrupted in their usual path. If they pause to look closer, names and birthdates as well as the date of deportation and, if known, the date and location of their death speak to the history of an individual. The Berlin website of the *Stolpersteine*-initiative features a section titled "Participation."[300] There, above the headline "Getting Involved," we see a photo of one cluster of gilded stones with names engraved on them, placed among the small cobble stones that are still characteristic of the board walks and city squares in large parts of Berlin. Also in the picture we see the hand of a person holding a yellow kitchen sponge. The text reads: "People can remain involved with the project even after a *Stolperstein* has been laid, by undertaking to clean it for example. This entails going to see it often, checking [if] it has become dirty or damaged, and regularly polishing the bronze surface."[301] Hence the sponge. While the laying of the stones is usually accompanied by a ceremony—maybe involving a speaker from the surrounding community, local politicians, or relatives of the person whose life and loss is remembered with the stone—the act of cleaning them follows a different temporality. Someone has to commit to this work on a regular basis, and there is no limit to how long this commitment, by an individual or the broader community, is set to last.[302] After all, if we are to "never forget," we must remember forever.

In this gesture of cleaning *Stolpersteine*, we encounter what Lisa Baraitser has called "maintenance time," that is, something that is "not the time of generation or production, or the eruption of the new […] but the lateral time of 'on-go' that tries to sustain an elongated present."[303] The temporality of maintenance at first recalls Merleau-Ponty's institutions, Celan's "puppets and automatons," and Czollek's "theatre of memory." Maintenance seems to point to what is hardened and habitualized and resistant to change. And the notion of "work" that maintenance entails, like that of "concentration," can of course "become a terrible one for memory" as Derrida put it.[304] Thinking about the labor of remembrance also means thinking of the deadly "labor" that Holocaust remembrance remembers in the first place. The act of cleaning *Stolpersteine* is not violent, but it might become perfunctory, or constitute a form of "cultural business," and thereby be quite disconnected from what Czollek conceived of as "*Gegenwartsbewältigung*." But, as Baraitser highlights, maintenance also has another side to it: "to maintain is also to keep buoyant […] to underpin, or prop up from below, to hold up when something or someone is flagging," so that the "time of maintenance" ultimately lies "at the intersection between the lateral axis of stumbling blindly on, and the vertical axis of holding up, orientating us towards a future, even when the future is uncertain, or may not be our own."[305] That gesture of polishing the stone might just have made the difference, causing someone to hesitate, making the past felt in the present. A practice of tending to the past and maintaining its memory might open up future possibilities.

Throughout the pages of this dissertation, the institutionalized culture of remembrance in Germany was often placed in negative light, criticitzed for its perfunctory character and its complacency toward ongoing contemporary injustices. It requires work to prevent Holocaust remembrance from turning into a mere "theatre of remembrance." At the same time, however, it also demands an ongoing commitment to uphold spaces and practices of remembrance in the first place. We might not want to defend Germany's Holocaust remembrance as a national "achievement," but still—or precisely from this position—strive to maintain or even expand public institutions of remembering. As I write these final pages, on June 13, 2020, several hundred people were out in the streets of Berlin to protest the planned construction of train tracks that would effectively render the "Memorial to the Sinti and Roma of Europe Murdered under National Socialism" inaccessible and defunct.[306] One day later, on June 14, the Berlin "Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted under Nazism" was vandalized (again), requiring that it be repaired, once more.[307] As its architects Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset stated after the memorial was damaged in 2019—unlike the loss of a human—monuments can be repaired, which is a reminder that renewing, supporting, preserving memory ultimately works for the living and is a form of living on.[308]

The *Stolpersteine* as well as Berlin's memorial are examples of remembrance in the public sphere. Poems take up space in a different way but they too ask us to reengage with the past. This dissertation followed tendencies—orientations, investments, commitments, attachments—that emerged in the reading of poetry in the wake of the Holocaust. What I also encountered in this project and what turned into a latent thread in the readings of Celan but also Dan Pagis, Charlotte Delbo, May Ayim, and Max Czollek is that reading—like remembering—is work, that it takes time, and energy, and can be uncomfortable, "unbearable" even, as Celan once said. Reading requires this attentive work in order to resist forgetting while also preventing institutionalized forms of remembrance from accommodating the past into fixed, automatized, and unreflective patterns. Like the time of maintenance, the time of reading holds itself on the edge between reading on, *immerzu nur lesen*, and sudden openings, shifts in perspective, and new encounters. In Pagis's poem "Katuv be-iparon" the circular structure turned reading into a potentially endless process as the poem's final word connected back with its beginning. The spectrality of Celan's language was potentially exhausting to the reader who first couldn't get a hold of any meaning in the poem and then saw words proliferate into a range of different denotations, connotations, and associations. Yet precisely in this capacity, the poem also resisted exhaustive, conclusive readings that would have allowed the work of reading and remembering to be completed. "Just carry on reading," said Celan, and his poetry also showed us that carrying a poem and the past can be a practice of susceptibility and openness. Delbo's work insisted that we continue to look, to pay attention to what is unbearable so that potentially we might learn to see otherwise. The entanglements of different times and experiences in Celan's poetry as well as in the writing of Ayim asked readers to work through the density of history. They too reminded us that remembrance—like the kneading of dough—is not an easy task and there are no shortcuts to it. There is the risk that things get stuck and complicated, messy even, and that a careful balance needs to be molded as different parts are brought into contact in order to give each part air to breathe. And it requires labor, persistence, and a continuous flexibility to keep it from turning into dead matter, to be attentive to the sedimentation of violence that Czollek alerted us to. Czollek's poetry, finally, highlighted the effort it takes to feel the presence of the Nazi past in everyday objects and everyday language—in the sound of highway, the sight of chimney-like pillars, beech trees, and Goethe's garden house.

Poetry opens up a space for a dynamic memory, and reading can in this sense become a practice of care, that is, "an arduous temporal practice that entails the maintenance of relations with ourselves and others through histories of oppression that return in the present again and again."[309] Today, in 2020, as Germany finds itself confronted with new and old forms of anti-Semitism and racialized violence and discussions about whether it hasn't been enough already with the "responsibility" for the past, poetry still and again asks us to begin or continue some of this work as it challenges readers to move through the folds and layers of the past and engage with their own present. We see contemporary writers, like Czollek and Ayim and Celan before him, take up the memory of the genocide and carry a debate forward in new ways, disrupting the automatic wires of German remembrance cultures by taking the past out of the showcases of history as part of working through the present. The poetry of Celan, which has formed a large part of the German culture of remembrance, continues to shape it but it also—tested against new and old realities—comes to us in a new light, letting us see old questions around "poetry after Auschwitz" and Holocaust remembrance more broadly in new ways. The poetic tendencies that I discussed in these pages have readers tend to the past and its memory in the sense of cultivating, caring, nourishing and helping it thrive. This is a sometimes arduous practice, but more often than not it also lifts up and carries the readers and supports them as they navigate their own present—in the wake and in the aftermath of the Nazi genocide.

The term "aftermath," like the expression "in the wake of," indicates the time after catastrophic events and is thereby both different from and tied to that of disaster itself. Like the term "tending," "aftermath" is also linked to the field of agriculture, where it designates the second "math" or "new growth after the initial mowing of the grass."[310] The math of aftermath, as Sanyal reminds us, can bring "new tragedy," new "seasons in hell." But it can also "resist violent harvests" and allow for the emergence of non-violent life forms.[311] What grows, then, in the aftermath of the Nazi genocide, is a matter of how we tend to it. Poetry—that of Celan, Pagis, Delbo, Ayim, and Czollek, teaches us to tend ethically, and thereby helps prepare the ground for new growth that does not cover over the past but—full and enriched by it—sustains new non-violent presents.

NOTES

[1] The Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation, for instance, on its website speaks of Germany's "*Vorbildcharakter für Europa*;" Germany is a "role model for Europe." https://www.kas.de/en/web/europa/erinnerungskultur. In an interview with German newspaper *Die Zeit*, Aleida Assmann writes in 2018: "[W]ir haben eine Errungenschaft zu verteidigen. Deutschlands Auseinandersetzung mit seiner Geschichte wird von anderen Nationen als Modell gehandelt." ("We have to defend what is an achievement. Germany's engagement with its history serves as a model for other nations.") Aleida Assmann, "Wir haben eine Errungenschaft zu verteidigen," Interview by Karin Janker, sueddeutsche.de, February 19, 2018, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/erinnerungskultur-deutschlands-imperativ-1.3866258; For an extended critical discussion of Germany's culture of remembrance see Y. Michal Bodemann, *Gedächtnistheater: Die jüdische Gemeinschaft und ihre deutsche Erfindung* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1996).

[2] Marina Chernivsky, Hannah Peaceman, and Lea Wohl von Haselberg, "Vergegenwärtigungen," *Jalta. Positionen Zur Jüdischen Gegenwart* 4 (February 2018): 4. Translation mine.

[3] https://neofelis-verlag.de/verlagsprogramm/zeitschriften/jalta/954/gegenwartsbewaeltigung

[4] His English translator Pierre Joris addresses this in an interview here: https://media.sas.upenn.edu/pennsound/authors/Joris/XCP-2012/XCP_253_05_Celan-as-a-concentration-camp-survivor-his-difficult-relationship-to-the-German-language-and-how-careful-Celan-was-with-what-he-wrote-when-receiving-the-Buchner-prize_Joris_2012.mp3

[5] Paul Celan, *Der Meridian: Endfassung, Entwürfe, Materialien* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999); Paul Celan, *The Meridian: Final Version-Drafts-Materials*, trans. Pierre Joris (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011). Cited hereafter in parentheses (M). The page numbers of the English translation match those of the German original.

[6] Translation amended. Pierre Joris, whose translation of *The Meridian* and the accompanying notes I use throughout this study translates the first sentence as follows: "We have been, each in his own way, witnesses of a process, which has led us to this circumstance from that which only fifteen years ago still lay true and heavy on our heart: […]."

[7] I employ the term "mode" in the sense that Namwali Serpell has defined it: "The mode has fixity, as evinced by its relationship to the model. But it also has flex, invoking modulation—change over time—as well as affective and grammatical moods." Namwali C. Serpell, *Seven Modes of Uncertainty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 24.

[8] Lucy Alford makes the claim for such a general capacity of poetry in Lucy Alford, *Forms of Poetic Attention* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

[9] Benjamin writes: "The constructions of history are comparable to military orders that discipline the true life and confine it to barracks." Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2002), 545.

[10] Reflecting on the title of Charlotte Delbo's *Auschwitz and After*, Ross Chambers speaks of the "temporal problematics tied to the phenomenon of return, that is, to the relation of a 'math" or disaster (Anglo-Saxon *maeth*, a mowing of grass) and its aftermath (originally a second mowing in the same season. […] [M]ath and aftermath are conjoined in such a way that before and after cannot be disentangled: Auschwitz remains present in after-Auschwitz (when Auschwitz is supposedly over) […]." Ross Chambers, *Untimely Interventions: AIDS Writing, Testimonial, and*

The Rhetoric of Haunting (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 210–11; On the notion of "aftermath" see also Debarati Sanyal, "Time and Politics in Contemporary Critique: Entanglements and Aftermaths. Introduction," *Critical Times* 2, no. 3 (December 2019): 347–48, https://doi.org/10.1215/26410478-7862509; Sharpe's study *In the Wake* engages specifically with the afterlives of slavery and the way in which it haunts contemporary Black life—the term "wake" indicates forms of keeping watch with the dead, of coming to consciousness, but also, most immediately, points to the water trail behind the slave ships. Throughout her study, Sharpe points at different moments to the historical violence of the Holocaust, referencing similarities and historical echoes. For instance, in a chapter on "The Hold," that discusses forms of containment and imprisonment—from the belly of a slave ship to the contemporary prison industrial complex—she engages with a section of Charlotte Delbo's *None of Us Will Return*, the short text "Arrivals, Departures" that records, as she writes, "another kind of ship, another kind of hold, that of the cattle cars arriving in Auschwitz." Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016).

[11] See also: Philip Babcock Gove, ed., "Tendency," in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1993), 2354.

[12] Roland Greene et al., eds., "Attention," in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012); See also Lily Gurton-Wachter, *Watchwords: Romanticism and the Poetics of Attention* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 1; David Marno, *Death Be Not Proud: The Art of Holy Attention* (Chicago and London: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 2016), 34.

[13] Alexandra Richter, in a paper on the political dimension of attentiveness in *The Meridian*, has in a related fashion emphasized the political importance of Celan's detour through Benjamin by revealing that it is part of a larger pattern in Celan's speech which, instead of citing directly, mediates quotes by Mercier, Pascal, or Malebranche through the words of Jewish thinkers: Rosanov, Chestov, Benjamin. Alexandra Richter, "Prier pour le petit bossu: La dimension politique de l'attention dans 'Le Méridien' de Paul Celan," *Po&sie* 159, no. 1 (2017): 113.

[14] Jacques Derrida, "Shibboleth: For Paul Celan," in *Sovereignties In Question: The Poetics Of Paul Celan* (New York: Fordham Univ Press, 2005), 10.

[15] David Rousset, *L'Univers Concentrationnaire [1946]* (Paris: Hachet/Pluriel, 2008); See also Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman, "Introduction—The Politics of Memory: From Concentrationary Memory to Concentrationary Memories," in *Concentrationary Memories: Totalitarian Terror and Cultural Resistance*, ed. Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 1–30.

[16] This investment in "tendencies" runs throughout her work but might be most prominently represented through her volume by the same name. Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993); Her essay on "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading" most clearly ties the question of how we tend toward someone or something to the reading of texts. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 123-152.

[17] Ramzi Fawaz, "'An Open Mesh of Possibilities.' The Necessity of Eve Sedgwick in Dark Times," in *Reading Sedgwick* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2019), 7.

[18] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Poetry as Experience," trans. Roxanne Lapidus, *SubStance* 18, no. 3 (1989): 24.

[19] For an overview of the critical responses to Celan's late poetry see Bianca Rosenthal, *Pathways to Paul Celan: A History of Critical Responses as a Chorus of Discordant Voices* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 29–40.
[20] For the discussion around the "New Formalism" see W. J. T. Mitchell, "The Commitment to Form; Or, Still Crazy after All These Years," *PMLA* 118, no. 2 (March 2003): 231–325; Susan J. Wolfson and Marshall Brown, eds., *Reading for Form* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006); Samuel Otter, "An Aesthetics in All Things," *Representations* 104 (Fall 2008): 116–25; My thinking is also indebted to what Niklaus Largier, in the context of Robert Musil's essayistic work has described as the "formative power of rhetorical effects," (*gestaltbildende Kraft rhetorischer Effekte*.) Niklaus Largier, *Zeit der Möglichkeit: Robert Musil, Georg Lukács und die Kunst des Essays* (Hannover: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2016); Central studies in the broader field of attention studies include: Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001); Bernhard Waldenfels, *Phänomenologie der Aufmerksamkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004); Jörn Müller, Andreas Nießeler, and Andreas Rauh, eds., *Aufmerksamkeit: Neue Humanwissenschaftliche Perspektiven* (Bielefeld: Transcript-Verl., 2016).
[21] Otter, "An Aesthetics in All Things," 117; Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 22.
[22] On the role that Celan's poetry itself holds within the context of the discussion of the relation between ethics and aesthetics see Kaufman, Robert, "Poetry's Ethics? Theodor W. Adorno and Robert Duncan on Aesthetic Illusion and Sociopolitical Delusion," *New German Critique* 97 (Winter 2006): 73–118.
[23] Serpell, *Seven Modes of Uncertainty*, 9, 2.
[24] Karen Zumhagen-Yekplé, *A Different Order of Difficulty: Literature after Wittgenstein* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 1–2.
[25] Serpell, *Seven Modes of Uncertainty*, 35.
[26] The term "surface reading" ultimately strikes me as a misnomer since it does not give credit to the depth of textual engagement that goes along with the modes of reading that fall under this name. Best and Marcus, "Surface Reading," 9–13.
[27] Heather Love, "Truth and Consequences: On Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," *Criticism* 52, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 236.
[28] Gurton-Wachter, *Watchwords: Romanticism and the Poetics of Attention*; Marno, *Death Be Not Proud: The Art of Holy Attention*. Others include: Margaret Koehler, *Poetry of Attention in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Andrew Lee DuBois*, Ashbery's Forms of Attention* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2006).
[29] Alford, *Forms of Poetic Attention*; While not specifically engaging with the notion of "attention," I see a related argument made in Hannah Eldridge's study on "Lyric Orientation," which considers the "power of poetic language to orient us as social beings." Hannah Vandegrifte Eldridge, *Lyric Orientations: Hölderlin, Rilke, and the Poetics of Community* (Cornell University Press, 2016). Eldridge's study too—while focused on 19th century poets, begins and ends with readings of Celan.
[30] At least, that is, within a Western, Germanic and Anglophile sphere that the above studies extend to. For two studies that deal specifically with the role of attention/attentiveness in Celan's "Meridian"-speech see Werner Hamacher, "Bogengebete," in *Aufmerksamkeit*, ed. Norber Haas,

Rainer Nägele, and Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, Liechtensteiner Exkurse, III (Eggingen: Edition Klaus Isele, 1998), 11–44; Richter, "Prier pour le petit bossu: La dimension politique de l'attention dans 'Le Méridien' de Paul Celan."

[31] Theodor W. Adorno, "Kulturkritik Und Gesellschaft," in *Prismen: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1955), 31; Theodor W. Adorno, "Cultural Criticism and Society," in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel Weber and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 34; Two publications that do raise the question of "reading" poetry after the Holocaust include Michael G. Levine, *The Belated Witness: Literature, Testimony, and the Question of Holocaust Survival* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006); Jessica Lang, *Textual Silence: Unreadability and the Holocaust* (New Brunswick, Camden, and Newark, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2017).

[32] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New Haven and London: Continuum, 2007), 362; See also Christian Skirke, "After Auschwitz," in *A Companion to Adorno*, ed. Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer, and Max Pensky (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Blackwell, 2020), 567–82; For a nuanced discussion of Adorno's dictum and its afterlive in poetry and criticism see Robert Kaufman, "Poetry after 'Poetry after Auschwitz,'" in *Art and Aesthetics after Adorno*, ed. Anthony J. Cascardi, Townsend Papers in the Huanities 3 (Berkeley: Townsend Humanities Center/ University of California Press, 2010), 63–121.

[33] This was related by Rolf Tiedemann, Adorno's editor. See John Felstiner, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* (Yale University Press, 2001), 255.

[34] Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 422–23.

[35] Lacoue-Labarthe, "Poetry as Experience," 24.

[36] Lawrence Langer, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); Berel Lang, ed., *Writing and the Holocaust* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988); Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); Anne de la Motte, *Au-delà du mot: Une "écriture du silence" dans la littérature française au vingtième siècle* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004); Brett Ashley Kaplan, *Unwanted Beauty: Aesthetic Pleasure in Holocaust Representation* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007); For an overview over the question of aesthetics in Holocaust literature see Jakob Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman, and James Phelan, "Introduction. 'After' Testimony: Holocaust Representation and Narrative Theory," in *After Testimony* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2012), 1–20.

[37] See for instance Thomas Trezise, "Unspeakable," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 39–66; Naomi Mandel, *Against the Unspeakable. Complicity, the Holocaust, and Slavery in America* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2007); Max Czollek, *Desintegriert Euch!* (Munich: Hanser, 2018), 131–32; Matthew Walk, "Survivors of Holocaust Retell the Unspeakable," *The New York Times*, September 3, 1979, sec. B.

[38] Trezise, "Unspeakable," 39.

[39] Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 113.

[40] Charlotte Delbo, *Mesure de nos jours. Auschwitz et après III* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1998), 77; Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, trans. Rosette C. Lamont (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 275.

[41] Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, trans. Jared Stark (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[42] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 194ff.
[43] Norbert Frei defines this as Germany's "politics of amnesty and integration." Norbert Frei, *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amnesty and Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
[44] Amir Eshel, "Paul Celan's Other: History, Poetics, and Ethics," *New German Critique*, no. 91 (Winter 2004): 59.
[45] Translation amended.
[46] Celan's language here resonates with what Sharpe describes as the "weather," that is, the "atmospheric condition of time and place" in which "antiblackness is as pervasive as climate," as well as Dora Zhang's reflections on the politics of "organizing a climate." Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, 102ff.; Dora Zhang, "Notes on Atmosphere" 27, no. 1 (2018): 121–55.
[47] Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 24–29; Charlotte Delbo, *Aucun de Nous Ne Reviendra* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1970); Charlotte Delbo, *La Mémoire et Les Jours* (Paris: Berg International, 2013); Charlotte Delbo, *Days and Memory*, trans. Rosette Lamont (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001).
[48] W.J.T Mitchell also speaks in this sense of the "political-judicial-military dead end [of formalism] which in the name of forms and procedures can haul millions of people off to their death." Mitchell, "The Commitment to Form; Or, Still Crazy after All These Years," 325 N 4.
[49] Paul Celan, *Die Gedichte: Kommentierte Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Barbara Wiedemann (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 113–18; Paul Celan, *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, trans. John Felstiner (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2001), 118–31.
[50] See for instance Eric Kligerman, "Celan's Cinematic: Anxiety of the Gaze," in *Visualizing the Holocaust: Documents, Aesthetics, Memory*, ed. David Bathrick, Brad Prager, and Michael David Richardson (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008), 187.
[51] This "we," of course, is arbitrary; I use the pronoun as a placeholder for those who, in reading, become part of the experiential space of the poem, even as this "being part of" might take different forms.
[52] Anne Carson, *Economy of the Unlost: (Reading Simonides of Keos with Paul Celan)* (Princeton University Press, 2001), viii; As Andre Furlani notes, "the question invites us to rethink notions of literary propinquity," considering forms of "approaching, engaging, touching, replying to, respecting, and accompanying Celan's work." It is with these modes of relationality in mind that I use this term throughout the chapter. Andre Furlani, "Reading Paul Celan with Anne Carson: 'What Kind of Withness Would That Be?,'" *Canadian Literature* 176 (Spring 2003): 88.
[53] Jean Daive, *Under the Dome: Walks with Paul Celan*, trans. Rosmarie Waldrop (Providence: Burning Deck, 2009), 29.
[54] Aris Fioretos, for instance, notes that "Engführung" "tr[ies] to circumscribe the incomparable event of the Holocaust," and Stéfane Moses, in a similar vein, argues that it "raises to the order of an allegory of absolute terror." Aris Fioretos, "Nothing: Reading Paul Celan's 'Engführung'" 27, no. 2 (1990): 159; Stéphane Mosès, "'Wege, auf denen Sprache stimmhaft wird.' Paul Celan's 'Gespräch im Gebirg,'" in *Argumentum e Silentio*, ed. Amy D. Colin (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1987), 54.
[55] Pierre Joris, "Introduction," in *Breathturn into Timestead. The Collected Later Poetry of Paul Celan*, by Paul Celan (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2014), xl.

[56] Offering yet another perspective on the shift in Celan's aesthetics, Anja Lemke has proposed that Celan's poetry undergoes a change from a direct representation of the experience of the victims toward a "non-semantic, non-thematic representation of the Holocaust." Anja Lemke, "How to Speak? Non-Semantic Representation of the Shoah in the Writings of Paul Celan," *TRN-Newsletter. Hamburg Institute for Social Research*, June 2004, https://d-nb.info/1160907692/34.
[57] Celan, famously, denied the hermetic character of his work but the sense persisted that something is not accessible in his later writing, that his aesthetic is resistant to hermeneutic interventions. See James K. Lyon, ""Ganz und gar nicht hermetisch": Überlegungen zum 'richtigen' Lesen von Paul Celans Lyrik," in *Psalm und Hawdalah*, ed. Joseph Strelka (Bern: Lang, 1987).
[58] This actualizes different valences of the terms etymological root *suscipere*, "to take, catch, receive, admit, submit to, sustain, support, bear, acknowledge, accept."
[59] Anne Anlin Cheng, "Skins, Tattoos, and Susceptibility," *Representations* 108, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 101–2.
[60] "Todesfuge" is in this sense an early example of what Max Czollek has called the "pop cultural archive" of the Holocaust, that is, a limited repertoire of images that is frequently associated with the Holocaust and instrumentalized in what he terms Germany's "theatre of remembrance." Czollek, *Desintegriert Euch!*, 84.
[61] On Celan's reading of "Todesfuge" during the meeting of the "Gruppe 47" see Theo Buck, "Paul Celan und die Gruppe 47," *Celan Jahrbuch* 7 (1998 1997): 65–88; Klaus Briegleb, "Ingeborg Bachmann, Paul Celan: Ihr Nicht-Ort in der Gruppe 47 (1952-1964/65). Eine Skizze," in *Ingeborg Bachmann, Paul Celan: Poetische Korrespondenzen*, ed. Siegrid Weigel and Bernhard Böschenstein (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 29–81; For a recent discussion see: Helmut Böttiger, "'Alle Dichter sind Juden.' Die Wahrheit über Paul Celans Auftritt bei der Gruppe 47," *Hintergrund Kultur und Politik* (Deutschlandfunk Kultur, May 21, 2017), https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/lesung-im-jahr-1952-die-wahrheit-ueber-paul-celans-auftritt.974.de.html?dram:article_id=386529.
[62] Andreas Donath, "Rezension zu 'Mohn und Gedächtnis,'" Frankfurter Hefte 9.11, 1954. (868-70) Summarized in Rosenthal, *Pathways to Paul Celan: A History of Critical Responses as a Chorus of Discordant Voices*, 6.
[63] In the most extreme cases, the images of his poems are cherished for their aesthetic value, but detached altogether from the history of genocide that they testify to. One of Celan's English translators, Pierre Joris, describes Celan's experience of the reception of "Todesfuge" as follows: "Celan had witnessed how his most famous poem "Deathfugue" was open to misuse as its lushly lyrical musicality made it [a] very pretty and easily hummable tune while its rich verbal metaphoricity allowed some badly intentioned critics to deny it's obvious link to the historical horrors of the Holocaust by claiming these images to be just surreal productions of the poet's mind." Pierre Joris, Paul Celan and the Meaning of Language, flashpointmag.com, accessed April 18, 2019, http://www.flashpointmag.com/Doug_Valentine_Interview_with_Pierre_Joris.htm.
[64] Carson, *Economy of the Unlost*, 115.
[65] For an extensive analysis of the "antimetaphoric" character of Celan's poetry and poetics see Pajari Räsänen, "Counter-Figures: An Essay on Antimetaphoric Resistance: Paul Celan's Poetry

and Poetics at the Limits of Figurality" (Academic Dissertation, Faculty of Arts, University of Helsinki, 2007).
[66] Axel Englund provides a helpful summary of the different positions with regard to Celan's critique of metaphor. Axel Englund, *Still Songs: Music in and Around the Poetry of Paul Celan* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 14ff.
[67] Englund, 14.
[68] Jean Bollack, *L'écrit: Une poétique dans l'œuvre de Celan* (Paris: PUF, 2003), 34–36; Winfried Menninghaus, *Paul Celan: Magie Der Form* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 172.
[69] Czollek, *Desintegriert Euch!*, 131–32.
[70] Peter Szondi, "Reading 'Engführung': An Essay on the Poetry of Paul Celan," *Boundary 2* 11, no. 3 (Spring 1983): 231.
[71] For more on the asterisk in "Engführung" see Fioretos, "Nothing: Reading Paul Celan's 'Engführung.'"
[72] Szondi, "Reading 'Engführung': An Essay on the Poetry of Paul Celan," 240.
[73] Letter from August 10, 1962. See Celan, *Die Gedichte*, 669.
[74] Dietlind Meinecke, *Wort Und Name Bei Paul Celan* (Bad Homburg: Koch, 1970), 177; See note 37 Celan, *Die Gedichte*, 688.
[75] This sense of a poetological reflection is also supported by the sheer density of the language in this passage. Unlike the English "poetry" that shares a root with the Greek *poiesis*, a process of making or crafting, the German "*Dichtung*" derives from the Latin *dictare*—to order, to command. Might we read "your breath obeyed" as a response to the command of poetry? But the German "*Dichtung*" also—while not etymologically related to this term—contains within it the word *dicht*—condensed, tight. There is indeed much "Dichtung" in this poem and this passage in particular—a condensation of times and histories, of an "I" and a "You," and of breath.
[76] This bears once more an affinity with *Night and Fog*, this time on a formal level. As Debarati Sanyal writes: *Night and Fog* "models a relationship between aesthetic form and historical violence that is not about trauma but about complicity." Debarati Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity: Migrations of Holocaust Remembrance* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 102.
[77] In his poems, Celan introduces compound words such as "breath crystal" (*Atemkristall*) or "breath-rope" (*Atemseil*), and his 1967 collection of poems is called *Atemwende*, *Breathturn*.
[78] This interrelation between breath as a somatic operation and breath as a spiritual figure is echoed in the linguistic root relation between the Hebrew "*neshima*" (breath) and "*neshama*" (soul.) See also Naomi Eleanor Shulman, "A Poetics of Survival: Figures and Forms of the Ethical in Poetry after the Shoah" (Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, Spring 2011), 64.
[79] In the preparatory notes to *The Meridian* a comment on the term "Atemeinheiten," "breath-units," is followed by "Buber" in parentheses—a reference to Martin Buber's bible translation. Buber, translating the Bible together with Franz Rosenzweig, emphasized the importance of recuperating the breath rhythm of the Hebrew original in the German version. (M, 109) For discussions of the role of breath in the context of Celan's work see for instance Lydia Koelle, *Paul Celans pneumatisches Judentum: Gott-Rede und menschliche Existenz nach der Shoah* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1997); Antti Salminen, "On Breathroutes: Paul Celan's Poetics of Breathing," *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 12, no. 1 (January

20, 2014): 107–26; Maya Barzilai, "'One Should Finally Learn How to Read This Breath': Paul Celan and the Buber-Rosenzweig Bible," *Comparative Literature* 71, no. 4 (2019): 436–54; On Buber's and Rosenzweig's Bible translation, see Leora Batnitzky, "Translation as Transcendence: A Glimpse into the Workshop of the Buber-Rosenzweig Bible Translation," *New German Critique* 70 (Winter 1997): 87–116.

[80] Gaston Bachelard, *L'Air et les songes: Essai sur l'imagination du movement*, (Paris: José Corti, 1994), 273ff. See the note on Celan's bibliographical reference to Bachelard in M, 210.

[81] Pierre Joris has written an insightful comment on his translation of Celan's poem "Frankfurt, September," that reflects on the figure of the "Kehlkopfverschlusslaut," glottal stop in it, which similarly doubles as a topos and textual principle that engages the reader. See: http://www.pierrejoris.com/blog/?p=725

[82] With this notion of reality, Celan comes close to what Niklaus Largier, discussing Erich Auerbach's notion of "realism" has described as a particular modern understanding of "the real" that cannot be subsumed into a coherent structure of sense but rather shines through in formative, shape-giving effects. See Niklaus Largier, "Die Figur des Realen. Zur Konvergenz von Realität und Möglichkeit," in *Die Wirklichkeit des Realismus* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2018), 43.

[83] See M, 109.

[84] See the note on Celan's bibliographical reference of Husserl in M, 210.

[85] Edmund Husserl, *Collected Works, Vol. 4: On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)*, trans. John Barnett Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), 111; See also Räsänen, "Counter-Figures: An Essay on Antimetaphoric Resistance: Paul Celan's Poetry and Poetics at the Limits of Figurality," 212.

[86] Paul Celan, *Collected Prose*, trans. Rosmarie Waldrop (Riverdale-on-Hudson, NY: The Sheep Meadow Press, 1986), 63 Translation adapted.

[87] *"[Eine] intersubjektive Leiblichkeit mit raumzeitlichen Implikationen*." Frank König, *Vertieftes Sein: Wahrnehmung und Körperlichkeit bei Paul Celan und Maurice Merleau-Ponty* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2014), 176.

[88] See König, 175.

[89] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 141.

[90] Cited in Richard Raskin's foreword to Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman, eds., *Concentrationary Cinema: Aesthetics as Political Resistance in Alain Resnais's "Night and Fog" (1955)* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2011), xi.

[91] Ingeborg Bachmann, *Frankfurter Vorlesungen: Probleme Zeitgenössischer Dichtung* (Munich, Zurich: Piper, 2011), 40; Nelly Sachs, *Fahrt ins Staublose: Die Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1961), 9; Nelly Sachs, *O the Chimneys: Selected Poems, Including the Verse Play, Eli*, trans. Michael Hamburger et al. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967), 5 Translated by Michael Hamburger.

[92] Some interpretations of Sachs's poem identify in it a call for survivors of the Shoah to move forward toward rebuilding lives, not to succumb to the memory of suffering, and not to listen to the echoes of the past. See for instance Cettina Rapisarda, "Eine Heimat für die Dinge: Zu einigen Motiven bei Nelly Sachs," in *Wechsel der Orte. Studien zum Wandel des literarischen Geschichtsbewußtseins*, ed. Irmela von Lühe and Anita Runge (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 1997).

[93] Bachmann, *Frankfurter Vorlesungen: Probleme Zeitgenössischer Dichtung*, 40.

[94] Szondi, "Reading 'Engführung': An Essay on the Poetry of Paul Celan," 231.

[95] Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 188.
[96] Celan, *Die Gedichte*, 40–41; Paul Celan, *Paul Celan: Poems: A Bilingual Edition*, trans. Michael Hamburger (New York: Persea, 1980), 60–63.
[97] I have discussed this in a different context here: Simone Stirner, "A Technique of Closeness, an Art of Straying: Reading with Walter Benjamin," *New Literary History* 50, no. 2 (Spring 2019): 271–91.
[98] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 416.
[99] Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction," *Representations* 108, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 10.
[100] When Anne Cheng formulates the notion of a "hermeneutics of susceptibility" she does so in the context of an investigation into the "dialogue between the skins of raced bodies and modern buildings." Cheng, "Skins, Tattoos, and Susceptibility," 101–2; Anne Anlin Cheng, "The Wayward Life of Objects," *Novel* 45, no. 1 (May 2012): 3–5.
[101] Cheng, "The Wayward Life of Objects," 4.
[102] Cheng, "Skins, Tattoos, and Susceptibility," 98.
[103] Sigmund Freud, "The Aeteology of Hysteria," in Jones, E. (ed.), Collected Papers of Sigmund Freud, Vol. I., (London: Hogard Press, 1953) 183-219. 184-185.
[104] Love, "Truth and Consequences: On Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," 236.
[105] When Susan Sontag, in "Against Interpretation" criticizes symptomatic reading in the tradition of Freud and Marx, her language appears to take direct aim at Freud's passage above: "[T]he contemporary zeal for the project of interpretation is often prompted […] by an open aggressiveness, an overt contempt for appearances. […] The modern style of interpretation excavates, and as it excavates, destroys; it digs "behind" the text, to find a sub-text which is the true one. The most celebrated and influential modern doctrines, those of Marx and Freud, actually amount to elaborate systems of hermeneutics, aggressive and impious theories of interpretation." Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation," in *Against Interpretation; and Other Essays* (New York: Delta, 1966), 6–7.
[106] Celan, *Die Gedichte*, 2.
[107] I borrow this term from Sianne Ngai, who among other lists irritation, paranoia, and disgust as "ugly feelings." Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2005).
[108] Joris, "Introduction," xl.
[109] Erich Lotz, "Rezension zu 'Fadensonnen,'" *Universitas* 24, no. 1 (1969): 92; See Rosenthal, *Pathways to Paul Celan: A History of Critical Responses as a Chorus of Discordant Voices*, 37.
[110] Gilda Encarnação, *Fremde Nähe: Das Dialogische als poetisches und poetologisches Prinzip bei Paul Celan* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007).
[111] Serpell, *Seven Modes of Uncertainty*, 5.
[112] See the introduction to Dan Pagis, *An Beiden Ufern der Zeit: Ausgewählte Gedichte*, trans. Anne Birkenhauer (Straelen: Straelener Manuskripte Verlag, 2003).
[113] Tamar Yacobi, "The Continuing Enigmatic Quality in the Late Poetry of Dan Pagis (Hebrew)," *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* (January 2011): 187.
[114] Michael Gluzman, "The Poetry of the Drowned: Sovereignty and Melancholia after 1948" (The 2016 Taubman Lectures, The Magnes Collection, Berkeley, February 2016).

[115] See Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, "Dan Pagis—Out of Line: A Poetics of Decomposition," *Prooftexts* 10, no. 2 (May 1990): 337.
[116] Jacques Derrida, "The Majesty of the Present," trans. Alessia Ricciardi and Christopher Yu, *New German Critique* 91 (Winter 2004): 21.
[117] Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 64; Video Testimony of Hanna F., Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University, HVT 0018, interviewed by Laurel Vlock and Miriam Posner. Transcription in: Jill Stauffer, *Ethical Loneliness: The Injustice of Not Being Heard* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 72.
[118] Stauffer, *Ethical Loneliness: The Injustice of Not Being Heard*, 73.
[119] Stauffer, 73–74.
[120] Walk, "Survivors of Holocaust Retell the Unspeakable."
[121] See Introduction as well as Thomas Trezise, "Unspeakable," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 39–66.
[122] Reflecting on the ethical stakes of close reading, Jane Gallop has articulated a more expansive version of the argument that practices of close reading can model a way of encountering another person: "By "reading," here, I mean of course close reading, learning to hear what's really on the page, listening closely to the other, and being willing to catch what the other actually says, and being able to hear what we didn't expect him to say. If we can learn to do that with books, we might learn to do that with people." Jane Gallop, "The Ethics of Reading: Close Encounters," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 16, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 17.
[123] Celan, *Die Gedichte*, 519. Translation mine.
[124] Rosenthal, *Pathways to Paul Celan: A History of Critical Responses as a Chorus of Discordant Voices*, 46. Translation mine.
[125] Peter Horn, *Die Garne der Fischer der Irrsee: Zur Lyrik von Paul Celan* (Oberhausen: ATHENA-Verlag, 2011), 13; Rolf Michaelis, "Ein Großer Tag für die deutsche Literatur: Paul Celans Gedichte aus dem Nachlaß. Nimmergesänge und Zwitscher-Hymnen," *Die Zeit*, May 16, 1997, https://www.zeit.de/1997/21/celan.txt.19970516.xml.
[126] This mirrors the catachresis effect, which Chana Kronfeld—via Dan Blanton's notion of the "shadow text"—has described as a defining feature of the intertextual practices of Statehood Generation poetry. Chana Kronfeld, *The Full Severity of Compassion: The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 37, 241; C.D. Blanton, *Epic Negation: The Dialectical Poetics of Late Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 10, 18.
[127] I am indebted to Robert Kaufman, Chana Kronfeld, and Winfried Kudszus, all of whom at different moments in time have taken the time to read and think through this poem with me and who generously lent their ear to add layers to the meaning of the term "*gassatim*."
[128] Friedrich Kluge, "Gassatim," in *Etymologisches Wörterbuch Der Deutschen Sprache* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1960).
[129] Celan, *Die Gedichte*, 966.
[130] "Cassation N.," Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, accessed October 10, 2015, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cassation.
[131] See: Françoise Escal, "Musiques de nuit, musiques de la nuit," in *La nuit*, ed. François Angelier and Nicole Jacques-Chaquin (Editions Jérôme Millon, 1995), 16.
[132] Celan, *Die Gedichte*, 252; Paul Celan, *Breathturn into Timestead: The Collected Later Poetry. A Bilingual Edition*, trans. Pierre Joris (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2014), 197.

[133] Joel Golb, "Allegorie und Geschichte: Paul Celans Bahndämme, Wegränder, Ödeplätze, Schutt," in *Lesarten: Beiträge Zum Werk Paul Celans*, ed. Axel Gellhaus and Andreas Lohr (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1996), 81–118.
[134] Anders Olsson, "Spectral Analysis: A Commentary on 'Solve' and 'Coagula,'" in *Word Traces: Readings of Paul Celan*, ed. Aris Fioretos (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 278. Olsson in turn references Christoph Perel's essay "Erhellende Metathesen" as another study that points to the polyvalency or spectrality of Celan's language. (See *Paul Celan*, ed. Hamacher and Menninghaus, 127-38.)
[135] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," in *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, ed. Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 247.
[136] Merleau-Ponty, 247–48.
[137] Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," in *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas Seboek (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), 350–77.
[138] Theodor W. Adorno, "Notes on Kafka," in *Prisms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 246.
[139] Adorno, 246.
[140] Adorno, 254.
[141] Adorno, 247.
[142] Judith Butler, "Values of Difficulty," in *Just Being Difficult? Academic Writing in the Public Arena*, ed. Jonathan Culler and Kevin Lamb (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 206.
[143] Butler, 209.
[144] Butler, 208–9.
[145] Butler, 208.
[146] Koelle, *Paul Celans pneumatisches Judentum*, 107.
[147] Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996), 235.
[148] According to Ada Pagis, the tutor did dictate a Hebrew letter to him that was sent to his father in Palestine: "My dear father! How much I, too, would like to go to *Eretz Israel* and to see you." Ada Pagis, *Lev Pitomi [Sudden Heart]* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1995), 28. Translation from the Hebrew by Nili Scharf Gold and Anne Birkenheuer.
[149] See Robert Alter, "Introduction," in: Dan Pagis, *The Selected Poetry of Dan Pagis*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1989), xii.
[150] Amir Eshel, *Poetic Thinking Today: An Essay* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 21.
[151] Eshel, 20; Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 109–31.
[152] Eshel, *Poetic Thinking Today: An Essay*, 20.
[153] As Tom Segev states, the "Eichmann trial marked the beginning of a dramatic shift in the way Israelis related to the Holocaust." Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 329.
[154] Dan Pagis, *Points of Departure*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1981), 28–37; Hannan Hever, "Trauma and Witnessing in Dan Pagis Literature [Hebrew]," in *Studies and Documents in the Poetry of Dan Pagis* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2016), 180.

[155] This bears structural affinity wit the notion of narrative mulitiplicity in the tradition of Mikhail Bakhtin, but where narrative multiplicity describes a "narrative structure characterized by the presentation of conflicting views within a given community about an event, an object, or a person," the structure that I describe as "poetic multiplicity" in Pagis, rather than presenting conflicting views, creates a destabilizing effect through the condensation of different languages, intertexts, and perspectives in the small space of the poem. On narrative multiplicity see Serpell, *Seven Modes of Uncertainty*, 115ff; Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 276.
[156] Hever, "Trauma and Witnessing in Dan Pagis Literature [Hebrew]," 180. Translation mine.
[157] I include here Chana Kronfeld's translation of the epigraph. The rest of the poem follows the translation by Stephen Mitchell.
[158] Hever, "Trauma and Witnessing in Dan Pagis Literature [Hebrew]."
[159] Tamar Yacobi, "Time Denatured into Meaning: New Worlds and Renewed Themes in the Poetry of Dan Pagis," *Style* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 107.
[160] See Nili Rachel Scharf Gold, "Betrayal of the Mother Tongue in the Creation of National Identity," in *Ideology and Jewish Identity in Israeli and American Literature*, ed. Emily Miller Budick (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 245.
[161] Examples include S.Y. Abramovitch's "Shem and Japheth on the Train" as well as Sholem Aleichem's *Railway Stories*. As Allison Schachter writes: The train is both a trope of Eastern Jewish culture and European modernity. In Yiddish literature, the train represented the acceleration of modernity and the experience of diaspora. At the same time, the train also disrupted traditional Jewish social conventions, introducing new cultural, linguistic, and gender norms." Allison Schachter, *Diasporic Modernisms: Hebrew and Yiddish Literature in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 123–24.
[162] I thank Chana Kronfeld for pointing me to this linguistic nuance.
[163] See Scharf Gold, "Betrayal of the Mother Tongue in the Creation of National Identity," 245.
[164] The final image of the flickering ball of earth covered by footprints can also be read as an iteration of the trope of Auschwitz as "another planet" that any outsider or belated witness can only see from a distance and without any recourse to understanding it. In a 2018 article, Kathryn Brackney highlighted the surprising coincidence of this trope with the space race. In one particularly uncanny encounter between these two histories, the *New York Times*'s frontpage on April 12, 1961 features the photograph of Adolf Eichmann shielded off by bulletproof glass, seemingly "hovering above spectators at his trial in Jerusalem" under the headline "Soviet orbits man and recovers him. Space pioneer reports: 'I Feel Well'; sent messages while circling earth." Kathryn L. Brackney, "Remembering 'Planet Auschwitz' During the Cold War," *Representations* 144, no. 1 (Fall 2018): 128.
[165] Robert Alter, "Introduction," in *The Selected Poetry of Dan Pagis*, by Dan Pagis, trans. Stephen Mitchell (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1989), xi.
[166] Alter, xiii.
[167] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Objects, Orientations, Others* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 158.
[168] Pagis, *Points of Departure*, 22–23.
[169] Tuvia Rübner and Dan Pagis, "Nachwort," in *Erdichteter Mensch*, trans. Tuvia Rübner (Aachen: Rimbaud, 2013), 74–75.

[170] Hayim Nahman Bialik, *Songs from Bialik: Selected Poems of Hayim Nahman Bialik*, trans. Atar Hadari (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 33. Translation adapted.
[171] Amir Eshel, "Eternal Present: Poetic Figuration and Cultural Memory in the Poetry of Yehuda Amichai, Dan Pagis, and Tuvia Rübner," *Jewish Social Studies* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 2000): 148.
[172] Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence," *Aspen* 5+6, no. The Minimalism Issue (Fall-Winter 1967).
[173] See Vivian Liska, "Walter Benjamin's Dialectics of Attentiveness," *Symposium* 65, no. 1 (2011): 16–24; On the dialectics of "*Welthingabe*" and "*Weltzugriff*" see also Andreas Niesseler, "Die Anthropologische Bedeutung der Aufmerksamkeit," *Neue Sammlung* 37, no. 3 (1997): 473.
[174] Walter Benjamin, "Goethe's 'Elective Affinities,'" in *Selected Writings, Vol. 1*, ed. Marcus Bullock, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1996), 297–360; See Liska's discussion: Liska, "Walter Benjamin's Dialectics of Attentiveness."
[175] Dan Pagis, *Shirat Ha-Chol ve-Torat Ha-Shir Le-Moshe Ibn Ezra u-Vney Doro [Secular Poetry and Poetic Theory: Moses Ibn Ezra and His Contemporaries]* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1970), 70; Cited in Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism*, 116. Translation by Chana Kronfeld.
[176] Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism*, 116.
[177] This passive-active structure of attention is also echoed in Lauren Berlant's description of the impasse as a stretch of the present in which there is a demand for "both a wandering absorptive awareness and a hypervigilance that might help to clarify things." This, in turn, allows us to see another aspect of what an earlier section in this chapter discussed as the "ethics of the impasse." Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 4.
[178] For an extensive reflection on the relation between "poetry" and "making" see Susan Stewart, *The Poet's Freedom: A Notebook on Making* (Chicago and London: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 2011).
[179] Paul Celan, "From 'Microliths,'" trans. Pierre Joris, *Poetry Magazine*, January 2017, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/91659/from-microliths.
[180] W. H. Auden, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," in *Selected Poems* (London: Faber, 1979), 82.
[181] See for instance Daniel Feldman, "Writing Nothing: Negation and Subjectivity in the Holocaust Poetry of Paul Celan and Dan Pagis," *Comparative Literature* 66, no. 4 (Fall 2014): 438–58; For a reflection on the role of "Nothing" in Celan's "Psalm" see also Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 180.
[182] Auden, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," 82.
[183] Richard T. Gray, *About Face: German Physiognomic Thought from Lavater to Auschwitz* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004).
[184] Eshel, *Poetic Thinking Today: An Essay*, 47.
[185] Annette Wieviorka, "On Testimony," in *Holocaust Remembrance: Shapes of Memory*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartmann (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994), 23–32; Roger I. Simon, *The Touch of the Past: Remembrance, Learning, and Ethics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 50.
[186] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: The Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 59.
[187] Felman and Laub, 59–60.
[188] Simon, *The Touch of the Past: Remembrance, Learning, and Ethics*, 56.

[189] Alia Al-Saji, "A Phenomenology of Hesitation: Interrupting Racializing Habits of Seeing," in *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Race* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2014), 144.
[190] Al-Saji, 155.
[191] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, "Institution in Personal and Public History," in *In Praise of Philosophy and Other Essays*, ed. John Wild and James Edie, trans. John O'Neill (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 108–9.
[192] Lisa Guenther, "Seeing Like a Cop: A Critical Phenomenology of Whiteness as Property" (Political Ontology of the Present Conference, University of Minnesota, April 27, 2018).
[193] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 466.
[194] Al-Saji grounds this in a greater consideration of affect as "tendency" in a Bergsonian sense, that is, affect as "not a completed reality or atomistic thing, but a process always open to further elaboration, forking, and becoming." Al-Saji, "A Phenomenology of Hesitation: Interrupting Racializing Habits of Seeing," 143.
[195] Page numbers to "Un Jour"/"One Day" are hereafter given in parentheses. Charlotte Delbo, *Aucun de Nous Ne Reviendra* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1970); Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, trans. Rosette C. Lamont (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995); The texts in *Auschwitz and After* are most frequently identified as "poetic prose," or "prose poems." Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 141; Rosette C. Lamont, "The Triple Courage of Charlotte Delbo: A Place without a Name," *The Massachusetts Review* 41, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 484; On the relation between Delbo's "poetic language of images" and her theatre work see Anne-Berenike Rothstein, "Presence through Absence: The Aesthetics of Blank Space in French Holocaust Literature and Film," in *Narratives of Annihilation, Confinement, and Survival: Camp Literature in a Transnational Perspective*, ed. Anna Artwińska and Anja Tippner (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), 135.
[196] Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 79–87; Delbo, *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, 137–39.
[197] Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 84; Delbo, *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, 137.
[198] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, 199.
[199] This is related by Lawrence L. Langer who writes: "She finished the first volume, *None of Us Will Return* (*Aucun de nous ne reviendra*) in 1946 but put it away in a drawer and did not let it be published until 1965, when, as she said, it had stood the test of time." Lawrence L. Langer, "Introduction," in *Auschwitz and After*, by Charlotte Delbo (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), x.
[200] See Kaplan, "Charlotte Delbo's Visualities of Memory," 39.
[201] Kaplan, *Unwanted Beauty: Aesthetic Pleasure in Holocaust Representation*, 20; Kaplan, "Charlotte Delbo's Visualities of Memory."
[202] Motte, *Au-delà du mot: Une "écriture du silence" dans la littérature française au vingtième siècle*, 119.
[203] Michaela Hulstyn, "Charlotte Delbo à l'écoute: Auditory Imagery in *Auschwitz et Après*,'" *Women in French Studies* 6, no. Special Issue (2016): 70.
[204] I would, however, not go as far as Hulstyn to say that the auditory truly steps in to "fill a gap" since this implies the possibility of a closure that the texts ultimately withhold. If anything, they teach us that there is always more to see and attend to.

[205] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, 200.
[206] Letter by Charlotte Delbo to Boubou, June 23, 1961. BNF, Fonds Delbo, 4-COL-208-294. Translation mine. Ghislaine Dunant first pointed to the importance of this letter in understanding that Delbo did in fact not wait for twenty years to publish *Auschwitz et après* (as, for instance Rothberg notes) but attempted to do so already in the early 1960s. Ghislaine Dunant, *Charlotte Delbo: La Vie Retrouvée* (Paris: Grasset et Fasqualles, 2016), 209.
[207] Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman, eds., *Concentrationary Memories: Totalitarian Terror and Cultural Resistance* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 4.
[208] Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 1; Delbo, *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, 7.
[209] This is reported by her friend and translator Rosette Lamont. Rosette C. Lamont, "Translator's Preface," in *Auschwitz and After*, by Charlotte Delbo, trans. Rosette C. Lamont (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), viii.
[210] Hulstyn, "Charlotte Delbo à l'écoute: Auditory Imagery in 'Auschwitz et Après.,'" 70.
[211] Langer, "Introduction," xix.
[212] Hulstyn, "Charlotte Delbo à l'écoute: Auditory Imagery in 'Auschwitz et Après.,'" 70.
[213] Langer, "Introduction," xvii.
[214] Delbo, *Mesure de nos jours. Auschwitz et après III*, 77; Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 275.
[215] In a recent dissertation, Vanessa Brutsche shows that Delbo's writing undoes the idea that the concentration camps were worlds of their own, with no contact to the "outside" world. Written into Delbo's texts is in this sense the awareness that the camps were not removed from the public eye. Rather, people chose not to "see" them. Vanessa Brutsche, "The Place of Atrocity: Geographical Imaginaries in Delbo, Camus, and Duras" (Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2017).
[216] On the economy of attention see also Waldenfels, *Phänomenologie Der Aufmerksamkeit*, 271ff.
[217] Delbo, *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, 80–85; Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 49–52.
[218] Delbo, *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, 142; Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 89.
[219] Delbo, *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, 21; Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 11.
[220] Lamont, "Translator's Preface," vii.
[221] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954-1955)*, trans. Leonard Lawlor and Heath Massey (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 192.
[222] Al-Saji, "A Phenomenology of Hesitation: Interrupting Racializing Habits of Seeing," 158.
[223] Lamont, "Translator's Preface," viii.
[224] Shoshana Felman and Thomas E. Donnelley, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 81.
[225] Felman and Donnelley, 83.
[226] See Judith Butler, "Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia," in *Reading Rodney King. Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert Gooding-Williams (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 15–22.
[227] See also Thomas Keenan, "Watching Without Seeing: Police Violence and Eyewitness Video" (The European Graduate School, Valletta, Malta, October 26, 2017), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3-347PCXUA.

[228] Motte, *Au-delà du mot: Une "écriture du silence" dans la littérature française au vingtième siècle*, 114f.
[229] Motte, 115. Translation mine.
[230] Judith Butler, "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26, no. 2 (2012): 138.
[231] Cannon Schmitt, "Interpret or Describe?," *Representations* 135 (Summer 2016): 104. The special issue of *Representations* is primarily dedicated to description as a critical mode that stands if not in opposition than at least in a relation of otherness to modes of interpretation. Lukacs is concerned with the difference between narration and novelistic description but as the volume shows, and Schmitt, among others, points out directly, the two sets of problems map onto each other.
[232] Georg Lukacs, "Narrate or Describe?," in *Writer & Critic And Other Essays*, trans. Arthur D. Kahn (New York: The Universal Library, 1970), 110–48.
[233] Schmitt, "Interpret or Describe?," 105.
[234] Schmitt, 104; Frederic Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 202; Heather Love, "Close but Not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn," *New Literary History* 41 (2010): 388.
[235] Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954-1955)*, 192.
[236] Al-Saji, "A Phenomenology of Hesitation: Interrupting Racializing Habits of Seeing," 158.
[237] Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954-1955)*, 192.
[238] Merleau-Ponty, 192.
[239] Al-Saji, "A Phenomenology of Hesitation: Interrupting Racializing Habits of Seeing," 159.
[240] This performative dimension of *The Meridian* has been discussed by Kristina Mendicino. Kristina Mendicino, "An Other Rhetoric: Paul Celan's Meridian," *MLN* 126, no. 3 (April 2011): 630–50.
[241] On the performative dimensions of the speech see Mendicino.
[242] On Celan's practice of quotation see: Helmut Müller-Sievers, "On the Way to Quotation: Paul Celan's 'Meridian'-Speech," *New German Critique* 91, no. Special Issue on Paul Celan (Winter 2004): 131–49; In her essay on the political dimensions of attentiveness in *The Meridian*, Alexandra Richter has also convincingly highlighted the political importance of Celan's detour through Benjamin by revealing that it is part of a larger pattern in Celan's speech which, instead of citing directly, mediates quotes by Mercier, Pascal, or Malebranche through the words of Jewish thinkers: Rosanov, Chestov, Benjamin. Alexandra Richter, "Prier pour le petit bossu. La dimension politique de l'attention dans 'Le Méridien' de Paul Celan," *Po&sie* 159, no. 1 (2017): 111–21.
[243] Anja Lemke has pointed out a similar phenomenon in Celan's "Bremer Rede" (*Bremen Speech*), suggesting that it describes the "path of language [*Weg der Sprache*]." Anja Lemke, "Andenkendes Dichten: Paul Celans Poetik der Erinnerung in 'Tübingen, Jänner' und 'Todtnauberg' in Auseinandersetzung mit Hölderlin und Heidegger," in *Die Zeitlichkeit des Ethos: Poetologische Aspekte im Schreiben Paul Celans*, ed. Ulrich Wergin and Martin Jörg Schäfer (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), 95.
[244] In its rhythm of tending and attending, the path of the poem also recalls Henri Bergson's words on time as *tâtonnement*, that is "a search without finality of teleology, an experimentation

that does not dictate the fiture it will find." Al-Saji, "A Phenomenology of Hesitation: Interrupting Racializing Habits of Seeing," 143.
[245] Bachmann, *Frankfurter Vorlesungen: Probleme Zeitgenössischer Dichtung*, 20.
[246] "Es gibt in der Kunst keinen Fortschritt in der Horizontale, sondern nur das immer neue Aufreißen einer Vertikale. […] Und die verändernde Wirkung, die von neuen Werken ausgeht, erzieht uns zu neuer Wahrnehmung, neuem Gefühl, neuem Bewußtsein." Bachmann, 25.
[247] "Wir schlafen ja, sind Schläfer aus Furcht, uns und unsere Welt wahrnehmen zu müssen." Bachmann, 26.
[248] Waldenfels, *Phänomenologie der Aufmerksamkeit*, 283.
[249] "I took this route, here too, in you presence." "*Ich bin, auch hier, in Ihrer Gegenwart, diesen Weg gegangen.*" (M, 11).
[250] Waldenfels, *Phänomenologie der Aufmerksamkeit*, 284. Translation mine.
[251] Lutz Koepnick, *On Slowness: Toward an Aesthetic of the Contemporary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014, 221.
[252] For a complete list of recipients and their acceptance speeches see https://www.deutscheakademie.de/de/auszeichnungen/georg-buechner-preis
[253] Eshel, "Paul Celan's Other: History, Poetics, and Ethics," 59.
[254] Bodemann, *Gedächtnistheater: Die jüdische Gemeinschaft ind ihre deutsche Erfindung*.
[255] Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, 21. I am grateful to Gabriel Trop who pointed me to Sharpe's study as a resource for this chapter.
[256] Sharpe, 9; Valeriya Safronova, "Rethinking the Jewish Place in Germany," *New York Times*, January 20, 2020, sec. C.
[257] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations. Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken, 2007), 263.
[258] Benjamin, 263.
[259] Sanyal, "Time and Politics in Contemporary Critique: Entanglements and Aftermaths. Introduction," 347.
[260] In his speech on the occasion of receiving the literature prize of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen, Celan states: "A poem, as a manifestation of language and thus essentially dialogue, can be a message in a bottle, sent out in the—not always greatly hopeful—belief that somewhere and sometime it could wash up on land, on heartland perhaps." Paul Celan, "Bremer Literaturpreisrede," in *Gesammelte Werke in fünf Bänden. Gedichte III, Prosa, Reden* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), 186; Paul Celan, "Speech on the Occasion of Receiving the Literature Prize of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen," in *Collected Prose*, trans. Rosemarie Waldrop (Riverdale-on-Hudson, NY: The Sheep Meadow Press, 1986), 35.
[261] Celan, *Die Gedichte*, 153; Celan, *Paul Celan: Poems: A Bilingual Edition*, 207.
[262] Barbara Wiedemann's annotated edition of Paul Celan's poetry provides extensive commentary on the different elements of the poem. Celan, *Die Gedichte*, 700–702.
[263] See also Derrida, "Shibboleth: For Paul Celan," 25.
[264] The entangled structure of Celan's "dates" can in this sense also be understood as holding an instant of what Lia Brozgal has described as the "absent archive" of the 1961 Paris massacre. Lia Brozgal, "In the Absence of the Archive (Paris, October 17, 1961," *South Central Review* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 35. I thank Karl Britto for alerting me to this historical context.
[265] See Barbara Wiedemann's commentary in Celan, *Die Gedichte*, 700–702.

[266] Clare Cavanagh, *Osip Mandelstam and the Modernist Creation of Tradition* (Princeton University Press, 1994), 175ff.
[267] Svetlana Boym, "The Future of Nostalgia," in *The Svetlana Boym Reader*, ed. Cristina Vatulescu et al. (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 227.
[268] Derrida, "Shibboleth: For Paul Celan," 21.
[269] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, "The Politics of Translation," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 329. For a brief explanation of the Freudian term "facilitation," "*frayage*," or "*Bahnung*" in German see note 2 in Spivak's essay.
[270] See Peggy Piesche, ed., *Euer Schweigen schützt euch nicht. Audre Lorde und die Schwarze Frauenbewegung in Deutschland* (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 2012).
[271] May Ayim, *Blues in Schwarz Weiss* (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 2014), 68–70. May Ayim. *Blues in Black and White*, p. 109-111 (Transl. May Ayim/Ekpenyong Ani)
[272] Holly Cartner, "'Foreigners Out': Xenophobia and Right-Wing Violence in Germany" (Human Rights Watch, 1992), 17; Julia Stegmann, *Denn die Geschichten der Opfer sind das Wichtigste. Rassismus-kritische Analysen zu rechter Gewalt im Deutschen Spiel- Und Dokumentarfilm 1992-2012* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2019), 160.
[273] May Ayim, "Das Jahr 1990. Heimat und Einheit aus Afro-Deutscher Perspektive," in *Grenzenlos und Unverschämt* (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1997), 90–91. Translation mine.
[274] Ayim, *Blues in Schwarz Weiss*, 61; May Ayim, *Blues in Black and White: A Collection of Essays, Poetry, and Conversations*, trans. Anne Adams (Trenton, NJ and Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2003), 48–49; See also Karein K. Goertz, "Showing Her Colors. An Afro-German Writes the Blues in Black and White," *Callaloo* 26, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 312.
[275] Alf Brustellin et al., *Deutschland Im Herbst*, 1978.
[276] See also Jamie H. Trnka, "'The Struggle Is Over, the Wounds Are Open': Cinematic Tropes, History, and the RAF in Recent German Film," *New German Critique* 101 (Summer 2007): 1–26.
[277] Marc Silberman, "Introduction to Germany in Autumn," *Discourse* 6, no. [German Avant-Garde Cinema: The Seventies] (Fall 1983): 48, 52.
[278] Silberman, 51, 50.
[279] Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity. Migrations of Holocaust Remembrance*, 2.
[280] Michael Rothberg, "Multidirectional Memory," *Témoigner: Entre histoire et mémoire* 119 (2014): 176.
[281] Rothberg.
[282] Iman Attia and Michael Rothberg, "Multidirectional Memory and Verwobene Geschichte(n) [Entangled (Hi)Stories]: A Conversation between Iman Attia and Michael Rothberg," *Transit* 12, no. 1 (2019): 50.
[283] Alia Al-Saji, "Hesitation as Philosophical Method: Travel Bans, Colonial Durations, and the Affective Weight of the Past," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 32, no. 2 (2018): 339; Alia Al-Saji, "Hesitation: Critical Phenomenology, Colonial Duration, and the Affective Weight of the Past" (Book Manuscript, 2019), 22.
[284] Al-Saji, "Hesitation: Critical Phenomenology, Colonial Duration, and the Affective Weight of the Past," 3.
[285] Al-Saji, "Hesitation as Philosophical Method: Travel Bans, Colonial Durations, and the Affective Weight of the Past," 343–44.

[286] See Czollek, *Desintegriert Euch!*, 132.
[287] Max Czollek, "Vom Spreizen der Finger": Interview mit Max Czollek auf der Leipziger Buchmesse 2015, interview by Ruprecht Volz, Signaturen. Forum für Autonome Poesie, 2015, https://signaturen-magazin.de/gespraech-mit-max-czollek.html. Translation mine.
[288] Celan, "Speech on the Occasion of Receiving the Literature Prize of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen," 33; Celan, "Bremer Literaturpreisrede."
[289] Max Czollek, *Druckkammern* (Berlin: Verlagshaus Berlin, 2016), 66 Translation Jon Cho-Polizzi.
[290] In the volume *Grenzwerte*, the poem dated 3. Oktober, October 3, within the cycle "Nachrichten aus Marathon" ("News from Marathon") has a similar effect when it asks whether it will be possible, in the future, to walk again singing through "beech forests," which in the German "Buchenwälder," is heavy with memory of the concentration camp Buchenwald. Max Czollek, *Grenzwerte* (Berlin: Verlagshaus Berlin, 2019), 26.
[291] Czollek, *Druckkammern*, 49.
[292] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Neue Gedichte* (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1922), 72–73; Rainer Maria Rilke, *New Poems*, trans. Len Krisak (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2016), 127–28.
[293] Czollek, *Grenzwerte*, 39. Translated by Jon Cho-Polizzi.
[294] Heinrich Heine, *Reisebilder III/IV*, ed. Manfred Windfuhr, vol. 7/1, Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe Der Werke (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1986), 159ff.; Heinrich Heine, *Pictures of Travel*, trans. Charles Godfrey Leland (Philadelphia: Schaefer & Koradi, 1882), 368–69. I am grateful to Jay Geller, who pointed me to Heine's *Reisebilder* as an intertext of Czollek's poem.
[295] For an extended discussion of Heine's lizard-philosopher see Willy Goetschel, "Nightingales Instad of Owls," in *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich Heine*, ed. Robert F. Cook (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), 139–68.
[296] Sigmund Freud, "A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis," in *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*, trans. James Strachey, vol. XXII, The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), 239–48.
[297] Al-Saji, "Hesitation as Philosophical Method: Travel Bans, Colonial Durations, and the Affective Weight of the Past," 339.
[298] Max Czollek, "Gegenwartsbewältigung [Overcoming the Present]," trans. Jon Cho-Polizzi, *Transit* 12, no. 2 (2020): 150.
[299] Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 263.
[300] https://www.stolpersteine-berlin.de/en/participation (accessed June 15, 2020.)
[301] https://www.stolpersteine-berlin.de/en/participation/cleaning (accessed June 15, 2020.)
[302] Here, of course, it is worth mentioning that while individuals might commit to a sponsorship of the *Stolpersteine,* the ones who most regularly contribute to maintaining the art project through their work are the employees of the public Berliner Stadtreinigung (BSR) (The Berlin Waste Management and City Cleaning Company).
[303] Lisa Baraitser, *Enduring Time* (London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 52.
[304] I discuss the multiple and opposing valences of concentration in the introduction. Derrida, "Shibboleth: For Paul Celan," 10.
[305] Baraitser, *Enduring Time*, 52–53.

[306] https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2020/06/streit-sinti-roma-mahnmal-deutsche-bahn-ausbau-s-bahn.html
[307] https://www.stiftung-denkmal.de/latest-news/smashed-glass-glass-at-the-memorial-for-the-homosexual/?lang=en
[308] https://hyperallergic.com/482860/berlin-memorial-to-gay-victims-of-the-holocaust-vandalized-for-second-time/
[309] Baraitser, *Enduring Time*, 54.
[310] Sanyal, "Time and Politics in Contemporary Critique: Entanglements and Aftermaths. Introduction," 348; See also Chambers, *Untimely Interventions: AIDS Writing, Testimonial, and The Rhetoric of Haunting*, xxii.
[311] Sanyal, "Time and Politics in Contemporary Critique: Entanglements and Aftermaths. Introduction," 348.

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