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### Alain Badiou's anabasis: rereading Paul Celan against Heidegger

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## **Tom Betteridge**

Alain Badiou's anabasis: rereading Paul Celan against Heidegger

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The essay examines Alain Badiou's concept of 'anabasis' and its disclosure in the poetry of Paul Celan. As a conceptualisation of the process of subject formation, anabasis is read as a rejoinder to that of 'homecoming', found in Martin Heidegger's appropriation of Friedrich Hölderlin's poems. Following an excursus on the philosophical and the ethical stakes at the heart of these movements, the essay close-reads two of Celan's poems in order to reveal poetry's own attempts to think through trajectories of emergent subjectivities in the wake of twentieth-century violence, as well as the as yet understated centrality of Celan's poetry to Badiou's wider philosophical project.

### **Keywords**

Alain Badiou; Paul Celan; Martin Heidegger; Friedrich Hölderlin; anabasis

Alain Badiou unfolds the concept 'Anabasis' in *The Century* (2005/2007)<sup>1</sup> in a meditation upon poems by Saint-John Perse and Paul Celan. Coming to signify the trajectory or movement comprising the essential moments of subject formation in the wake of twentieth-century violence, the concept of anabasis with which Badiou's chapter ends is intended to take account of the fact that, in Badiou's words, 'the century foundered upon a darkness so real that it was forced to change the *direction* of [its] movement, as well as the words that would articulate it'.<sup>2</sup> Crucially, Badiou finds the resources for thinking this change of direction in the poetry of Paul Celan, who, for Badiou, 'never ceased inventing a poetry capable of reckoning with what men underwent during the thirties and forties...'<sup>3</sup> Though ineluctably grounded in Celan's poetics however, anabasis also comes to resonate beyond the bounds of poetry's own interrogation of subject formation, and this is illuminated by Justin Clemens when he claims that anabasis is actually fundamental to Badiou's philosophy as a whole, remaining consistent despite its invocation in different contexts: 'Once you recognize this operation, you might begin to discern it everywhere in Badiou – if under a sequence of ever-varying names.'<sup>4</sup> However, this particular rendering of an ever-present operation – 'anabasis' in *The Century* – has a very specific target encoded beneath its subtle resonances and allusions: Martin Heidegger. In what follows, I want to read anabasis as a trajectory mobilised specifically against the movement of 'homecoming' we find bound to Heidegger's infamous readings of Friedrich Hölderlin's poems, in the hope that Celan's significance to Badiou's departure from Heidegger be made explicit. This essay begins by exploring the philosophical concerns – sameness, otherness, identity, alterity – at the heart of these movements of the subject, before offering two close-readings of Celan intended to elucidate Celan's own engagement with homecoming, as well as its centrality to the development of Badiou's anabasis.

Opening his meditation, Badiou writes: 'How did the century envisage its own movement...? As a re-ascent towards the source, an arduous construction of novelty, an exiled experience of beginning.'<sup>5</sup> These three moments comprise the essential aspects of anabasis per se. Badiou starts his analysis, however, not with the twentieth century's 'own movement' nor with the more particular variant of this movement he reads from Celan, but with a return to Xenophon's narrative *Anabasis*. This return operates as a subtle allusion to Heidegger's focused investigations into the obscured etymologies of *physis*, *logos*, *alētheia*, et al., and his attempt to revivify them as constituents of the myth of a pure Greek *arche*.<sup>6</sup> Badiou's return to Xenophon serves as a surreptitious critique here too, insofar as it privileges the Ancient Greeks' military prowess, their discipline especially, over the aesthetic, cultural and intellectual

evolution of their 'refined civilisation'.<sup>7</sup> This subversion is completed when Badiou identifies Greek military discipline as a 'discipline of thought, the compact force of a certainty . . .'.<sup>8</sup> Thought's proximity to the poem in Heidegger is overturned, replaced by a thinking allied to political necessity; and this critique is lent further weight by a playfully disproportionate analogy with the 'iron discipline' Lenin imposes upon his proletarian party. As well, Badiou's use of 'source' is not arbitrary, and alludes to both Hölderlin's obsession with his two rivers – the Rhine and the Ister – and to Heidegger's adoption of the discourse of *Ursprung* and source in his own writings on Hölderlin, especially on 'The Ister' hymn.<sup>9</sup> Alongside explicit reference to Heidegger elsewhere in the chapter – to his meeting with Paul Celan in 1967 and the subsequent publication of Celan's 'Todtnauberg', for example – these allusions invite us to consider the 'trajectory' central to Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin – 'homecoming' – alongside anabasis.

At its most abstract, the movement of homecoming contains three points in sequence: the traveller departs, encounters the other, and then returns to home's sanctuary. In this movement's Homeric form, Odysseus departs Ithaca for Troy, the majority of this epic poem then presents the various trials he faces in his attempt to return to Penelope, Telemachus, and his estate in Ithaca, where he is ensured a hero's welcome. However, the movement of homecoming with which we are dealing concerns fundamentally the becoming of cultural identity, the moving into proximity with what is 'proper' to one – and in its Heideggerian form, the becoming of the historical destiny of the German people. Reading Hölderlin's 'The Ister', Heidegger remarks that the poet may only 'learn the free use of what is proper to him' by fulfilling one of the conditions of 'becoming at home in what is proper . . .': 'the voyage into the foreign land'.<sup>10</sup> The following year in 1943, Heidegger commemorates the hundredth anniversary of Hölderlin's death with an address subsequently titled 'Homecoming/To Kindred Ones'.<sup>11</sup> There, a sinister reminder of the sacrifice of those 'sons of the homeland . . . far distant from its soil' is followed by the explicit imbrication of poetic task with the violent assertion of national identity: 'are not these sons of the homeland the poet's closest kin?' The political stakes of homecoming then, a movement which depends on pre-verified limits and boundaries, on blood and soil, become clear: 'homecoming', Heidegger surmises, 'is the future of the historical being of the German people'.<sup>12</sup> The poetic task of homecoming finds its corollary then in the political attempt to inaugurate a new people through the violent dissolution of the other. In order for the same to arise, it must pass through the other as its adversary.

Charles Bambach's reading of Hölderlin in *Thinking the Poetic Measure of Justice: Hölderlin-Heidegger-Celan*<sup>13</sup> seeks to emphasise the reciprocity between same and other evinced in Hölderlin's poems in order to

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open his poetry to a thought tradition entirely alien to Heidegger's totalising narrative. Reading 'The Ister' and 'The Journey', Bambach writes that:

To be German then, for Hölderlin, means to journey forth from the provinces and to leave behind what is familiar; it means to enter into the realm of what is foreign, strange, and other, so that what is one's own can be cultivated in and through an encounter with alterity.<sup>14</sup>

Bambach claims that Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin serves to obscure this fundamental aspect of exchange with the other by emphasising what he calls 'the narrow myth of autochthony', and later describes as 'the myth of a pure Greek *arche* untouched by foreign influence'.<sup>15</sup> The becoming of a people, for Hölderlin, is a reciprocal process demanding mutual exchange between native and foreign, and his account of the becoming of Ancient Greece, in Bambach's reading, is no different. Far from being a pure *arche* then, Greece, for Hölderlin, depended on a 'positive appropriation of the foreign'. Hölderlin, in his rejection of the hegemony of self-appropriation, for Bambach holds much in common with what the latter calls 'the Jewish critique of ontology', evinced by the likes Rosenweig, Lévinas, Derrida, and Celan. For these thinkers, the mutual exchange between self and other at the heart of ancient Greece allows 'the metaphysics of totality-identity that dominates the work of Western philosophy', or the privileging of identity over difference, to be critiqued, as a way of overcoming the politicised motifs of authenticity and identity at work in Heidegger's absolutisation of the poem.<sup>16</sup>

What Bambach sees in Hölderlin is a sense of poetic dwelling which remains open to alterity, and this is to be distinguished from Heidegger's absolute privileging of 'the same', expressed most forcefully in his lecture on Hölderlin's 'Andenken', in which the other is only thought through the proper: 'The origin can be shown only in one way: ...', Heidegger writes, '... returning back from a journeying which first originated from the origin, the showing moves into a nearness to the origin. Thereby the showing itself is pinned down in the steadfastness of the origin'.<sup>17</sup> The origin is left and endures throughout the journey, and the other, towards which the poet embarks, is only thought insofar as it contributes to the eventual becoming enacted in the subject's return to origin and subsequent 'fulfilment in the German homeland'.<sup>18</sup> Bambach seeks to save Hölderlin from this narrative by highlighting the latter's emphasis on the mutual exchange between native and foreign, claiming that Hölderlin 'brings into play the power of ... Lévinasian ethics of alterity'.<sup>19</sup> Though Bambach is keen to open Hölderlin's poetry up to proponents of the 'Jewish critique of ontology', the latter can hardly be said to present an alternative movement to that of Homeric homecoming, despite going some way in overcoming the

privilege afforded to the proper via its focus on alterity for its own sake. What Bambach is keen to present in his study is an entirely other movement, opposed to homecoming, and bound to an overarching critique of the centrality of identity to western metaphysics. To Homeric homecoming Bambach counterposes the 'Abrahamic myth of exile', and this is a movement in which the same moves into the other, but never returns. 'In the Jewish experience of wandering and exodus each finds a way of privileging the alterity of the stranger', Bambach writes.<sup>20</sup> Abrahamic movement *depends* upon the experience of exteriority: wandering, exodus, and exile replace the pre-verified homeland. This displacement of homecoming favours 'the ethical legacy of Jerusalem', which avoids 'static principles', in opposition to 'the ontological legacy of Athens'.<sup>21</sup> Crucially, Bambach reads Paul Celan in terms of this ethical legacy, emphasising the impossibility of dwelling enacted in his poems. Alongside many other scholars, Bambach reads Celan as a poet who, in relentlessly seeking alterity, stands as an exemplar of this Abrahamic movement in exile towards the other, against Heidegger's compulsion to totalise in 'coming home'.

Badiou's anabasis is a third movement. It is couched in the same philosophical terms as Homeric homecoming and Abrahamic exile – same, other, alterity, etc. – however, it is intended to overcome both the totalising of identity tied with the former, and the privileging of the other in the latter. Lévinas' conception of ethics affords primacy to the category of 'the Other', and this is a move attacked vehemently by Badiou in his *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (1993/2001). There, Badiou modulates Bambach's distinction between 'the ontological legacy of Athens' and the ethical legacy of Jerusalem, by claiming that Lévinas 'devoted his work ... to the deposing of *philosophy* in favour of ethics'.<sup>22</sup> On Badiou's reading, Lévinas is made to conflate the ontological legacy of Athens with philosophy per se, and this is to surreptitiously exclude Lévinas' writings from the practice of philosophy, as well as to posit the centrality of ontology to philosophy itself. Of course, the cornerstone of Badiou's mature philosophy, *Being and Event* (1988/2005), deems the ontological question the necessary starting point for philosophy today.<sup>23</sup> As it stands, Badiou's conception of the movement of the subject is unable to find a place in the schemas identified so far; he at once demands ontology be of founding importance, and that the privilege afforded to the same by Heidegger's conception of homecoming be rejected. In other words, Badiou demands the conjunction of metaphysics and ethics.<sup>24</sup>

In *Ethics* ... , Badiou produces a further reading of Lévinas' project which anticipates the former's departure from the two movements – Homeric and Abrahamic – identified above:

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Lévinas maintains that metaphysics, imprisoned by its Greek origins, has subordinated thought to the logic of the Same, to the primacy of substance and identity. But, according to Lévinas, it is impossible to arrive at an authentic thought of the Other (and thus an ethics of the relation to the Other) from the despotism of the Same, which is incapable of recognizing this Other. The dialectic of the Same and the Other, conceived 'ontologically' under the dominance of self-identity ensures the absence of the Other in effective thought, suppresses all genuine experience of the Other, and bars the way to an ethical opening towards alterity.<sup>25</sup>

Heideggerian homecoming subordinates thought to the logic of the same, harnessing the force of alterity for the benefit of the native, for what is 'proper'. Lévinas on the other hand (and in Bambach's study, Celan) seeks an ethical opening towards alterity divorced from the ontological dominance of self-identity evinced from Parmenides to Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. Badiou's anabasis in contrast, is a movement desiring both an opening towards alterity, but also the centrality of ontology. The status of alterity in anabasis, however, is markedly different from its mobilisation in Lévinas. What is crucial in Badiou's reading of Lévinas is his assertion that the latter reduces the ethical to the theological, 'annulling' the philosophical in the process. Badiou's point of contention is that in an encounter with alterity, with the finitude of the other, there is nothing to guarantee that such an experience is one of non-identity or of difference per se, rather than one based on resemblance or identity – in which one recognises oneself in the other, for example. The ethical experience on Lévinas' schema aims to traverse the distance between identity and non-identity, but for Badiou the necessity of this non-identity, and of this 'distance' between same and other, would require a grounding principle of otherness far beyond the finite encounter itself; in Badiou's words, 'The other always resembles me too much for the hypothesis of an originary exposure to his alterity to be *necessarily* true.'<sup>26</sup> Lévinas's 'Altogether-Other' then, via the individual subject's 'infinite devotion' to it, guarantees the 'finite devotion' ensuring that an encounter with the other be one *with otherness*. Badiou deems this infinite grounding principle another name for God, and maintains in his own conception of the ethical, and of the relation between same and other, that such a figure cannot simply be suppressed; that is, the category of 'ethics' cannot persist in its current 'abstract arrangement' – the privileging of the other – by simply masking its dependence on an infinite, unifying, or *theological*, figure.<sup>27</sup>

The complex relation between same and other enacted in Badiou's philosophy comes to light here then, for what he requires of ethics, in order to escape the theological, is a seemingly counter-intuitive return to



sameness or the same, which is another way of saying that ethics cannot produce its own guiding principle (of otherness, for example, as in Lévinas) and instead must be tethered to the production of 'truths'.<sup>28</sup> The philosophical innovations made in *Being and Event* – that being qua being is subtracted from knowledge and inconsistent, that 'the one is not' – allow Badiou to make a return to a logic of sameness without acquiescing to the identity-centric metaphysics with which Lévinas takes issue.<sup>29</sup> For Badiou, 'Infinite alterity is quite simply *what there is*'.<sup>30</sup> The logic of the same is modulated, referring not to a pre-verified identification but to the intervention of unrepresented inconsistency upon presented consistency, sustained in the material unfolding of a truth by a subject in a situation; in Badiou's words, 'since differences are what there is, and since every truth is the coming-to-be of that which is not yet, so differences are then precisely what truths depose, or render insignificant'.<sup>31</sup> The figure of anabasis is to offer a subjective movement based on the philosophical reconfiguration of what is understood by alterity, by the relation between same and other. The 'alterity' at the centre of this movement is *really other* only insofar as it is borne by an encounter with what is effaced by 'differences', or the prescribed identifications of 'the count'; an encounter with alterity then, for Badiou, is precisely an encounter with sameness. Badiou's reading of 'Anabasis' reconfigures the position of Celan's poetry too then, in its relation to Heidegger, as well as to its uncertain position in the tradition of Jewish thought, and to the early twentieth century's events as a whole, for the sense of the other interrogated so forcefully by Celan comes to be invested, in Badiou's reading, with the results of his philosophical reformulation of identity and difference, same and other.

Anabasis exists in opposition to Homeric homecoming and to Abrahamic exile, though in Badiou's reading of Xenophon, this opposition is not easily discerned. In his initial invocation of both 're-ascent towards the source' and 'exiled experience of beginning', Badiou invites consonance with the two movements from which his own departs. In Xenophon's narrative, he and his 10,000 Greek mercenary troops are left abandoned in foreign lands following the death of their Persian employer at Cunaxa. Badiou further complicates the status of anabasis in relation to homecoming by insisting that the former names the mercenaries' movement 'homeward': '... left alone in the heart of an unknown country, bereft of any local support or pre-established destination. "Anabasis" will be the name for their "homeward" movement, the movement of lost men, out of place and outside the law'.<sup>32</sup> Modulating the initial three meanings comprising anabasis, Badiou proceeds to invest anabasis with, firstly, a 'principle of lostness', in this case determined by the mercenaries being 'deprived of any reason for being where they are' (their essential foreignness

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in Persia), secondly, with the necessity of invention – they are ‘... left to their own devices, forced ... to invent their own destiny’ – and finally, with the imperative to find something new, for anabasis ‘invents a path without knowing whether it really is the path of return’.<sup>33</sup>

However, nothing so far testifies to the core of anabasis; a movement that, embarking into the unknown from an empty space, demands disciplined progression, step by step, carving a trajectory from nothing – the ‘free invention of a wandering that *will have been* a return’.<sup>34</sup> The essence of anabasis, which sets it apart from both homecoming and exile, is its progression through undecidability.<sup>35</sup> In Badiou’s words:

In the trajectory it names, anabasis leaves undecided the parts respectively allotted to disciplined invention and uncertain wandering. In so doing, it constitutes a disjunctive synthesis of will and wandering. After all the Greek word already attests to this undecidability, since the verb ἀναβαίνειν [(*anabanein*)] (‘to anabase’, as it were) means both ‘to embark’ and ‘to return’. There is no doubt that this semantic pairing suits a century that ceaselessly asks itself whether it is an end or a beginning.<sup>36</sup>

Anabasis demands disciplined, formal innovation alongside uncertainty. Discipline ensures the progressive movement through the uncertain and unknown, but also its restraint. Wandering is restrained by will, yet wandering must intervene on restraint producing momentum. Badiou’s intention in the passage above is to bring anabasis into dialogue with what he elsewhere calls ‘thought’.<sup>37</sup> Like thought, the tension internal to anabasis is what propels its movement: there is no external verification (it is ‘outside the law’), no ‘homeland’ via which it can orientate itself, and no predetermined, pre-verified space from which to embark. ‘Will’, the desire of a subject body, is subjected to formal discipline, but this subject must also wander in the unknown, avoiding the Kantian prescription of an a priori ‘moral’ law determining ethical action. For Peter Hallward, ‘nothing is more foreign to [Badiou’s] notion of the subject than the idea of a will governed by purely a priori principles’.<sup>38</sup> It is precisely in the blank open spaces beyond the reaches of the law, of structure or of rules that the subject must wander in order to win reality, or in order to sustain the material unfolding of truth within a world. In the language of Badiou’s main influence on the question of ethics – Lacan – we could say that it is only by subtracting away from the prescriptions of the symbolic order in which we submit to our identification that we might approach the real, and, as Hallward suggests, ‘ethics’ is what allows the subjective encounter with this real to be sustained – this is the ‘disciplined invention’ of anabasis.<sup>39</sup>

Before investigating Badiou's treatment of alterity in Celan's 'Anabasis', I want to explore how Celan himself engages with the movement of homecoming by close-reading his poem 'Heimkehr' – 'Homecoming'. In Celan's poem, the efficacy of the poetic word in both inauguration and the return to what is proper – one's 'own' – is placed under strain both by the elision of the homeland itself, and by the radical reduction or deletion of the assured wholeness of the poetic voice. The 'I', left floating and empty in the wake of its evacuation, is rendered latent and mute, but is charged nonetheless with the poetic imperative to trace an alternative movement. For Celan, famously, 'Poems . . . are a kind of homecoming', but the trajectory this imperative for the poem demands stands in stark opposition to homecoming in its Hölderlinian and Heideggerian forms. Reading 'Homecoming' also anticipates the close-reading of Celan's 'Anabasis' with which this essay concludes, by encouraging us to think the concept of anabasis as a movement built upon the armature of a negated homecoming.

### Reading Celan's 'Homecoming'

Paul Celan's 1955 poem 'Heimkehr' ('Homecoming') is from his third collection *Sprachgitter* (*Language Mesh*). 'Homecoming' also names Michael Hamburger's translation of Hölderlin's 'Heimkunft' from the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>40</sup> In their difference, these titles serve to unfold a fundamental contrast in tone and emphasis between the two poems.

*Heimkehr* is Celan's title. Its meaning in everyday German – homecoming, or the return home – is lent poetic nuance by its suffix's derivation from the verb *kehren* ('to turn' in English) and its distance from the verb *kommen* (to come).<sup>41</sup> To make 'turning' resonate beneath 'coming' in this way is to offer an understanding of homecoming in which completion is deferred; 'home', whatever or wherever that may be, is turned towards, not found and returned to. Beneath 'Heimkehr' then, operates a privilege afforded to embarking rather than returning itself. In idiomatic German, the verb *kehrer* is also used to evoke an introspective pensiveness – *in sich gekehrt* – or an introspective person more generally – *ein in sich gekehrter Mensch*.<sup>42</sup> Any turning towards home, for this poem, is tethered to a subject in a self-reflexive, interrogative mode, and the choice of *kehrer* in this case also serves to make sure that any questioning of the outside – borders, boundaries, territory, homeland – is imbricated with the internal dynamics of the individual subject. Finally, *kehren* is also the German verb for 'to sweep'. Imbuing Celan's title with a distant sense of clearing, *kehren* evokes both the flattened features of an unidentifiable home or homeland

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and the historical caesura understood by the signifier 'Auschwitz',<sup>43</sup> but also the promise of marking out a journey upon an empty, pure space.

In contrast, Hölderlin's title, 'Heimkunft', harnesses the verb *kommen* in its suffix *-kunft*. This word-choice changes little of the immediate sense in German, for which *-kunft* operates to denote 'come' in conjunction with other prefixes, for example in *Ankunft* – 'arrivals'.<sup>44</sup> Harnessed poetically, however, it offers consonance with *künftig*, an adjective denoting 'future'. In Hölderlin's title then, we are invited to think the 'futurehome' to which we shall return, and this is to imbue the homeland with a sense of prior verification or guarantee. Hölderlin's dedication of the poem 'to his relatives' (*an die Verwandten*) only serves to consolidate this construction of homecoming which privileges a return, in the future, to origins, to place of birth, but also to abiding structures of familial support. The contrast with Celan's 'Homecoming' becomes sharply focused here if we accept John Felstiner's reading that the 'you' of Celan's poem is an address to his mother, shot in the Autumn of 1942.<sup>45</sup> Celan's 'Homecoming' begins from a wholesale evacuation of those preconfigured, identifiable structures towards which Hölderlin seeks a return.

If there is a negative encounter with lost home in Celan, however, there is also a positive one, to which the final minutes of Celan's 'The Meridian' speech, made on reception of the Georg Büchner Prize in 1960, attest. Homecoming, its Hölderlinian form subverted and supplanted, is conceived instead as a movement vitalised by an encounter between an 'I' and a 'You', 'encounters, paths from a voice to a listening You, natural paths, outlines for existence perhaps, for projecting ourselves into the search for ourselves . . . A kind of homecoming'.<sup>46</sup> But, this is a homecoming in which the given is uncertain and unfixed, in which there is no Swabian motherland, for example, to return to. Celan, in a reply to a bookstore questionnaire, describes the relation between 'reality' and poetic language two years earlier as follows:

This language, notwithstanding its inalienable complexity of expression, is concerned with precision. It does not transfigure or render 'poetical'; it names, it posits, it tries to measure the area of the given and the possible. True, this is never the working of language itself, language as such, but always of an 'I' who speaks from the particular angle of reflection which is his existence and who is concerned with outlines and orientation. Reality is not simply there, it must be searched and won.<sup>47</sup>

Against mythical poetic rendering or transfiguration (*muthos*), Celan's poetics compels the poem to *measure* with precision, to carve out a path through a featureless terrain in which nothing is given.<sup>48</sup> The poet is

charged with the painstaking construction and measurement of a reality which resists language. This is a feature of Celan's poetics which helps us to understand not only the subversion of Hölderlinian homecoming in his work, but also, in this subversion, the constitution of an entirely new trajectory within and without the realms of the poem, a movement which corresponds to Badiou's 'anabasis'.

That reality must be sought and won, as Celan says, is a demand to which his 'Homecoming' remains faithful. Its taut, self-sufficient strophes restrain and encapsulate dynamic, often contradictory, movements between speaker and 'home' which develop across the poem's five steps. In Michael Hamburger's translation, the poem reads as follows:

### HOMECOMING

Snowfall, denser and denser,  
dove-coloured as yesterday,  
snowfall, as if even now you were sleeping.

White, stacked into distance.  
Above it, endless,  
the sleigh track of the lost.

Below, hidden,  
presses up  
what so hurts the eyes,  
hill upon hill,  
invisible.

On each  
fetched home into its today,  
an I slipped away into dumbness:  
wooden, a post.

There a feeling,  
blown across by the ice wind  
attaching its dove – its snow –  
coloured cloth as a flag.

### HEIMKEHR

Schneefall, dichter und dichter,  
taubenfarben, wie gestern,  
Schneefall, als schiefst du auch jetzt noch.

Weithin, gelagertes Weiß.  
Drüberhin, endlos,  
die Schlittenspur des Verlorenen.

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Darunter, geborgen,  
stülpt sich empor,  
was den Augen so weh tut,  
Hügel um Hügel,  
unsichtbar.

Auf jedem,  
heimgeholt in sein Heute,  
ein ins Stumme entglittenes Ich:  
hölzern, ein Pflock.

Dort: ein Gefühl,  
vom Eiswind herübergeweht,  
das sein tauben-, sein schnee-  
farbenes Fahnentuch festmacht.<sup>49</sup>

Snow effaces history and asserts a boundless, empty present – ‘now’. Both ‘as yesterday’ and ‘stacked into distance’, snow homogenises memory and destination. Subtle communication with Hölderlin’s poem ‘Heimkunft’ is present here too, for ‘Snowfall’ is a mark of resistance against Hölderlin’s naming of ‘the Alps’ (‘Drinn in den Alpen . . .’) in the first line of his own ‘Homecoming’.<sup>50</sup> This lack of coordinates in Celan’s poem is lent sense and further evolved in prosody: the promise in the break between strophes is crushed by a terse reassertion of the snow’s hegemony – ‘White, stacked into distance’. This is the only point in the poem at which a sentence intervenes on a strophe, although the chiasmic contribution of the line in German – ‘Weithin gelagertes Weiß’, where ‘Weiß’ completes and recapitulates ‘Schneefall’ – is lost in the English; ‘distance’ fails to reproduce the closed quality of the first four lines and the break between them, inviting us to roll through the full stop into ‘Above’ without sufficient pause. Regardless, the endless whiteness of the snow does not connote the freedom of boundlessness, so much as entrapment, the difficulty of movement forwards or backwards, in a time and space whose coordinates have been effaced.

However, the very density of the ‘stacked’ snow also harbours a positive assertion of poetic task. As a poem in communication with Heidegger’s mobilisation of Hölderlin’s homecoming, this is precisely a demand for movement. John Felstiner is keen to emphasise the pun which operates beneath ‘denser’: ‘dichter und dichter’, he writes, ‘suggests the concentrate of poems, since *Dichter* also means “poet”’.<sup>51</sup> The first strophe makes ‘Snowfall’ the surface on which the poet must embark, and extends this featureless terrain into both past and future; it becomes the only space from which movement, in poetry, may begin. However, this imperative for

poetry is nuanced by the elevation of 'snow' as a metaphor for the medium in which poetic thought is produced; 'dichter und dichter' falls the snow, muffling eloquence, but not mute. 'Homecoming' begins then from a site of contradiction. 'Snowfall' indexes both negative ground and the poetic capacity to explore routes forward, but the first strophe alone is not enough to allow us to separate one from the other; they remain indiscernible. The imperative for 'Homecoming' is to submit this indiscernibility to direction, to carve out a path, but without the benefit of external verification.

For Celan, 'poems are *en route*: they are headed toward'.<sup>52</sup> 'Homecoming' is a poem which asks what this 'en route' consists of, what it is headed towards, and it does this by elaborating a principle of measurement that steadily submits an empty landscape to orientation. At first, an open, empty surface is only submitted to measurement by the 'sleigh track of the lost' which extends above the drifts 'as yesterday', its 'endless' extension reaching beyond the horizon. This sleigh track submits the terrain to measure insofar as it produces a point of orientation with which to navigate. 'Drüberhin' – 'Above it' – offers little scope for conceiving the sleigh-track as inscribed in the snow, measuring the terrain with its furrow. The trace is far more distant, a constellation in a dim night sky perhaps, for the setting of Celan's poem, following Hölderlin, is surely perpetual twilight.

The first strophe of Hölderlin's 'Homecoming' invokes a landscape, a 'Chaos trembling with pleasure' in ecstatic anticipation for the coming dawn – 'a gleaming night still delays . . . [ . . . ] . . . For more bacchantically now morning approaches within'.<sup>53</sup> The snow of the Alps is divinely blessed. In Hölderlin's second strophe, dawn, 'rosy-fingered' as in Homer's epithet, brings the light of the sun – 'Full of roses up there, flushed with dawn's rays, lies the snow'.<sup>54</sup> Above the snow for Hölderlin, not the trace of loss, but the dwelling of a God made glad by the play of 'holy' sun beams on snow-capped mountains below; 'so now does life bud anew' in a tumult of 'well-allotted fortune', tumbling over fifteen lines of unbroken dactylic hexameter. But in Celan's poem, this dawn never arrives. The 'sleigh track of the lost', inscribed on the abyss of the sky above the snow, supplants Hölderlin's God and the warming sun, and the 'joyful zest' and abundance of hexameter is evacuated and pared down into isolated, one-sentence strophes like stepping stones.<sup>55</sup> Enjambement is conspicuous by its near-complete absence in Celan's poem: often utilised by Celan as a key constituent of a prosody that carves and cuts, its absence here suggests a reduction not a fragmentation of Hölderlin's lines, a withdrawal from eloquent excess which is recognisable finally in the reduction of Hölderlin's six strophe 'Homecoming', to Celan's five. In turn, each compact, pared-down strophe in Celan's poem testifies to

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a principle of poetic measurement which proceeds point by point through difficulty.

The measure of boundlessness in the second strophe – the sleigh track ‘Above’ – is supplemented in the third once ‘hill upon hill’ become features of the terrain. The endlessness of the trace in the sky is concretised and made particular in the features of the landscape below. Eyes strain in an effort to discern the emergence of mounds of snow on a backdrop of ‘White’. These hills make the minute transition from being ‘hidden’ ‘below’ to pressing up, ‘invisible’, inscribing landmarks on the surface, but marks only present insofar as they are felt in the eye they make blind. ‘What so hurts the eyes’ is precisely their inability to discern these mounds, these graves. The poem’s measurements at this stage allow an empty territory to be discerned through its bifurcation from the sky above, but also through its own inherent, though invisible, features. Each strophe takes a minute step forwards in constructing a ‘home’, but the features which construct this home – the sleigh track and the hills, so far – are both qualified in a way that makes their appearance ephemeral or fleeting. The sleigh track’s endlessness threatens its efficacy as a point of differentiation, and the hills, though they ‘press up’ and are felt, ultimately resist our grasp in the final line of the strophe – they are ‘invisible’.

This fragility in construction reaches its apex in the fourth strophe, which offers the most tautly-woven, dialectical image in the poem. The appearance of the ‘I’ here harbours much of this strophe’s ambiguity, by indexing both the representation of each grave’s inhabitant and the singular lyric ‘I’ on the page. The form works hard to ensure that the strophe’s original assertion of plurality – ‘On each’ – is reduced, filtered, through the appearance of the ‘I’, in order to become resolutely singular, transformed following the colon into ‘a post’. Both instances of the I are ‘fetched home into [their] today’. The lost – or ‘other’, in a visceral rejection of Heidegger’s mobilisation of homecoming – find their ‘home’ in graves, each grave marked by the slipping away of the inhabitant to which it belongs, each metamorphosing into a readable wooden graphic or dead letter at the same time made resolutely singular by its material placement – ‘I’ – in the text. ‘Today’ forces a conjunction between a lost other unable to speak, and a lyric I struck dumb.

However, the movement from ‘wooden’ to ‘post’,<sup>56</sup> the most important transition in the poem, and the apex of its dialectical development, bears evidence of a latent subjectivity able to open up, through silence, a seemingly dead object, or ‘mere thing’ in Heidegger’s words. The wooden marker on each of these hills is transfigured into a ‘post’. No longer wooden or dead, as ‘posts’ the grave markers are able to commemorate the lost. The expression of this minimal transition cut off by a colon – ‘wooden, a post’ – is this strophe’s principle of measurement. This is the



first instance in Celan's poem in which measurement demands human agency, for a wooden 'mere thing' cannot become a 'post' on its own, but must be raised and planted. Not only is there a principle of measurement at work here insofar as mere things are made commemorative, posts also mark boundaries. The space upon which poetry embarks is not the motherland but the silence of loss. The posts serve to measure the boundaries of that territory which the 'I' who speaks, in Celan's words, seeks to bring into relief. But the strophe finishes with only one post: the path dictated by the poem is a laborious one with only fragile results.

The final strophe serves to consolidate the measurement undertaken by the poetic voice, and it reconciles this poetic task with homeland. For, not only does the post serve to mark out a territory determined by loss, affect – 'a feeling' – also consolidates this marking by attaching its flag. What we are left with at the poem's conclusion is a lone post-become-flagpole, serving to mark a territory with no features. The ice wind which attaches this flag also threatens to bring more snowfall with it. The assertion of this territory, arduously constructed, results only in precarity, as the snowfall – poetry's saying – is transported by the same wind attaching the flag, yet also threatens to obscure it, to say too much. By way of contrast, the final strophe of Hölderlin's 'Homecoming' bemoans the silence that often befalls everyday speech, elevating lyrical poetry by ascribing it the task of bringing the transcendent into proximity:

Silence often behoves us: deficient in names that are holy,  
Hearts may beat high, while the lips hesitate, wary of speech?  
Yet a lyre to each hour lends the right mode, the right music,  
And, it may be, delights heavenly ones who draw near.<sup>57</sup>

Poetry's capacity to name the holy in times of joy is bound by an ostensibly political imperative here. That the lyre provide the 'right music' in the 'right mode' is a direct reference to Plato's *The Republic* in which the political founding of the new state excludes all instruments besides the lyre and the cithara, and forbids music played in modes besides the Dorian and the Phrygian.<sup>58</sup> This dialogue with Plato serves to imbue the inauguration tasked to poetic homecoming in Hölderlin with a principle of political state-forming; the *arrival* home – home's verification – and the winning of the gods' proximity, are coterminous with the eventual exclusion of the other. This is the sense of homecoming against which Celan poses his own. In a historical situation that renders poetry *qua* founding-word obscene, the trajectory his poem charts is one of minimal, precise steps towards something fragile and ephemeral, a movement determined by the cut of language, 'Toward something open, inhabitable, an approachable you, perhaps, an approachable reality'.<sup>59</sup>

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### Reading Celan's 'Anabasis'

The question of 'an approachable you' and its proximity in Celan's speech to 'an approachable reality' is precisely what is at stake in anabasis. In *The Century*, Badiou reads Michael Hamburger's translation of Celan's 'Anabasis' from *Die Niemandrose* (1963).<sup>60</sup> Taking its point of departure in the difficulty of movement faced by language in its approach towards the other, conceived both as the lost and as 'reality', 'Anabasis', for Badiou, reveals the crucial importance of the *encounter* to how we must conceive any movement of the subject seeking to overcome the nefarious complicities implicit within homecoming.

#### ANABASIS

This  
narrow sign between walls  
the impassable-true  
Upward and Back  
to the heart-bright future.

There.

Syllable-  
mole, sea-  
coloured, far out  
into the unnavigated.

Then:  
buoys,  
espalier of sorrow-buoys,  
with those  
breath reflexes leaping and  
lovely for seconds only-: light-  
bellsounds (dum-,  
dun-, un-,  
*unde suspirat*  
*cor*),  
re-  
leased, re-  
deemed, ours.

Visible, audible thing, the  
tent-  
word growing free:

Together.

ANABASIS

Dieses  
schmal zwishhen Mauren geschriebne  
unwegsam-wahre  
Hinauf und Zurück  
in die herzhelle Zukunft.

Dort.  
Silben-  
mole, meer-  
farben, weit  
ins Unbefahrne hinaus.

Dann:  
Bojen-,  
Kummerbojen-Spalier  
mit den  
sekundenschön hüpfenden  
Atemreflexen-: Leucht-  
glockentöne (dum-,  
dun-, un-,  
*unde suspirat*  
*cor*),  
aus-  
gelöst, ein-  
gelöst, unser.

Sichtbares, Hörbares, das  
frei-  
werdende Zeltwort:

Mitsammen.

The three initial components of anabasis in Xenophon – ‘re-ascent towards the source’, ‘arduous construction of novelty’, and ‘exiled experience of beginning’<sup>61</sup> – are modulated in Celan’s poem, becoming for Badiou, ‘three fragile and almost improbable connections: “narrow sign”, “impassable-true”, “to the heart-bright future”’.<sup>62</sup> Together these connections comprise the ‘Upward and Back’, the movement of Celan’s anabasis. The inner workings of this important first strophe reveal much about the precise nature of these ‘connections’. The poem begins with the word *Dieses* – ‘This’ here and now. Hamburger chooses to elevate the present of the poem itself, casting it as the ‘narrow sign’, though the

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German glosses more literally as ‘written narrow between walls’. The poem’s language is condensed into a single ‘sign’ restrained by the walls surrounding it. *Zwischen* usually translates as ‘between’ but also suffixes *Zwischenbemerkung* and *Zwischenruf*, to mean ‘interruption’, a sense which is understandably lost in English. The narrow sign, seemingly constrained and reduced, offers itself nonetheless as an interruption to the limits the walls impose, and a route along which the ‘heart-bright future’ may be sought.

This first strophe hinges on a pun on *weg* – German for path. *Unwegsam* denotes ‘rough’ in English but Hamburger is alert to the negation of *weg* in *unweg*, glossing *unwegsam-wahre* as something like ‘the rough and unpathed true’, hence his translation ‘impassable-true’. Of course, in the German, the fact that any path in the poem is obscured in paronomasia invites us to consider the difficulty of the path, the fact that the route via which anabasis must proceed is not given to us. For Badiou, ‘to the degree that [the path] is true, it is impassable’.<sup>63</sup> Language constrained between the walls is impassable insofar as it is true, but is also unpathed by the Shoah; language is the only means of continuing, but it must be a resistant language, a ‘narrow sign’.

In *The Century*, Badiou begins his reading of ‘Anabasis’ by removing questions of the other from the bounds of collectivity, from the dialectic of the ‘I’ and the ‘we’. The ground upon which thinking through the other must take place shifts on ‘the other side of the century’ – after the Holocaust – from the violent assertion of identity and an adversarial or appropriative treatment of the other towards, instead, a situation in which only the ‘imperceptible poverty of the call’ of the other may be heard.<sup>64</sup> In Celan’s poem, silence intervenes on the ‘I’ and the ‘we’, denigrating their self-sufficiency; all that is left is an unidentified voice, and the movement of the poem is its trace. ‘To the question “Who speaks?”’, the poem answers: “No one”, Badiou writes, ‘There is just a voice, an anonymous voice the poem tunes into.’<sup>65</sup>

However, this voice on its own is not enough to journey ‘Upwards and Back’. The crucial insight Badiou develops in dialogue with Celan’s poem, is that the undecidability of wandering and will in any anabasis requires an *encounter* in order to proceed. In Celan’s anabasis, this encounter is with the buoys’ ephemeral ‘bellsounds’ – for Badiou, the sounds emitted by beacons heralding the retraction of the tide – this is an image of the ‘poverty of the call’ of the other. Celan’s poem evolves its ‘Upward and Back’ through this image of the beacons as they leave a trace of a Mozart motet – *unde suspirat cor* – on the air, which Badiou qualifies further as ‘the minimal difference of the breath of the other’.<sup>66</sup> The ‘voice trying to trace a way’ in a movement of anabasis, requires this breath be met: ‘Assuming the call – its enigma –’, Badiou writes,

'Celan breaks with the theme of an empty and self-sufficient wandering. Something must be encountered.'<sup>67</sup> The poem works 'Upward' to the maritime call, before its 'Return' to the walls from which it embarks, for the last word of the fifth strophe 'Zeltwort', 'tent-word', recalls the first's last word 'Zukunft' – 'future' – but supplements it too with the finality of *Mitsammen* – 'Together'.

It is on this encounter that the word 'Together', the projected future of the journey, depends: 'There is a pure call', Badiou writes, 'an almost imperceptible difference that must be made our own, simply because we have encountered it.'<sup>68</sup> Celan's question, in Badiou's words, is 'How are we to make alterity ours?'<sup>69</sup> This is to ask how we may bear the consequences of an encounter with 'minimal difference' without eliding that difference itself – passing it over – or subsuming it under a pre-verified subjective figure. This difference – the call – is *constitutive* for the subject, but the subject only persists so long as this difference is harboured: 'The "we" enjoys an aleatory dependence on an anabasis that reascends – outside of any pre-existing path – towards this "together" that still harbours alterity.'<sup>70</sup> The interaction between same and other does not occur at the level of identity or representation as in homecoming then, but at the level of precarious presentation, the 'tremulous uncertainty' of alterity, ours, and 'together'.

Badiou's reading is intended to dispel the idealist conceit of a pre-existing subjective substance through which difference is encountered and then internalised or appropriated as one's own. Broadly speaking, this is idealist insofar as it reconciles encounters with difference within a pre-existing subject. Badiou's rigorous materialism is grounded in his conviction that the subject is never similarly pre-existing, but constructed as the material support in each and every unfolding of a truth within a situation; far from guaranteeing unity, or a way of overcoming what Badiou calls the 'aporias of the One', Badiou's subject is dependent on an encounter with an event – this call of the other.<sup>71</sup> For Badiou's purposes then, it seems important that the encounter with the fleeting 'breath of the other' is rendered within the image-world of Celan's poem as a material supplement – the 'espalier of sorrow-buoys'. The sorrow-buoys' 'espalier' refigures the walls of the first strophe as climbable trellises, which are then supplemented by the 'tent-/word' becoming visible, 'growing free' up the walls. The espalier serves to ornament the material of the poem too, manifesting itself in the prosody's prunes and cuts, and the ornate punctuation and italics of the strophe in which it appears. Only following the immediate assertion of a *material* difference – no longer walls, but 'espalier' – is the call of the bellsounds itself understood as such, as if the encounter forces an immediate material shift in the possibilities of *this* world, even before a subject is able to coagulate around it in order to make those possibilities real.

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Earlier in *The Century*, Badiou makes explicit the nefarious complicities accompanying those movements of the subject – like Heideggerian homecoming – that privilege pre-verified, given ideals, movements that subsume the other under the drive for authenticity:

For a whole host of thinkers, particularly in the area of fascist thought (and without excepting Heidegger), ‘the new man’ is in part the restitution of the man of old, of the man who had been eradicated, had disappeared, had been corrupted. Purification is actually the more or less violent process of a return of vanished origin. The new is a production of authenticity. In the final analysis, the task of the century is viewed here as restitution (of the origin) through destruction (of the inauthentic).<sup>72</sup>

Under the sign of ‘anabasis’, Badiou finds the resources to think through the formation, following an encounter, of an ephemeral subject consistently uncertain of itself – ‘a “we” that does not pretend to be a subject’.<sup>73</sup> It is the intensity with which Celan’s poems respond to the dynamics of identification evinced in Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin which elevates them as conditions for Badiou’s philosophy. In the wake of twentieth-century violence, the subject is not to be thought in terms of identification, but as something arising only after an encounter – an event. The process that guides the subject’s formation then is similarly opposed to the identifications that pre-exist such an encounter.

Though elsewhere in *The Century* Badiou is resolute in his distinction between Fascist and Communist subjectivities and their respective politics – the latter, importantly, experiences ‘the antimony . . . between the finitude of the state and the infinite immanent to every truth, including and above all political truth’<sup>74</sup> – they nonetheless both mobilise ‘the production of imaginary macroscopic entities and hyperbolic names’, which serves, in the particular case of the ‘communisms’, to stultify truth’s immanence by subsuming it under an objective historical category – ‘the proletariat’, ‘the people’ or ‘the nation’.<sup>75</sup> The contemporary force of Celan’s anabasis for Badiou then, arises not only in its rejection of Heideggerian homecoming – its demythologisation of the process of subject formation, the clearance of ideals and pre-verified mythical/cultural categories by which a subject orients itself – but also insofar as it offers a movement of the subject that resists, at a later stage, submission to the inert ‘communist’ categories of ‘proletariat’, etc., prevalent in and deemed necessary by the century’s emancipatory political projects. For Badiou, Celan overcomes Heideggerian homecoming by presenting a process of subject formation which avoids requiring the other’s effacement or extermination, but he also anticipates the necessity of reconfiguring twentieth-century subjective movements so

that they are able to coalesce around an event and sustain its thought via an inner dynamism, refusing the external verification of supposedly universal ideals: in Badiou's words, Celan's anabasis offers 'a "we" that would not be prey to the ideal of the fusional, quasi-military "I" that dominated the century's adventure; a "we" that would freely convey its own immanent disparity without thereby dissolving itself'.<sup>76</sup> 'Anabasis' is the trajectory of a subject that sustains this dynamism as an interruption: it seeks the rejection of mythical/cultural ideals in subject formation, a non-adversarial approach to the other (which, for Badiou, must be an encounter with alterity bound to 'the Same' – the event), and the avoidance of any attempt to *represent* the real movement of event and subject or pass over the force of radically discontinuous, material unfolding of truths to 'fictional objectivities'.<sup>77</sup>

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### Notes

- 1 Alain Badiou, *The Century*, trans. Alberto Toscano (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).
- 2 Ibid., p. 90.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 87–8.
- 4 Justin Clemens, 'Had We but Worlds Enough, and Time, This Absolute, Philosopher . . .', in Paul Ashton, A.J. Bartlett, and Justin Clemens (eds), *The Praxis of Alain Badiou* (Melbourne: re:press, 2006), pp. 102–43 (p. 109).
- 5 Badiou, *The Century*, p. 81.
- 6 See Charles Bambach, *Thinking the Poetic Measure of Justice: Hölderlin-Heidegger-Celan* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2013), p. 69. See also Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).
- 7 Badiou, *The Century*, p. 81.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 See Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, trans. Keith Hoeller (New York: Humanity Books, 2000) and *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, trans. William McNeill and Julia Davies (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996).
- 10 Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, trans. William McNeill and Julia Davies (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. xi.

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- 11 Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, p. 231.
- 12 Ibid., p. 48.
- 13 Bambach, *Thinking the Poetic Measure of Justice*.
- 14 Ibid., p. 67.
- 15 Ibid., pp. 67–9.
- 16 See *ibid.*, p. 21. As well, despite his critique of metaphysics, Heidegger remains entrenched, for Badiou at least, within the tradition of metaphysics inaugurated by Plato:

Heidegger still remains enslaved, even in the doctrine of the withdrawal and the un-veiling, to what I consider, for my part, to be the essence of metaphysics; that is, the figure of being as endowment and gift, as presence and opening, and that the figure of ontology as the offering of a trajectory of proximity. (See *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham [London: Continuum, 2005], p. 9)

- 17 Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, p. 168.
- 18 Ibid., p. 161.
- 19 Bambach, *Thinking the Poetic Measure*, p. 71.
- 20 Ibid., p. 20.
- 21 Ibid., pp. 20–1.
- 22 Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (London: Verso, 2001), p. 18. My emphasis.
- 23 'Along with Heidegger, it will be maintained that philosophy as such can only be re-assigned on the basis of the ontological question.' See Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 2.
- 24 For a concise account of Badiou's understanding and mobilisation of 'metaphysics', see especially his 'Metaphysics and the Critique of Metaphysics' in *Pli*, 10 (2000), pp. 174–90.
- 25 Badiou, *Ethics*, pp. 18–19.
- 26 Ibid., p. 22.
- 27 See *ibid.*, pp. 22–3. See also Emmanuel Lévinas' *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Boston and London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1979), pp. 82–101.
- 28 See Badiou's *Ethics* and 'What Is It to Live?', in Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, trans. Alberto Toscano (London and New York: Continuum, 2009).
- 29 This is because identity, for Badiou, is never originary but prescribed by how a situation structures its elements – the 'one' is only ever the result of this structuring, the 'count as one' of presentation. See *Being and Event*.
- 30 Ibid., p. 25.
- 31 Ibid., p. 27.
- 32 Badiou, *The Century*, p. 82.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 See Badiou, *Being and Event*: 'Undecidability is a fundamental attribute of the event: its belonging to the situation in which its eventual site is found is



- undecidable. The intervention consists in deciding at and from the standpoint of this undecidability' (p. 525).
- 36 Badiou, *The Century*, p. 83.
- 37 'Thought', for Badiou, designates the process via which truth is unfolded by a subject. It opposes both knowledge and opinion, refusing verification by either. As such, it must generate its own momentum. See Badiou, *Being and Event* and Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).
- 38 Badiou, *Ethics*, p. xvii.
- 39 See *ibid.*, p. 52.
- 40 In *Freidrich Hölderlin: Selected Poems and Writings*, trans. M. Hamburger (London: Penguin Books, 1994), pp. 159–67 and *Paul Celan: Selected Poems*, trans. M. Hamburger (London: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 111.
- 41 Both verbs are commonly used as suffixes to *zurück* (*zurückkommen*, *zurückkehren*) in order to denote returning, coming back, etc. See *The Oxford-Duden German Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
- 42 'kehren', *ibid.*, p. 446.
- 43 For this formulation, see Theodore Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1996) and Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Poetry as Experience*, trans. Andrea Tarnowski (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), among many others.
- 44 'Ankunft', in *The Oxford-Duden German Dictionary*, p. 87.
- 45 John Felstiner, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* (London and New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).
- 46 Paul Celan, *Collected Prose*, trans. Rosmarie Waldrop (Manchester: Carcanet, 2003), p. 53.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- 48 This is an explicit rejection of the role of poetry as founding word found in Heidegger. See Heidegger, 'Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry', in *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, pp. 51–65. See also the 'broadly political' consequences of poetry *qua mythos* in Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe's *Heidegger and the Politics of Poetry*, trans. Jeff Fort (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).
- 49 Paul Celan, *Selected Poems*, p. 111.
- 50 For evidence of Celan's engagement with Hölderlin, see Bambach, *Thinking the Poetic Measure*, pp. 204–13.
- 51 Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, p. 97.
- 52 Celan, *Collected Prose*, p. 53.
- 53 Hölderlin, *Selected Poems and Writings*, p. 161.
- 54 *Ibid.*
- 55 Besides the second strophe mentioned above.
- 56 Hamburger translates the German word 'Pflock' as 'post', instead of 'stake', which would have been an interesting alternative, for it elects an agent capable of hammering it into the ground, as well as inviting consonance with poetic measuring, waiting, as in 'to stake out', but also risk-taking, as in 'high stakes'.

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- 57 Hölderlin, *Selected Poems and Writings*, p. 167.  
58 See Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee (London: Penguin Books, 2007), p. 159.  
59 Paul Celan, *Collected Prose*, p. 35.  
60 Paul Celan, *Selected Poems*, pp. 202–3.  
61 Badiou, *The Century*, p. 81.  
62 *Ibid.*, p. 94.  
63 *Ibid.*  
64 *Ibid.*, p. 95.  
65 *Ibid.*, p. 94.  
66 *Ibid.*, p. 95.  
67 *Ibid.*, pp. 94–5.  
68 *Ibid.*, p. 95.  
69 *Ibid.*  
70 *Ibid.*, p. 96.  
71 See especially Badiou's *Logics of Worlds*:

Ever since Descartes, this is the essential trait of an *idealist* philosophy: that it calls upon the subject not as a problem but as the solution to the aporias of the One (the world is nothing but formless multiplicity, but there exists a unified *Dasein* of this world). The materialist thrust of my own thought (but also paradoxically of Hegel's, as Lenin remarked in his *Notebooks*) derives from the fact that within it the subject is a late and problematic construction, and in no way the place of the solution to a problem of possibility or unity (possibility of intuitive certainty for Descartes, of synthetic judgements *a priori* for Kant). (p. 101)

- 72 Badiou, *The Century*, p. 65.  
73 *Ibid.*, p. 96.  
74 Badiou, *The Century*, p. 103.  
75 *Ibid.*  
76 *Ibid.*, p. 97.  
77 *Ibid.*, p. 109.