

## Chapter 4

# “Undecidably Equivocal”

## *On “Todtnauberg” and Forgiveness*

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Paul Celan’s visit to Martin Heidegger’s famous cottage (“*die Hütte*”) in the Black Forest village of Todtnauberg on July 25, 1967 has been widely discussed and debated, and, especially more recently, also widely documented. More and more primary and secondary literature relating to the incident has been published and is constantly being published. Various accounts exist of those who were present during Celan’s sojourn in Freiburg and witnessed his meeting with Heidegger. There are letters related to the visit. There are various versions and sketches of the poem and other first- and second-hand documents related to the encounter. So today, it has become fairly easy to reconstruct the episode.

The meeting at Todtnauberg, which has so forcefully captivated the thought and imagination not only of scholars in the fields of

literary studies and philosophy, but also of writers of literary fiction and drama, was not exactly the only time the poet and the thinker met personally, but indeed part of their first “real-life,” face-to-face encounter. Here and now, we cannot and need not explore all the complex details of the personal, textual and intellectual relationship between them.<sup>1</sup> But to condense everything into one word, *ambivalence* would seem to be most appropriate: ambivalence on Celan’s part and toward Heidegger, and not so much the other way around.<sup>2</sup>

The several letters to his wife and quite a few other documents confirm, of course, the obvious fact that Celan had mixed feelings about meeting the German thinker, whose political engagement was debated animatedly also in the sixties. Before traveling to Freiburg to give a reading of his poems, Celan already knew Heidegger would be among his audience.<sup>3</sup> Celan probably had been reading Heidegger’s work already in the forties, but verifiably at least since 1951 or ’52, and kept reading his works both extensively and intensively for the rest of his life. Heidegger showed growing interest in Celan’s poetry at least since the late 1950s, but never published anything on him. The two probably also corresponded more than can be verified at least since 1956, when Heidegger sent the poet a copy of one of his essays on Hebel, possibly in response to a letter.<sup>4</sup> The great mutual interest seems undeniable, even though the relationship was, on Celan’s part, just as undeniably shadowed by Heidegger’s relative inability to deal with his own political adventure of 1933, his “inexcusable error” as Heidegger himself, in a private conversation with Otto Pöggeler, judged his involvement with the National Socialist party. Not to mention his almost total silence with regard to the Holocaust. A silence which, according to Vladimir Jankélévitch and a few others, was even more inexcusable than the rectorship and party membership themselves.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, to mention only one telling anecdote, Pöggeler, who was a personal friend of both Heidegger and Celan, has told that in a private conversation in 1969 Celan vehemently objected to Theodor Adorno’s pamphlet against the Heideggerian “jargon of authenticity” and defended Heidegger’s idiom.<sup>6</sup>

Celan's ambivalence must be reduced to neither mere attraction nor mere repulsion.

With respect to the abundant published material related to the Heidegger-Celan relationship, less and less room seems to be left for mere speculation on the exact circumstances that gave rise to the primary poetic document of their 1967 encounter, namely the poem "Todtnauberg."

Let us now read the poem as it was printed in the book *Lichtzwang* (1970):

TODTNAUBERG

Arnika, Augentrost, der  
Trunk aus dem Brunnen mit dem  
Sternwürfel drauf,

in der  
Hütte,

die in das Buch  
– wessen Namen nahms auf  
vor dem meinen?–,  
die in dies Buch  
geschriebene Zeile von  
einer Hoffnung, heute,  
auf eines Denkenden  
kommendes  
Wort  
im Herzen,

Waldwasen, uneingeebnet,  
Orchis und Orchis, einzeln,

Krudes, später, im Fahren,  
deutlich,

der uns fährt, der Mensch,  
der's mit anhört,

die halb-  
beschrittenen Knüppel-  
pfade im Hochmoor,

Feuchtes,  
viel.<sup>7</sup>

The words in my title, “undecidably equivocal,” are borrowed from Jacques Derrida’s essay “To Forgive: The Unforgivable and the Imprescriptible.”<sup>8</sup> These words do not directly designate the poem’s equivocality, at least if we restrict poetic equivocality to such elements as syntactic ambiguity and semantic multivalence. Rather than poetic equivocality in such a restricted sense, Derrida’s words address, in the few lines that mention “Todtnauberg,” the undecidable equivocality involved in any address of forgiveness. However, he also links the poem with the themes of gift and forgiveness in a paradoxical manner: “*Todtnauberg* remains [...] to be read, to be received – as gift or forgiveness themselves, a gift and a forgiveness which are the poem before being, possibly, its themes or the theme of the poet’s disappointed expectation” (“To Forgive,” p. 38). This is of course by no means obvious at first sight.

The earlier interpretations have often seen in the poem, as Derrida says, “the trace of a disappointed expectation, of Celan’s anticipation of a word from Heidegger that would have signified a pardon beseeched,” and more specifically, these interpretations used to be more or less in conformity with the “clear narration” ridiculed by Derrida: “Celan-came, – H[eidegger]-did-not-ask-the-Jews-for-forgiveness-in-the-name-of-the-Germans, – Celan-who-was-waiting-

for-a-word-of-forgiveness, – a ‘pardon!’ – a-request-for-forgiveness – left-disappointed-and-he-made-a-poem-of-it – he-recorded-it-in-one-of-his-poems” (“To Forgive,” p. 36).

Derrida points out, in his brief remarks concerning the poem, that he does not want to either “confirm or invalidate” such an interpretation, but “would like to suggest that forgiveness (granted or asked for), the address of forgiveness, must forever remain, if there is such a thing, undecidably equivocal” (p. 36).<sup>9</sup>

Among many others, Lacoue-Labarthe has – prudently affirming that he does not actually know exactly which word Celan was expecting from Heidegger – suggested that it might have been “*le mot pardon*.”<sup>10</sup> And of course, he must be right; actually this has been confirmed, as firmly as such things can be confirmed, for instance by an attestation by Jean Daive, who reports Celan having told him personally: “*Je voulais l’entendre me dire pardon et le convaincre de le dire publiquement*.”<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, a few days after the meeting, Celan wrote in a letter to his wife that he hoped that Heidegger would “pick up his pen and write a few pages echoing [their conversation] and also warning against resurgent Nazism.”<sup>12</sup> So it seems that we know the word already, the word to be expected from Heidegger, the word to come, the word that apparently never came. Or do we?

Lacoue-Labarthe is actually himself the first to repent his conjecture concerning “*le mot pardon*,” the first to admit that he may have been wrong in thinking, for an instant, that this may have been the word Celan was expecting; and indeed, that this was the word that Heidegger should have enounced. The second part of *La poésie comme expérience* is entitled “La Mémoire des dates” and consists of twelve relatively brief texts marked with dates. If you turn the page to the table of contents, you discover that the last of these notes, dated “4 août 1984 (Gênes),” also bears the title “L’impardonnable.” It is a question of Heidegger’s “irreparable offense,” which does not mean the declarations he made in 1933–1934 as the Rector of the University of Freiburg (statements which may be comprehensible, as Lacoue-

Labarthe says, but nonetheless unapprovable in themselves), but his silence afterwards, concerning the genocide:

Le premier, il aurait dû dire quelque chose. Et j'ai eu tort de penser un instant qu'il suffisait de demander pardon. Cela est strictement impardonnable. Tel est ce qu'il fallait dire. (*La poésie comme expérience*, pp. 167-168)<sup>13</sup>

It is no wonder that Lacoue-Labarthe had second thoughts about his first conjecture. And yet, judging by the circumstantial evidence (namely, at least Jean Daive's testimony), this first intuition was correct: Celan did have the word *pardon* in his mind. But what we do not know is whether perhaps Celan, too, came to have second thoughts. And it is the poem itself which must count as our primary piece of evidence; not in order to speculate about the intentions of its author, but perhaps in order to see how the poem situates us face to face with the word of forgiveness, as Lacoue-Labarthe says, face to face with "*le mot pardon*" (p. 58),<sup>14</sup> its conditions of possibility or impossibility.

No doubt, Derrida's essay "To Forgive" engages itself, besides the explicit dialogue with Jankélévitch, in an implicit dialogue also with Lacoue-Labarthe's very impressive book, although this friend is not explicitly mentioned. The period of hesitation or undecidedness between forgiveness and the unforgivable, or between the end of the first part (written in September 1983) and the end of the second, "*à lire comme un post-scriptum, avec sa part – inévitable – de repentir*," as Lacoue-Labarthe himself characterizes it (p. 9), corresponds in its own way to the aporetics of Derrida's work on "impossible forgiveness," "forgiving the unforgivable," "mad forgiveness."

After discussing the anecdote and the text of the poem in the manner of a more traditional interpretation, we shall try to approach the poem with regard to the "extravagant" view of it as "a gift and a forgiveness" on a pre-thematic level.<sup>15</sup>

“Every poem is circumstantial”<sup>16</sup>

I will only sketch a few main lines of the anecdote. Celan gave a reading of his poems at the University of Freiburg, and Heidegger, who had eagerly anticipated meeting the poet whose books he knew well, having also heard some details of his personal history,<sup>17</sup> was there among the one thousand and two hundred listeners. He invited Celan to visit his cottage the next day and the poet accepted. Those who attended the conversation between the two, the next day at Todtnauberg, in “the hut,” during their walk in the Black Forest or during their automobile ride later, have not been able to tell much. According to Silvio Vietta, who accompanied them on their walk, their conversation was rather reticent: the poet would step aside from the path and pick flowers and impress his interlocutor by telling their names in German, in Latin and in Yiddish, but other issues were not touched upon.<sup>18</sup> Hence the words *Arnika*, *Augentrost* and *Orchis und Orchis* in the poem. The poet and the thinker seem to have also exchanged some words on Adalbert Stifter and on Emily Dickinson, whose poems Celan had translated several years earlier.<sup>19</sup>

The role of Gerhard Neumann in the anecdote is paradoxical. He was then an assistant to professor Gerhart Baumann, whose book of reminiscences has been one of the most important sources for the circumstantial information. Neumann was the man, the human being (“der Mensch”), who drove the car and heard the conversation during the drive back to Freiburg, and who also told Celan, after the drive, of his immediate impression, which was that this conversation, the words that the poem refers to as “coarse” and “clear,” “*Krudes [...] deutlich*,” were to have an epochal meaning. One would indeed expect that Neumann,<sup>20</sup> the man whose presence the poem mentions, would have something significant to tell us about this talk in the car, a conversation that he himself designated as epoch-making. However, Neumann has reportedly been quite reluctant to share his observations concerning the exchange, and perhaps also doubtful about remembering the details; reportedly, he recalls the “painful silence,” and yet he

also remembers that between the “long pauses” Celan asked whether Heidegger would soon publicly speak about his involvement with National Socialism.<sup>21</sup> Before the drive, Celan wrote a few words in the visitors’ book at Heidegger’s cottage, the line that the poem mentions and reproduces almost verbatim, only slightly transformed:

Ins Hüttenbuch, mit dem Blick auf den Brunnenstern,  
mit einer Hoffnung auf ein kommendes Wort im Herzen  
Am 25. Juli 1967 Paul Celan<sup>22</sup>

But these words themselves mention a word, an expected word, a yet unsaid word, a word to come and hoped for. So we know, as far as such a thing can be known, that the hope and expectation had to do with a statement concerning Nazism, also a resurgent Nazism, as Celan wrote in the letter to his wife Gisèle, and with persuading Heidegger to request forgiveness. At the same time, of course, as for instance Hadrien France-Lanord remarks, Celan must have realized that “the words that request forgiveness cannot be themselves requested” (*Paul Celan et Martin Heidegger*, p. 121). Even though we seem to know that the hope concerned asking forgiveness both privately and in public, we do not know exactly which word Celan had in mind. We do not know it, because Celan himself did not know it. We know, a priori as it were, that the expected word could not be dictated by the poet; he could not put words into the thinker’s mouth, let alone into his heart.<sup>23</sup>

While the hope for the word to come is quite unequivocal, clear and distinct, also in the poem which expresses this wish quite unequivocally, this word to come is itself still opaque. Otherwise it would not be still “in the heart”: the hope is in the heart, but it is also necessary that the word to come resides in the heart, comes from the heart, into the heart that hopes for it. Such a personal heart-to-heart relation is one of the prerequisites for forgiveness, as Vladimir Jankélévitch invites us to observe.<sup>24</sup>



In spite of the well-spread rumour, the material recently published seems to confirm that Celan did not at all return from Todtnauberg disappointed and down-hearted.<sup>25</sup> It seems that his hope was not at all thwarted, to the contrary. But it also seems indisputable that Celan was eventually frustrated, as time went by and the word that would have met with his expectations did not come. Poems are, as Celan has written, gifts to the attentive; but his gift to Heidegger did not seem to gain the proper attention it was desired to have.

Parallel to the anecdote runs the textual history of the poem. Questions could be posed for instance concerning the differences between the version published in January 1968 and sent to Heidegger and the final version in the book *Lichtzwang*. Only the limited separate edition of the poem in January 1968, the one that Celan sent to Heidegger, contains a certain addition in parentheses, later effaced in preparation for the collection of poems entitled *Lichtzwang* (1970). It is the phrase, divided by an enjambment: “*Un-/gesäumt kommen-*des,” to come without delay; “*un-/gesäumt,*” with a hyphen and line-break; John Felstiner has included this word in his translation. “Un-/delayed,” as if there was a moment of hesitation, precisely a delay between the prefix “un-” and “-delayed.”

There was another difference too, a tinier one, because while the 1968 printing just repeated the verse “*die in das Buch*” around the question between the dashes, the second of these in the final 1970 version reads “*die in dies Buch / geschriebene Zeile.*” It is as if the second of these verses referred to the book *Lichtzwang* in saying “this book,” this book which reiterates or insistently preserves the line of hope that was, for the first time, recorded in the guest book of the *Hütte* at Todtnauberg. It is as if the request for a word was now, in the absence of the desired response, destined for the reader, the human being who still listens into the conversation, the third party who is always already there for the poetic conversation, and not just the one who drove the car.

## The unspoken horizon

Both Hans-Georg Gadamer and, in an early interpretation, Otto Pöggeler, assume that the word *Krudes* in the fifth strophe, “*Krudes, später, im Fahren,/ deutlich*,” refers to something that Heidegger either said to the poet or had written in his later works, something that first appeared “crude” but later, during the conversation in the car, became “clear,” “distinct” for his reader and interlocutor Celan.<sup>26</sup> In the light of all available circumstantial information this seems a misunderstanding, of course. However, the syntax alone does not seem to preclude this reading, it does not allow us to decide whether it was Heidegger or Celan whose words were “crude” or “coarse.” It could well be that the “crudeness” becomes “later, while driving,/ clear,” and nothing seems to prevent us from assuming that the “crude” word comes from “the thinking man” from whom a word is expected to come. Actually, *Krudes* seems to respond formally to *kommendes*, and perhaps this is no mere formal coincidence. Through this formal reflection, it could also reflect the more reserved, more polite expression, the hope expressed by a written line in the guest book in the third strophe, something that is now suddenly expressed in a cruder, and as such, more distinct manner during the drive. The word “later [*später*]” responds to the earlier “today [*heute*],” and even while the word “un-/delayed” has been erased, there seems to be a certain dialectic between the patient hope and the impatient, even rude demand. This impatience even transmits itself into the syntax or, rather, asyndetic parataxis of the more and more singly spattered words in the later strophes, and especially the violent rhythm of the fifth strophe, more or less like the rocking of a car while driving on an “unleveled” road:

Krudes, später, im Fahren,  
deutlich,

The words themselves in this poem have a certain “crude” aspect. *Waldwasen* brings along the synonym of *Wasen* which is *Faschine*,

“fascine” in English, a word with obvious assonances and etymological connotations. In military jargon, fascines are “long cylindrical faggot[s] of brush or other small wood, firmly bound together at short intervals, used in filling up ditches, the construction of batteries, etc.”<sup>27</sup> Michael Hamburger must have had this in mind when translating, not *Waldwasen* but *Knüppelpfade* by “fascine walks”; so this is indeed an ingenious way to bring this allusion into the translation, even though it cannot be used directly for the word *Waldwasen*. And since *Wasen* means not only grassy sward or turf, a mound covered with grass, and botanically, the root-structure of plants (thus the root-structure of the poem connects this word also with “*Orchis und Orchis*,” and the other flowers mentioned), but also alludes, albeit only through this etymological connection, to fascine, this word *Waldwasen* is quasily synonymous with *Knüppelpfade*, which is an obvious parody of Heidegger’s title *Holzwege*. On the other hand, this “swelling of the ground”<sup>28</sup> covered with grass and often forest flowers, *Wasen* is, according to the Grimm dictionary, not only favored by animals searching for food and by wanderers seeking a place of rest, but has also been addressed as man’s final resting place.<sup>29</sup> And this archaic and very polyvalent word sometimes “designates also a place where the carcasses and hides of animals were disposed of by a knacker.”<sup>30</sup> What is more, through a metonymic displacement between the damp clod of earth and dampness itself, *Wasen* is also synonymous to *Feuchte*, humidity; thus it corresponds also to the penultimate word of the poem. The Grimm dictionary even quotes an Old Frisian use of the word *wasem* for “*der feuchte hauch aus dem munde*,” “the moist breath out of the mouth” (*DWB*, Bd. 27, Sp. 2284).

The word *Knüppelpfade* is not only a parody of *Holzwege* but also an allusion to the weapon, *Knüppel*, “bludgeon,” as an instrument of violence. The title of the poem does not only allude to a “mountain of death,”<sup>31</sup> nor only to the Todt organization, but perhaps also to the historical etymology of this toponym. As Marjorie Perloff remarks, “in 1025 A.D. Emperor Henry II took the town from the French, who had originally called it ‘Toutenouua,’ or ‘all new.’”<sup>32</sup> And indeed, if we

look at the Grimm dictionary, we find the entry *Todtenauge*, a word to be found in one of Celan's favourite literary sources, Jean Paul, who in the context speaks of death beds and "the eyes of the dead once more raised toward us [*die blassen gestalten, die ihre todtenaugen noch einmal gegen uns aufheben*]." <sup>33</sup> This spectral allusion, as if concealed by a mountain of other voices, the *-berg* of *Todtnauberg* that is, would find its counterpoint in the word *Augentrost* on the first line.

Of course, the flowers that begin the poem (*Arnika, Augentrost*) are not mentioned here simply because Celan happened to see them blooming during his visit, and not only since they happen to be healing plants. *Arnika* is supposed to heal bruises and *Augentrost*, "eyebright," as its name already suggests, "is a remedy for weak eyes," with an "old reputation for 'making old eyes young again.'" <sup>34</sup> Literally, *Augentrost* means a "consolation for the eyes." Thus we may surmise that these healing plants are mirrored by two perhaps antagonistic elements in the last two strophes: *Knüppel* may cause bruises; and moisture (*Feuchte*) can be caused by old age or sorrow, by a mote or cinder in the eye.

It is actually hard not to let all kinds of associations intervene, while they frame the unspoken horizon of the encounter rather than accumulate into some kind of definite lexicon of its content. Perhaps the form matters more than the content here, since it is in principle enough to observe that an innumerable, inexhaustible multitude is in question; and form must here be understood, in Celan's sense, as a vacancy and occupiability which makes further encounters possible. "The form of the poem," writes Celan in one of his drafts for the Meridian, "is the heart of the poet waiting for the poem." <sup>35</sup> This is to say, it seems to me, that the poem only becomes what it is in the encounter, in the "secret of the encounter [*Geheimnis der Begegnung*]."

Personal lived experience may always contribute to the reading of a poem, and this is indeed in accordance with Celan's poetics of the encounter. Derrida attests to this fact by telling how he also signed the guest book, at Heidegger's son's request, "with as much anxiety," as he writes, "an anxiety that extended as much to all those in whose following, without knowing it, I signed, as to what I myself scribbled

in haste, both things likely to be equally at fault” (“To Forgive,” p. 38). Such anxiety extends itself to all those in whose following you sign, but no doubt, also to all those who shall follow you by signing, countersigning below your signature, as it were.

I had the opportunity, in June 2006, to visit Todtnauberg and also Heidegger’s native town Messkirch, where there is also a Heidegger Museum. A large cardboard poster with Celan’s poem printed on it actually greeted the visitors at the entrance. The *Brunnenstern* or *Sternwürfel*, the “star-die,” from above the well, had been taken there to be displayed. The star-shaped cube turned out to be a perfect example of multifacetedness, and indeed, when I gazed at this piece of woodwork from various angles, I also discovered that if you cover the nether part with the palm of your hand, looking obliquely upward at it, as if bowed down to draw water from the well, you can see the shape of the upper half of the Star of David. It has been suggested that the word *Sternwürfel*, referring to the wooden star-like cube or polyhedron attached upon the well of Heidegger’s cottage, might allude to the Star of David; this is of course possible, but the motivation for such an allusion itself remains unclear.<sup>36</sup>

When writing the poem with the names of the healing plants and the allusion to “drinking the waters” for which the surroundings of Todtnauberg are famous (“*Arnika, Augentrost, der Trunk/ aus dem Brunnen*”), Celan may or may not have known that Heidegger had actually suggested, in a letter to Gerhart Baumann, that it might be “wholesome” for Celan to visit the Black Forest.<sup>37</sup> Actually Celan and Heidegger met face to face the second time the following June in Freiburg.<sup>38</sup> This time, as the weather was more favorable, the poet’s hope for a walk on the highland moor was realized. They met a third time, too, in March 1970, and Heidegger would have wanted to take the poet to see the Hölderlinian landscape of the Danube valley the next summer, arguing again that it would be beneficial for the poet who had suffered from serious mental trouble.<sup>39</sup> They never met again, however. Celan drowned himself in the river Seine in April 1970, more or less a month after they met the third and last time.<sup>40</sup>

## Silences

Let us not pretend that we know exactly what the painful silence and long pauses meant or had to mean, what was said between the lines, so to say, in the car, or precisely which evasion was marked by these omissions, either in general or to the two parties of the conversation, accompanied or witnessed by a third party. Heidegger thanked Celan for the poem he had received early in 1968 in a letter. One or two enigmatic phrases concern this silence. Heidegger begins the letter by asking: “How can I thank you for this grand, unexpected gift? [*Wie soll ich Ihnen für dieses unerwartete große Geschenk danken?*]” He refers to the evening of the poet’s “unforgettable reading” in Freiburg and their “initial greetings” in the hotel, and then continues, in Lyon’s translation: “Since then we have exchanged a good deal of mutual silence.” Actually the original sentence verges on untranslatability: “Seitdem haben wir Vieles einander zugeschwiegen.”<sup>41</sup> The capitalized, nominalized *Vieles* responds, as it were, to the poem’s similar formulations: (1) to the present participle *kommendes* which is attributed to *Wort*, (2) to *Krudes* which seems to refer to other words exchanged that were (or perhaps became, as some have viewed) also *deutlich*, and especially (3) to the pair of words “*Feuchtes, / viel*,” whose reference seems even more uncertain. The rare verb in Heidegger’s letter, *zuschweigen*, is hardly translatable; it corresponds to *zusprechen* and *zusagen*, which both mean various forms of addressing the other (to promise or to affirm, to speak forwardly and so on), but *zuschweigen* means to address silence to someone; not exactly to address something by silence to someone, but to address silence to someone.

Silence need not be hostile, even when it is painful.<sup>42</sup> While of course, the words in the car must have been “crude” and “clear”; and yet, silence and pauses cannot be interpreted in terms of messages and information, two terms that both Heidegger and Celan considered as adverse to the poetic nature of language. Celan himself uses, in his drafts for the *Meridian*, the verb *anschweigen*, which is quite close to *zuschweigen*; to address the unknown “Thou” by silence is to give this

“Thou” a chance, he writes.<sup>43</sup> Yet, Heidegger’s letter may indeed have been a disappointment for Celan, with the thinker not taking this opportunity and mentioning anything about an “un-/delayed” word to come concerning National Socialism, but instead of that, addressing the poet with the well-meaning hope “That at the appropriate hour you will hear the language in which what is to come forth as poetry speaks to you.” However, after the word *zugeschwiegen* the letter also expresses a “thought” concerning a future conversation: “I think that someday some of it [that is, some of the mutual silence] will be redeemed from unspokenness through conversation. [*Ich denke, dass einiges noch eines Tages im Gespräch aus dem Ungesprochenen gelöst wird.*]”<sup>44</sup> That did not seem to happen, though.

Is it not as if the whole poem ended up swallowed in the bog, in the dampness, and in the words *Feuchtes, viel* themselves? The word *Feuchtes* refers, of course, on the anecdotal level, to the highland moor and the rain that interrupted the walk on the *Knüppelpfade*, which must have turned slippery too, no doubt. Celan reportedly apologized that his shoes were not sturdy enough for such a walk. But the word may refer to other things as well. *Feuchtes* echoes quite a few earlier words in the poem, first of all *kommendes* and *Krudes*. As a word juxtaposed with these two words that concern words, *Feuchtes* also refers to words, words including itself, as a word. *Feuchtes* is a humid word, just as *Krudes* is a word that sounds crude. But it is certainly not just onomatopoeic. As I just suggested, it is as if the words of the poem, not only *kommendes* and *Krudes* and all the words alluding to water and humidity, “*Augentrost, / der Trunk aus dem Brunnen [...] Waldwasen, Knüppel-/pfade im Hochmoor,*” ended up swallowed in “the much” of humidity, “*Feuchtes, / viel,*” not only these but also all the words in the poem, including the unspoken word which is still a word *in* the poem, as an expected word, the hoped-for word-to-come. And perhaps the words “*Feuchtes, / viel*” in this final strophe also tell something of words in general? Instead of the “originary speaking” which had been an important Heideggerian theme for Celan, as it seems, instead of the rivers and sources and fountainheads and valleys shaped

by the rivers, and nations founded by the poet's word, this dampness of the bog, this dampness of the word *Feuchtes*, might mark a new poetics which is something quite different from all sovereign layings of foundations.

Derrida cautiously suggests, that “the word ‘*viel*,’ many, innumerable, infinitely numerous, [...] the last word of the poem [...] apparently, or figuratively, describes that which, like tracks or the humid thing (*Feuchtes*), is buried in the bog...” (“To Forgive,” p. 38). That is, “figuratively” describes that which has lost all figure, all number, by infinite multiplication. Is it perhaps also a question of something organic deteriorating below the surface and emitting a “luminescence” which, according to Otto Pöggeler’s account (cf. *Der Stein hinterm Aug*, p. 172), Celan was looking for when asking Heidegger to show him the highland moor, typical of the Black Forest?

Do these final words not also speak about silence, in their own way? Not only Heidegger’s silence, or the silence of expectation for a word to come, or the silence of the conspicuously absent voices who are still also spectrally present, but also the silence which ends the poem, any poem, the silence which belongs to the poem as its true *envoi*?

### Words, like flowers

“*Orchis und Orchis, einzeln*”: here the word for “orchid” may stand for its etymological root. The tuberosities of an orchid have the shape of testicles, hence the Greek name for the plant. And no doubt, these two singular pairs of testicles might stand, *pars pro toto*, for the two men having a walk in the Black Forest. Two singularities, two individuals trying to have a conversation, and at least one of them picking flowers and naming them. These two both speak German as their mother tongue, but their dissimilar rootedness in this native language also keeps them at a distance. A distance that both separates and brings them together.



In another famous poem, “Radix, Matrix,” Celan speaks of an uprooted root, “rod and bulb,” a murdered *Geschlecht* – a famously untranslatable word – standing black in the sky, “rod and testis”:

Wer,  
wer wars, jenes  
Geschlecht, jenes gemordete, jenes  
schwarz in den Himmel stehende:  
Rute und Hode –?

(Wurzel.  
Wurzel Abrahams. Wurzel Jesse. Niemandes  
Wurzel – o  
unser.)<sup>45</sup>

As Werner Hamacher has argued, the second member of this pair, *Hode*, can even be – and indeed must be – associated with the Latin root of this word, which is *cunnius*. Thus *Rute und Hode* corresponds to the asyndetic pair in the title “Radix, Matrix,” joining both sexes or, more equivocally, *Geschlechter* – a word for the constellation of quasi-metonymical relations between sex and stock, gender and generation, organs and ancestry.<sup>46</sup> The association, made at least by Bollack (“Vor dem Gericht,” p. 138), with the word *Orcus* can only be sufficiently motivated by this detour through the deeply ambivalent cinereous constellation intimated by the words “*Orchis und Orchis, einzeln*,” I think.

*Orchis und Orchis* are not just representative figures for the dark configuration of rootedness and uprootedness. They do not only frame, for their part, the unspoken horizon of the man-to-man conversation either, the conspicuous absence of the third party which still, however, silently surrounds them, as if taking part in their reticent exchange. These underground tuberoids belong to the mentioned configuration just as any other true “words, like flowers” belong to the fourfold mirror-play of the earth and sky, the gods and mortals, as Heidegger insists; or rather, they do not only “belong,” but constitute

the very *Gegend* (region) where these appear. This belonging together that holds apart, this ineradicable relatedness, this inclusion and contiguity drawing together and holding apart the members of the fourfold is precisely what motivates Heidegger's claim that Hölderlin's turn-of-phrase "*Worte, wie Blumen*" is no metaphor. *Worte, wie Blumen* – words, like flowers are no mere metaphors, because they belong to the togetherness of earth and sky, mortals and immortals, and not only belong to this mirror-play, but let the foursome appear, take place.

In a very insightful passage of his essay concerning "Todtnauberg," Axel Gellhaus points to the fact that three of the four "elements" belonging to the Heideggerian "fourfold [*das Geviert*]" appear in the poem: the star above the well invokes the sky, and, as we have seen, several words of the poem refer to the earth (the names of the flowers, the well itself, the unlevelled mounds, etc.). The mortals could not be mentioned more directly: "*der Mensch*" ("... seit ein Gespräch wir sind ...," p. 12). But the gods, the immortals, remain conspicuously absent. Nevertheless, the poem's vocabulary – these words like flowers, the well and the highland moor and the forest swards, and the possible allusion, through the words *Wasen* and *Orchis*, to the root structure of plants (in German, *Wurzelwerk*) – also insinuates that perhaps something lies beneath the earth's surface and beneath (or within) these earthen words, too; thus it seems that a certain conversion, an inversion (if not perversion) of the fourfold structure has taken place:

Das Geviert hat sich also neu zusammengesetzt, die Unterirdischen sind an die Stelle der Himmlischen getreten, das »Welt«-Bild Heideggers wird zum Kopfstand gezwungen: »Komm auf den Händen ...« (Gellhaus, "«... seit ein Gespräch wir sind ...," p. 12)

So the gaze ("Blick") to the star above the well has turned upside down, heaven as an abyss opening under the poet's feet.

In "Todtnauberg," the trace of the disappeared (for Heidegger's Hölderlin, the trace of the escaped gods: "*Spur der entflohenen Götter*")<sup>47</sup>

has fallen from the skies, so to say, and materialized itself in the “tracks or the humid thing [...] buried in the bog.” The bog which has perhaps replaced Hölderlin’s rivers and sources, origins.

“What is called poetry,” says Derrida in *Shibboleth*, “is perhaps only an intense familiarity with the ineluctable originarity of the specter.” Namely, an intense familiarity with the *revenance* which all words partake of, “from their first emergence [*La revenance est le partage de tous les mots, dès leur premier surgissement*].”<sup>48</sup> The “luminescence” caused by deterioration, looking at the “allegorical” dimension of the poem’s landscape, is maybe nothing, after all, but this spectral figure of revenance.

### Gift, forgiveness, “hostipitality”

The singular experience with language, “radical individuation,” a common theme to Heidegger and Celan,<sup>49</sup> has to wrestle also with the legion of voices and their silence. A host of ambiguities resides in “Todtnauberg,” as we are beginning to see. And this counterpoint of a unique sentence (the poem consists of a single paratactic sentence) is marked by a single point of interrogation. Let us read a passage, actually a compilation of sentences from the passage dealing with “Todtnauberg” in Derrida’s “To Forgive,” focused on this single question mark and beginning with the words “as if”:

as if there were no poetic experience, no experience of language as such without the experience of the gift and forgiveness – whether or not they are asked for, granted, given – the question mark around the name that comes before my own in the book [...], around the name of the other who will have preceded me and with whom I am, whether I want it or know it, [...] bound up in [...] the strange genealogy of this book: This question mark indeed marks this anguish or this anxiety as to the name of the other, as to this other to whom I am given over with my eyes blindfolded, passively, although I sign, the other having

signed before me [...], the gift and forgiveness having taken place, or not, having taken place and having been nullified, carried away, without my ever even having to make a decision. This abyssal countersignature forms one body with the poem, with the experience of language itself, always as the language of the other, something that Celan knew and acknowledged so singularly, but which is also a universal experience of language. ("To Forgive," p. 38)

All of the profound ambivalence or multivalence of "Todtnauberg" is not only circumstantial or thematic, historical or psychological, not only semantic or syntactic, nor even all these aspects taken together. It has to do with the universally singular experience of language, addressed by Celan's poetry and poetics.

Perhaps we might venture to say that speaking German, speaking any mother tongue, the language of the other, implies a gift granted or received, and an act of forgiveness. But this takes place, according to Derrida, beyond all conscious decision and power: "unconditional but without sovereignty" ("Le Siècle et le Pardon," p. 133).

And perhaps we must affirm, with Derrida, after all, that in the poem "Todtnauberg," it is a question of an address of forgiveness, a scene of forgiveness. But forgiveness itself is aporetic through and through, "undecidably equivocal." Like a poem, which does not just record an incident but speaks the language that is always the language of another, of others, those before my signature and those after it. "Forgiveness perhaps implies," writes Derrida, "from the outset, as if by hypothesis, the appearance on the scene of a third party whom it nonetheless must, should, exclude" ("To Forgive," p. 34). A little like prayer: destined to a singular addressee, but also exposed to an apostrophe that multiplies the address. One of the axioms for forgiveness is the personal relation, face to face, heart to heart; but on the other hand, can true forgiveness ever exclude the third party?

As Celan writes in a much earlier poem: "*Welches der Worte du sprichst –/ du dankst/ dem Verderben.*" "Whichever word you speak –/ you thank/ the deterioration" (*GW1*, 129; my trans.). Deterioration

or corruption – such as the one to which we owe our words, for better or for worse – decay is a process in time: just as your name, anyone’s name, in the guest book, is exposed to those that were recorded before yours, and also to those that shall be recorded after yours, the polysemy of such seemingly innocent words as *Waldwasen* and *Knüppelpfade* is irreducible; not only because of their past, but also because of their future, the words to come in a future syntax; for instance that of an interpretation.

The necessary risk of decay, but as an exposure which is also a chance, as both Celan and Derrida have affirmed, is not all that Derrida must have meant, when he in passing and in parentheses speaks of “(a theme to which [he] should return later – the theme of verbal language, of discourse as the disastrous condition of forgiveness, which makes possible forgiveness but which also destroys it).” But there are other, let us say, linguistic problems with the performative speech act of beseeching or granting forgiveness. For instance, “if I grant forgiveness on condition that the other confess, that the other begin to redeem himself, to transfigure his fault, to dissociate himself from it in order to ask me for forgiveness, then my forgiveness begins to let itself be contaminated by an economy, a calculation that corrupts it” (“To Forgive,” p. 46). And Derrida continues, by linking this granting of forgiveness to the other speech act, namely to asking for forgiveness:

As soon as the word “pardon!” – the performative of forgiveness as speech act – is uttered, is there not the beginning of a reappropriation, a mourning process, a process of redemption, of a transfiguring calculation which, through language, the sharing of language [...] rushes toward the economy of a reconciliation that causes the wrong itself to be simply forgotten or annihilated, and thus this unforgivable as well, this unforgivable that is the only possible correlate of a forgiveness worthy of the name, of an absolutely singular forgiveness as unique event, unique but necessarily iterable, as always? The result of this law of iterable unicity, promised to repetition, divided by the promise that haunts all forgiveness, the result of this law of iterable unicity is that

at the same time there is no sense in asking for forgiveness collectively of a community, a family, an ethnic or religious group – and at the same time multiplicity and the third and the witness are involved from the outset [*d'entrée de jeu de la partie*]. (“To Forgive,” p. 46)

A third party is always already involved, whether present or absent. Whether present, as the man who drove the car and listened in, or absent, as those whose names were recorded “before mine” in the guest book, or those even more absent, who are neither named nor mentioned, but perhaps alluded to in an oblique manner, those whose trace we may only suspect in the unlevelled forest swaths and in their name *Waldwasen*, and even in the dampness of the bog.

Indeed, one should perhaps even ask for forgiveness for asking, or for granting forgiveness. Earlier in the essay, Derrida points out that “one would even have to be forgiven forgiveness, which may itself also include the irreducible equivocation of an affirmation of sovereignty, indeed of mastery” (p. 22; cf. “Le Siècle et le Pardon,” p. 132). Here we have an analogy between gift and forgiveness, since “[o]ne is always guilty, one must always be forgiven the gift.”<sup>50</sup> Following up from what Derrida says here, I have to ask for forgiveness for asking for forgiveness, since by asking, by this speech act, I put the other in the position of having to decide whether to grant or to refuse forgiveness, in the suspicious position of sovereignty with regard to the other who pronounces that speech act and forces me to pronounce mine, in response – even refusing to respond, even silence would signify a decision, here there seems to be no “neither-nor” – and on the other hand, I have to ask for forgiveness for granting forgiveness, for putting myself or letting myself be put in the position of making the quasi-sovereign decision concerning the other, the other’s past, present and future.<sup>51</sup>

Derrida even argues that when I say “I do not forgive you” to someone who asks forgiveness, to someone whom I understand and who understands me, a process of reconciliation has already begun and the third has intervened; thus the pure, singular forgiveness is

already ruined (cf. “Le siècle et le pardon,” p. 123). There is no scene of forgiveness without the involvement of the third, and there is no scene of forgiveness without these complications and implications and tensions. Since there is the third, since the third is there – there from the outset – since, as Derrida says in a sentence that is not included in the English version of the text “To Forgive,” “the face-to-face is at the same time interrupted and made possible by the third” (*Pardonner*, p. 89, my trans.), I must ask for forgiveness for asking for forgiveness as well as for granting forgiveness: “*Je dois demander pardon – pour être juste.*” Derrida explains this equivocal sentence with the emphasized preposition *pour* as follows: “I must ask forgiveness in order to be just, to be just, with a view to being just; but I must also ask forgiveness for being just, for the fact of being just, because I am just, because in order to be just, I am unjust and I betray. I must ask forgiveness for (the fact of) being just” (“To Forgive,” p. 49; *Pardonner*, p. 89).

A scene of forgiveness, which must be singular and, as it seems, bipolar (between two persons, between two hearts: the one who requests and the other who grants), still takes place “between three,” but – and thus – it takes place “always again only for once,” and never, perhaps, once-and-for-all. The figure of the third party, as a listener-in or a signatory, anterior or posterior, may always multiply itself. Forgiveness does not abolish the guilt or fault, it is not absolution and it cannot be clemency, either: it leaves room for the word and signature of the third party.

Following Axel Gellhaus, we agreed that gods are conspicuously absent from “Todtnauberg,” and discovered therein the inverted version of the Heideggerian “fourfold [*Geviert*].” However, perhaps there is, in the poem, even an allusion to divinity. The strophe, whose words should maybe gain a certain emphasis by their very laconic nature and graphic, “*in der/ Hütte*,” names another figure of hospitality besides the *Hüttenbuch*, which has been abbreviated into “*das Buch [...] dies Buch*” in the poem. In Biblical language, *Hütte* also means a tabernacle – tabernacle of testimony (cf. *DWB*, Bd. 18, Sp. 2931). Celan

knew well Heidegger's talk of language as the house of being ("*Haus des Seins*") or as the temple of being, and also of poetry as a "shrine without a temple [*tempelloser Schrein*]." And the story of a philosopher's hospitality, told first by Aristotle and repeated by Heidegger in his "Letter on 'Humanism,'" namely the words Heraclitus spoke when visitors came to see the revered thinker and found him warming himself by the stove: "for here too, the gods are present."<sup>52</sup> So even though the word that was written in the *Hüttenbuch*, the word *Hüttenbuch* itself, has been effaced or divided in the poem, there still resounds a counterpoint of sorts between "in the / hut" and "in the book."

Where there is hospitality, or "hostipitality" as Derrida has coined, and where there is forgiveness, there is God. And one does not have to be a believer to believe this. God is the name of all names and the host of all hosts, guest of all guests, the Wholly Other of every other, of all the others, wholly others; and the "great Third" too, of course. The witness of all witnesses. Thus, "it is [neither] by chance, nor contingent, nor avoidable, that it would be always and finally God that we ask of forgiveness, even when we are linked by a scene of forgiveness, to one or the other on earth" ("Hostipitality," p. 397). In other words,

the third and the witness are involved from the outset [*d'entrée de jeu de la partie*]. This may be one of the reasons, certainly not the only one, why forgiveness is often asked of God. Of God not because he alone would be capable of forgiveness, of a power-to-forgive otherwise inaccessible to man, but because, in the absence of the singularity of a victim who is sometimes no longer there to receive the request or to grant forgiveness, or in the absence of the criminal or the sinner, God is the only name, the name of the name of an absolute and namable singularity as such. Of the absolute substitute. Of the absolute witness, the absolute *superstes*, the absolute surviving witness. But inversely, if the address of forgiveness (I say the address of forgiveness to designate both the act of asking for forgiveness, of addressing a request for forgiveness, and the place from which forgiveness, once the request is received by the addressee of the request, is either



granted or not granted), if the address of forgiveness is always singular, singular as to the fault, the sin, the crime, the harm, and singular as to the perpetrator or his victim, nonetheless it calls forth not only repetition but through or as this repetition, a disidentification, a disseminating multiplication, [...]. ("To Forgive," p. 46)

The presence of the third party, the conspicuous absence of the third ensures "that the debate between forgiveness and the unforgivable will never have an end," to quote Vladimir Jankélévitch. "Fortunately, nothing ever has the last word!" (*Forgiveness*, p. 162).

Still, should we not ask if we have already let the poem speak the last word? Have we given the last word to the poem yet?

**"Fortunately, the last word is  
always the penultimate word..."<sup>53</sup>**

The poem, "Todtnauberg," ends in silence, as if stifled by the moisture: "*Feuchtes, / viel.*" But this silence itself is equivocal.

Derrida asks, right after repeating a quote from "Todtnauberg": "Must one refuse the experience of forgiveness to whoever does not speak? Or, on the contrary, must one make silence the very element of forgiveness, if there is such a thing?" ("To Forgive," p. 47). Derrida's suggestion that silence might be the very element of forgiveness does not mean that we should reach some taciturn agreement, a quiet mutual understanding in order that we arrive at forgiveness, instead of inextricably complicating matters and ruining everything by speaking. To the contrary. Language, one that is common to the forgiver and the forgiven, to the pardoner and the pardonee, shared by them both so that they can understand the fault and the guilt and their roles upon this scene, and so on, is at the same time both presupposed by forgiveness and excluded by it, taken that the only forgiveness worthy of the name would not be already contaminated by the process of reconciliation, the work of mourning, understanding

the guilty person and his motives, and so on (cf. “Le Siècle et le Pardon,” pp. 122–123). Only what is unforgivable can be truly forgiven, as Derrida insists:

We constantly struggle in the snares [*dans les rets*] of an aporia whose abstract and dry form, whose logical formality is as implacable as it is indisputable: There is only forgiveness, if there is such a thing, of the un-forgivable. Thus forgiveness, if it is possible, if there is such a thing, is not possible, it does not exist as possible, it only exists by exempting itself from the law of the possible, by impossibilizing itself, so to speak, and in the infinite endurance of the im-possible as impossible; and this is what it would have in common with the gift; [...]. (“To Forgive,” p. 48; *Pardonner*, p. 84; cf. “To Forgive,” p. 30; see also e.g. “Le Siècle et le Pardon,” p. 108, and “Hostipitality,” pp. 385ff)

We must understand that Derrida’s remarks on “Todtnauberg” are not an interpretation of the poem, *explication de texte* in any accustomed sense, let alone that he would like to reach beyond the text, to transcend it and tell us what he thinks Celan must have felt or thought or meant, in writing the poem or in meeting Heidegger and signing the guest book, and so on. Rather, let us quote his own words –

I myself will not venture to confirm or invalidate [*à confirmer ou à infirmer cette interprétation*], I will not, out of respect for the letter and the ellipsis of Celan’s poem, rush into an interpretation so transparent and univocal; I abstain from this not only out of hermeneutic prudence or out of respect for the letter of the poem, but also because I would like to suggest that forgiveness (granted or asked for), the address of forgiveness, must forever remain, if there is such a thing, undecidably equivocal, by which I do not mean ambiguous, shady, twilit, but heterogeneous to any determination in the order of knowledge, of determinate theoretical judgment, of the self-presentation of an appropriable sense [*de la présentation de soi d’un sens appropriable*] (it is an aporetic logic that, at least from this point of view, forgiveness would have [in common]

with the gift, but I will leave this analogy in progress or undeveloped here). (“To Forgive,” p. 36; *Pardonner*, p. 49)

Do we have the right to forgive? Do we have the right to deny forgiveness? Do we have the right to decide upon the nature of the “mutually exchanged silence” between the two men, “*Orchis und Orchis, einzeln*”? Does the word *Feuchtes* not address an eye, too? The word seems to reflect several previous words and clauses in the poem, including “*Augentrost, der / Trunk aus dem Brunnen,*” “*kommendes / Wort,*” “*Krudes.*” Clearly it cannot be read only as an apposition to the strophe that precedes it,

die halb-  
beschrifteten Knüppel-  
pfade im Hochmoor,

since by virtue of its grammatical form (nominalized present participle), the last strophe, “*Feuchtes, / viel,*” rather just adds to the paratactic inventory of which the whole poem virtually consists. This “dampness, / much” may designate the weather conditions and the highland moor but may designate a host of other things, too. The eyes, for instance, as in “*Engführung,*” another poem speaking of a word and of humidity, a word that came and “would glisten” or “wanted to shine,” and a moist eye. This is an excerpt from the fifth “movement” of that 1958 “*Stretto*”:

Kam, kam.  
Kam ein Wort, kam,  
kam durch die Nacht,  
wollt leuchten, wollt leuchten.

Asche.  
Asche, Asche.  
Nacht.

Nacht-und-Nacht. – Zum  
Aug geh, zum feuchten.<sup>54</sup>

Obviously enough, the words written in the visitors' book at Todtnau-berg were written in the hope that they would reach a human eye and heart.

In one of his notes written while preparing the *Meridian* speech, Celan discusses "judaization" or "jewification" and "conversion," referring also more or less explicitly to Heidegger:

Verjuden: Es ist das Anderswerden, Zum-anderen-und-dessen-Geheimnis-stehn – / – Liebe zum Menschen ist etwas anderes als Philanthropie – / Umkehr – dazu scheint es ja nun doch zuviel Einbahnstraßen zu geben. – Gegenverkehr und Umkehr, das ist zweierlei aber auch auf den Feldwegen scheint es, ach, wenig Gelegenheit dazu zu geben. (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 417. Cf. Ms. 690, Ts. 847, Ts. 858)

The point of the words "*auf den Feldwegen*" is clear and sharp. The earliest reading traces in Heidegger's works contained in Celan's personal library are the underlining of the dialectal word "*Kuinzige*" and the date "17.X.51" in the tiny booklet *Der Feldweg* (1949), and this is clearly Celan's point of reference.<sup>55</sup> Those few pages would merit a very close reading, *in extenso*, but we shall not engage in that now.

The "alas! [*ach*]" in Celan's fragment – is it not, first of all, an ironic, or even sarcastic interjection (far from "*das »Kuinzige«*," a Swabian sort of serene irony or compassionate melancholy evoked by Heidegger), attesting to a disappointment or indignation in the face of the other's "serene" silence? But secondly, and at the same time, could it not be also an intimation of sincere hope for the impossible, and an acknowledgement of this impossibility, even if ironic at the same time? Not only sarcasm over an unwillingness or inability to turn back, but also a sincere regret over this inability or even impossibility? When Celan writes that there seems to be hardly any opportunity for conversion upon the field paths [*auch auf den Feldwegen*

scheint es, ach, wenig Gelegenheit dazu zu geben”], he seems to acknowledge the more or less aporetic nature of Heidegger’s situation.

Axel Gellhaus points to the fact that when Heidegger was asked by Herbert Marcuse to distance himself publicly from National Socialism, he replied, in a letter dated January 20, 1948 (even here we have a Twentieth of January!) that he would not be associated with those former partisans with whom he had nothing in common to begin with, and who now, after the defeat, were making haste to manifest their conversion “in a most obnoxious way [*in der widerlichsten Weise ihren Gesinnungswandel bekundeten*].”<sup>56</sup> As regards the specific sentence just quoted, and when read in its context, the meaning appears as quite unambiguous. Heidegger would not have anything to do with the backsliders, he would not show remorse by their side, insofar as they had, until then, been eager supporters of the regime, who now had to make a complete about-face to escape with their skins, and since he had not even previously had anything to do with them. He would not be seen prostrate among the apostate. It takes either bad faith or bad reading, or a bit of both, to take Heidegger’s words to show that he never actually showed remorse because he never actually abandoned his belief in the “Movement” and its *Führer*. If that would have been the case after all, namely if he actually remained loyal to Hitler not only after 1934 but even after 1945, his reply to Marcuse would show marvellous subtlety. Heidegger the Fox, indeed.

But in any case, we do not know. We do not know exactly what the “dampness” in question is, or was, and what exactly is the “muchness” of this “dampness,” after all. We do not know all that there is to it. And we shall never know.

Perhaps there was a tear. Perhaps. We shall never know. We know, a priori as it were, that we shall never strictly speaking know what was, or might have been, behind the unknown, possible teardrop. An old man’s lachrymosity? *Das »Kuinzige«* – serene melancholy? A fox’s – a crocodile’s – tear? Or a manifestation of a heart perhaps, an unspoken word, a visible sign? Or nothing of the kind? We shall never know. What we do know is that after “dampness [*Feuchtes*]”

comes “much [*viel*]” – much or many, who knows, and who knows what dampness.

The speculation about the word *Feuchtes* is and must be immediately and forever haunted by the multiplication involved in the last word, *viel*, “much” or “many.” We can never reduce the poem’s secret to a privacy and face-to-face intimacy that would not be, at the same time, exposed to divulgence, to “this repetition, a disidentification, a disseminating multiplication.” But, on the other hand, instead of “representing” or “reproducing” something that could be “reported” in an anecdote, the two last words and lines of the poem manifest a secret that not only remains unattainable for us readers but also divides the (possible) intimacy of a conversation between the two (say, Celan and Heidegger) and witnessed by a third party (“he who drives us, the man, / who listens in”). The two words, two lines, *Feuchtes*, / *viel* (may) manifest the (possible) silent humidity in the eyes of an old man. In all the ambiguity, in all the equivocality of the “many” or “much.” And this is to say: exactly what they (the words and the tears that remain in the realm of the possible) manifest remains forever beyond knowledge. The manifestation both violently breaks into the open (or “verifies,” which has been used as an idiosyncratic but suggestive translation of Celan’s use of the verb *wahrnehmen*) the whole ambiguity and ambivalence but also, in so doing, preserves the secret as a secret.

Whether there really was a teardrop or not is not important here. Perhaps not. Insofar as the teardrop in the other’s eye leaves the atmosphere of the “as if” or “perhaps” (which it never completely does, inasmuch as we simply cannot get inside the heart of the other and feel what he feels, think what he thinks, see what he sees, not to mention the caesura not only between us but also within us: a “symptom” always remains, as if by definition, something exterior), insofar as it abandons the realms of dreams or images or unconsciousness, that are not yet even the realms of fiction as we know it, and becomes a more or less verifiable piece of reality (presuming that a moist eye, or even a teardrop, might have been witnessed by someone; it would be quite ridiculous to speculate upon such a possibility) or an object

of positive speculation (thetic, thematic pretensions at transcending the “mirror of the soul” toward its referent), it may also become suspect: perhaps a symptom of repentance or feigned repentance, indecent sentimentality, self-therapy for the conscience, making amends, work of mourning, transfiguration, reconciliation, all these economies of redemption, mentioned by Derrida, that would contaminate and corrupt true forgiveness, “if there is one.” So, with all the conditions of possibility and impossibility of true forgiveness taken into account, perhaps the possible (imagined) dew-drop must retain its silence, its momentariness, its atmospheric suspension, its undecidable equivocality.<sup>57</sup>

By “atmospheric suspension” I would like to allude, not only to the “air” of fiction or imagination, let alone “castles in the air” (“*in der Luft*”) and all the aerial or ethereal utopias, but also to one of the poems in the *Stimmen* cycle that opens the book *Sprachgitter*, and the words “*blieb hängen*” and “*Atme*” in it:

*Jakobsstimme:*

Die Tränen.  
Die Tränen im Bruderaug.  
Eine blieb hängen, wuchs.  
Wir wohnen darin.  
Atme, daß  
sie sich löse.<sup>57</sup>

There is a Hasidic tale told by Martin Buber, quoting Rabbi Schmelke of Nikolsburg, on the tears of Esau:

In the Midrash it is written: “Messiah, son of David, will not come until the tears of Esau have ceased to flow [*die Erlösung komme nicht, ebe die Tränen Esaus Versiegt sind*].” The children of Israel, who are God’s children, pray for mercy [*Erbarmen*] day and night; and shall

they weep in vain so long as the children of Esau shed tears? But the “tears of Esau” – that does not mean the tears which the peoples of the earth weep and you do not weep; they are the tears that all human beings weep when they ask something for themselves, and pray for it. And truly: Messiah, son of David, will not come until such tears ceased to flow, until you weep because the Divine Presence is exiled [*weil die Schechina verbannt ist*], and because you yearn for its return.<sup>58</sup>

Aspiration is a word that translates as both hope (*Hoffnung*) and breath (*Wort*). To say “breathe” (“*Atme*”), in the imperative or optative mode, is it not to express one’s hope for the other’s word, one’s hope for another’s hope, a shared hope in a shared abode (“*Wir wohnen darin*”), even in a divided atmosphere (“the air we have to breath” of which Celan speaks in *The Meridian*)?<sup>59</sup> Such an expression (or exhalation) of one’s hope for another’s word, a word for another’s hope, is far from being similar to praying for mercy, clemency or compassion just for oneself and one’s own, *pro domo*. I believe such an aspiration, a word that just “would glisten, would glisten,” desires to exceed all the economies of give-and-take, including the economies of forgiveness. By fixing the “date”<sup>60</sup> of an eye-to-eye, heart-to-heart encounter, or by indicating the singularity of circumstances (even through the minimal indication involved in using the second person singular), by signing the visitors’ book, so to speak, a poem also exceeds its own intimate conditions of possibility – and impossibility – or if you will, the “sense-certainty” of the “here and now,” by becoming readable.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Two recent books having almost identical titles must be mentioned first of all, dealing with both the face-to-face encounter at Todtnauberg and the intellectual, textual exchange over the years: Hadrien France-Lanord, *Paul Celan et Martin Heidegger : le sens d'un dialogue* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), and James K. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger: An Unresolved Conversation, 1951–1970* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 2006). Both make good use of recent publications



and also archive material. Both are also relatively impartial, even though Lyon caricatures Heidegger right away quite roughly as “an arch-German nationalist” (p. 1); on the other hand, France-Lanord has been criticized for not being always able to resist an apologetic tone in favor of his *maitre à penser*, for being “dispiritingly one-sided, exclusively pro-Heideggerian” (cf. e.g. Leslie Hill, “Distrust of Poetry’: Levinas, Blanchot, Celan,” in *MLN* 120 [2005], pp. 986–1008, here p. 1003n9). I do not agree with this critique, nor with Lyon’s labeling of France-Lanord’s book as (too) “[p]hilosophical, speculative” (p. viii). Being “philosophical” is necessary in dealing with Heidegger’s and Celan’s phenomenologies of poetry, and one can be “speculative” in more than one way – France-Lanord’s way is by far not the worst kind of speculation. France-Lanord does affirm the “extreme tension” of the relationship on Celan’s part and never lapses into mere apologetics, let alone into a biased polemic in the style of Jean Bollack (cf. below). France-Lanord has not avoided discussing, in the mentioned book or in other contexts, even those documents that are rather painful to acknowledge for anyone profoundly impressed by Heidegger’s work (such as Paul Celan himself obviously was). He dismisses not only the militantly anti-Heideggerean polemics, but also those interpretations that tend to neutralize the tension and ambivalence in a more positive fashion: for instance Hans-Georg Gadamer’s “indecent image” of Celan as “one of the many pilgrims” who wandered to the thinker’s abode, which is indeed obscene, not only toward the poet but also toward the thinker. Gadamer ended his few pages of homage to Heidegger, contained in the book *Philosophische Lehrjahre*, by citing the poem “Todtnauberg” and indeed calling Celan one of the “*Wallfahrern nach Todtnauberg*” ([Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1977], p. 220; cf. France-Lanord, p. 95). But I think the many polemical interpretations of this poem and of this encounter are just as obscene, such as Jean Bollack’s view of Celan as a poetic sorcerer, laying some sort of strategic trap for his host, “pre-programming” a “drama” to be played out in the middle of the “germanic fog” in the highland moor, documented in the “serious game of poetic riddling,” as Bollack sees the poem “Todtnauberg” (“Vor dem Gericht der Toten: Paul Celans Begegnung mit Martin Heidegger und ihre Bedeutung,” trans. Werner Wägenbauer, in *Neue Rundschau* vol. 109 no. 1 [1998], pp. 127–156, here, pp. 140, 142, 144, passim; original French text: “Le Mont de la mort : le sens d’une rencontre entre Celan et Heidegger,” in *Lignes* 29 [1996], pp. 159–188). For Otto Pöggeler’s response to Bollack’s polemic directed, among others, at Pöggeler, cf. the latter’s *Der Stein hinterm Aug: Studien zu Celans Gedichten* (München: Fink, 2000), pp. 159–188 [i.e. chapter “Celans Begegnung mit Heidegger”], here pp. 186ff. While Pöggeler takes an anti-polemic attitude with regard to Bollack, his own polemics against Derrida’s readings in *Schibboleth – pour Paul Celan* (Paris: Galilée, 1986) seem rather odd (cf. *Der Stein hinterm Aug*, pp. 165ff.). Bollack’s account of his conversations with his friend Celan are of course to be taken as seriously as any other, and as one of the many sources for information concerning the incident, but it is also obvious, even in terms of Bollack’s own view of the poem as the primary manifestation of the alleged scheme being successfully realized, that even these private exchanges call for exegetic intervention. Here are some of the other most

important and most recommendable texts related to the meeting and the poem itself, in more or less chronological order: Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *La poésie comme expérience* (Paris: Bourgois, 1986); Gerhart Baumann, *Erinnerungen an Paul Celan* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1992 [1st ed. 1986]); Otto Pöggeler, *Spur des Worts. Zur Lyrik Paul Celans* (München: Alber, 1986), pp. 259–271; Pöggeler, “Heidegger und Celan in der französischen Diskussion,” in Eliane Escoubas & Bernhard Waldenfels, eds., *Phénoménologie française et phénoménologie allemande / Deutsche und Französische Phänomenologie* (France: Harmattan, 2000), pp. 609–632; Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Im Schatten des Nihilismus,” in Hubert Dethier, Eldert Willens, eds., *Cultural Hermeneutics of Modern Art. Essays in Honor of Jan Aler* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989), pp. 233–244, esp. pp. 242ff.; Gadamer & Silvio Vietta, *Im Gespräch* (München: Fink, 2002); Paul Celan, Gisèle Celan-Lestrangé, *Correspondance (1951–1970): Avec un choix de lettres de Paul Celan à son fils Eric. Éditée et commentée par Bertrand Badiou avec le concours d’Eric Celan*, 2 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 2001), passim, esp. nos. 533, 534, 536; Axel Gellhaus, “»... seit ein Gespräch wir sind ...«. Paul Celan bei Martin Heidegger in Todtnauberg,” in *Spuren* 60, Jan. 2004, zweite Auflage (Marbach am Neckar: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, cop. 2002) [15 pp.]. Among the several literary works directly or indirectly referring to the poem and the encounter are, e.g., Jorge Semprún, *L’écriture ou la vie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994); Elfriede Jelinek, *Todtnauberg. Ein Stück* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1991); Günter Grass, *Mein Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Steidl, 1999), pp. 238–252 (years 1966–1968). For several other texts related to the encounter, cf. e.g. Michael Mayer, “Hoffnung auf das Wort,” in *Berliner Zeitung* (März 7, 1998), p. 12; Sieghild Bogumil, “Todtnauberg,” in Hans-Michael Speier, ed., *Celan-Jahrbuch 2* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1988), pp. 37–52; Stephan Krass, “Mit einer Hoffnung auf ein kommendes Wort: Die Begegnung von Paul Celan und Martin Heidegger,” in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (2.–3. Aug. 1997), pp. 57–58. In 2002 there was a special *dossier thématique* under the heading “Document” in the French literary review *Magazine littéraire* (Janvier 2002), with two articles, the first entitled “Celan/Heidegger : Lumières sur une rencontre,” and the second, “La responsabilité d’une pensée”; these were written by Frédéric de Towarnicki and Hadrien France-Lanord, respectively. An earlier, furiously polemical article directed against a certain “Heideggerianism” of some “French” readers of Celan (especially Lacoue-Labarthe, but also Derrida and Blanchot) has been presented by Mark M. Anderson, “The ‘Impossibility of Poetry’: Celan and Heidegger in France” (in *New German Critique*, no. 53 [Spring/Summer 1991], pp. 3–18). Anderson’s reading of Lacoue-Labarthe’s *La poésie comme expérience* is quite selective and tendentious, and his speculations, for instance, about “deconstruction” as a “bizarre form of revisionism” (p. 15) are themselves precisely bizarre and uninformed. Anderson’s article happens to precede Richard Wolin’s “Introduction to Herbert Marcuse and Martin Heidegger: An Exchange of Letters” (pp. 19–27), in the same issue, and Wolin’s translation of these 1947–1948 letters (pp. 28–32), containing an outrageously misconstrued phrase that completely distorts Heidegger’s words; we shall return to this piece of disinformation in another note.

2. Otto Pöggeler has told how Celan once said to him: “Heidegger war mein Gegenüber” (reported by James K. Lyon upon his personal interview with Pöggeler, in *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger*, p. 22). By using the past tense, Celan refers to the years when he was most intensely and extensively engaged with Heidegger’s works, namely in the early fifties: during the years 1952–1954 Celan read for the first time such books as *Sein und Zeit*, *Holzwege*, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, *Was heißt Denken* and some others; he made many underlinings, marginal remarks and notes and also dated his readings (cf. Lyon, *loc. cit.* & p. 219; Celan, *La bibliothèque philosophique / Die philosophische Bibliothek*, ed. Alexandra Richter et al. [Paris: Rue d’Ulm, 2004], pp. 338–418). Heidegger had been his *vis-à-vis*, his interlocutor for at least fifteen years before they met face to face, or at least had been for some time. This reader’s engagement continued, albeit perhaps less *vis-à-vis*, until the poet’s death in 1970. *Gegenüber* is actually the word used in the title of the German translation of Ossiip Mandelstam’s essay “On the Interlocutor,” and an important term in the vocabulary of the *Meridian* speech: “Das Gedicht will zu einem Andern, es braucht dieses Andere, es braucht ein Gegenüber” (*Der Meridian. Endfassung, Entwürfe, Materialien*, in *Werke: Tübinger Ausgabe*, 9 vols, ed. Jürgen Wertheimer et al. [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996–2004], 9 = “Endfassung,” section 35a. This nine-volume Tübingen edition is henceforth cited as *TCA*, followed by the title of the volume; e.g., in this case, *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 35a. Sometimes I also refer to *Gesammelte Werke in sieben Bänden*, ed. Beda Allemann [Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2000], 7 vols, henceforth cited as *GW*, followed by the volume and page numbers). In Felstiner’s translation: “The poem wants to reach an Other, it needs this Other, it needs an Over-against” (*Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, trans. John Felstiner [New York: Norton, 2001], p. 409). On Celan’s ambivalence toward Heidegger, see, besides Pöggeler’s various accounts, esp. France-Lanord’s and Lyon’s books. On Heidegger’s indications of a very different ambivalence toward Celan, see for example the following: “Heidegger’s admiration of Celan was also ambivalent, though in a different way. Although he admired and felt drawn to Celan’s poetry, some of it he did not understand or find accessible, which is why he enlisted Pöggeler, with his direct access[?] to Celan, as ‘translator’ and interpreter” (Lyon, p. 156). And the following: “Pöggeler claims that by 1964 Heidegger confessed that he found Celan’s poems in the volume entitled *The No One’s Rose*, which appeared in 1963, unsympathetic, not easily accessible, and too ‘allegorical’” (p. 157; cf. also p. 211). Cf. Pöggeler, *Der Stein hinterm Aug*, pp. 161–162; *Spur des Worts*, p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> The poetry reading in Freiburg was actually not his primary reason for traveling from Paris to Germany, but a sort of intermediate stop on his way to Frankfurt, to settle some editorial matters with his publishers (cf. Paul Celan/ Gisèle Celan-Lestrange, *Correspondance*, ed. Bertrand Badiou [Paris: Seuil, 2001], vol. 1, p. 547ff., i.e. no. 533).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. e.g. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger*, pp. 65–66, *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger*, p. 167 (paraphrasing Pöggeler,

“Praktische Philosophie’ als Antwort an Heidegger,” p. 67 [Lyon, p. 231n24]); Jankélévitch, paraphrasing Robert Minder (“Heidegger is responsible not only for everything he said under Nazism but also for everything he abstained from saying in 1945”), is cited by Derrida, “To Forgive,” pp. 36, 50n11.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Pöggeler, *Der Stein hinterm Aug*, p. 164. Pöggeler was also “astonished at the poet’s spirited defense of Heidegger’s later works”; Celan “would not tolerate any criticism from him of the language in these later works” (Pöggeler is thus paraphrased by Lyon, p. 97).

<sup>7</sup> *TCA/Lichtzwang*, p. 51. Trans. John Felstiner, in *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan* (New York: Norton, 2001): “TODTNAUBERG// Arnica, Eyebright, the/ drink from the well with the/ star-die on top,// in the/ hut,// into the book/ – whose name did it take in/ before mine –?/ the line written into/ this book about/ a hope, today,/ for a thinker’s/ (un-/delayed coming)/ word/ in the heart,// woodland turf, unlevelled,/ Orchis and Orchis, singly,// crudeness, later, while driving,/ clearly,// the one driving us, the man/ who hears it too,// the half-/trodden log-/ paths on the high moorland,// dampness,/ much.” Trans. Michael Hamburger, in *Poems of Paul Celan* (New York: Persea Books, 2002): “TODTNAUBERG// Arnica, eyebright, the/ draft from the well with the/ star-crowned die above it,// in the/ hut,// the line/ – whose name did the book/ register before mine? –,/the line inscribed/ in that book about/ a hope, today,/ of a thinking man’s/ coming/ word/ in the heart,// woodland sward, unlevelled,/ orchid and orchid, single,// coarse stuff, later, clear/ in passing,// he who drives us, the man,/ who listens in,// the half-/trodden fascine/ walks over the high moors,// dampness,/ much.”

<sup>8</sup> “To Forgive: The Unforgivable and the Imprescriptible,” trans. Elizabeth Rotenberg, in John Caputo, Mark Dooley, and Michael J. Scanlon, eds., *Questioning God* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 2001), pp. 21–51, here p. 36. Derrida’s text was first presented in a 1997 conference and appeared first in English, and just a day before his death in the original French in the special issue of *Cahiers de l’Herne*. This French version was reprinted in the series “Carnets de l’Herne” as *Pardonner – l’impardonnable et l’imprescriptible* (Paris: L’Herne, 2005); the expression “*indécidablement équivoque*” appears on p. 50. In the volume *Questioning God*, Derrida’s “To Forgive” is followed by a transcript of a roundtable discussion “On Forgiveness” (“On Forgiveness: A Roundtable Discussion with Jacques Derrida. Moderated by Richard Kearney,” pp. 52–72), which is another very important text with regard to Derrida’s work on forgiveness.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. also *Donner la mort* (Paris: Galilée, 1999), pp. 185, 192. On literature as the topos of utopian (or a-topic, if you will) gift and forgiveness, cf. Derrida, *Donner le temps I: La fausse monnaie* (Paris: Galilée, 1991), and *Donner la mort* (Paris: Galilée, 1999); in the latter, see especially the discussions of Kierkegaard’s imaginary versions of the story of Abraham and Isaac and Kafka’s *Brief and den Vater*.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *La poésie comme expérience*, pp. 57–58; En. trans. *Poetry as Experience*, trans. Andrea Tarnowski (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1999), p. 38.

<sup>11</sup> Cit. France-Lanord, *Paul Celan et Martin Heidegger*, p. 119. Heidegger would be there to attend the reading among the 1200 listeners who were “holding their breath for an hour,” who applauded at length and then still listened to the poet for another fifteen minutes, as Celan proudly told his wife in a letter (*Correspondance*, No. 536). On July 24, 1967, as he came to Freiburg, Celan was reportedly very affected to see in every bookstore window his collections of poetry, and nobody told him that it was actually Heidegger who had beseeched the book dealers to showcase his books. An hour before the very successful reading, the two met for the first time personally, in a hotel lobby, and were engaged in an informal conversation; but when someone was planning to record their encounter, Celan suddenly rose from his seat and by this gesture refused to be photographed together with the former Rector of the University. Heidegger was reportedly neither surprised nor offended by this. A moment later Celan came back and said that the photo could now be taken, and everyone acted as if nothing had happened; the picture was not taken, after all. After the very successful reading, Heidegger invited the poet to visit him the next day in Todtnauberg and Celan accepted the invitation (cf. e.g. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger*, pp. 160ff).

<sup>12</sup> Letter of Aug. 2nd, 1967 to Gisèle Celan-Lestrange, in *Correspondance* (no. 536); trans. Lyon, modified (p. 167).

<sup>13</sup> The English translation by Andrea Tarnowski contains an error: “He should have been the first to say something. And I was wrong to think initially that it was enough to ask forgiveness. It is absolutely unforgivable. That is what he should have said [*sic*]” (*Poetry as Experience*, p. 122). The error lies in translating the impersonal *il* by the personal pronoun “he,” disregarding the difference between *devoir* (“*il aurait dû dire*”) and *falloir* (“*il fallait dire*”): “That is what he should have said” is not correct. The French sentence should be translated more or less as follows: “That is what should have been said.” Or even: “That is what I should have said.” How could Heidegger have said, after the War, that his silence after the War was unforgivable? The construct “*il fallait dire*” is impersonal and refers to what should have been said earlier in the book *La poésie comme expérience*, that is, what Lacoue-Labarthe thinks he himself should have said, namely that Heidegger’s silence after the war was unforgivable, instead of his initial suggestion concerning “the word *pardon*.” The erroneous translation confuses the point, I’m afraid. In the text, Lacoue-Labarthe stated just before the sentences in question that “Heidegger’s irreparable offense” was not “his declarations of 1933–34, which we can understand without approving, but his silence on the extermination” (*Poetry as Experience*, p. 122). It is this silence that Lacoue-Labarthe deems unforgivable. In any case, the whole issue is desperately complicated, as we are perhaps beginning to see. And not only with regard to Heidegger’s situation in the Third Reich (1933–1945), as an “internal” critic of Nazism, and as someone whose every move must have been surveyed, as it seems; the letter to Marcuse of January 20, 1948 (*GA 16*, 430–431), mentioned below, points out some of these difficulties related not only to the possibility of heroic resistance within the totalitarian state but also to the possibility of manifesting remorse after the Third Reich had collapsed.

<sup>14</sup> “C’est en face de ce mot [le mot pardon] que Celan nous a situés. Un signe ?”

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Derrida, “To Forgive,” p. 38. The word “extravagant” comes from an article by Chris Kaposy who, more or less in the old Carnapian manner, “seeks to apply some of the tools of analytic philosophy to a text written by a ‘continental’ philosopher, in order to evaluate the quality of its arguments” (“Analytic’ Reading, ‘Continental’ Text: The Case of Derrida’s ‘On Forgiveness,’” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* Vol. 13(2), 203–226, here p. 223). One of the main points in Kaposy’s text is that “the pragmatics of a concept and the ethical arguments about how a concept should be used are two different issues that, for clarity’s sake, should be considered separately” (p. 223). For the sake of brevity, I would only ask one question: When we are speaking of the concept of forgiveness, how long can we keep description and prescription rigorously apart?

<sup>16</sup> “Tout poème est de circonstance” (Michel Deguy, “Paul Celan, 1990,” in *La raison poétique* [Paris: Galilée, 2000], pp. 85–98, here p. 93). See also Lacoue-Labarthe, *La poésie comme expérience*, p. 83: “la poésie est poésie de circonstance.” See also Derrida’s contribution to a discussion in a colloquy on Peter Szondi’s work, in 1979: “There is always an address in each poem, a poem is dedicated in one way or another. And this address is at one and the same time secret, it is always secret in every way, and its secret offers something to read, it turns away from itself, that’s what language is” (translation by James G. Hughes slightly modified, in *boundary 2*, Vol. 11, No. 3, The Criticism of Peter Szondi [Spring 1983], pp. 155–167, here p. 157).

<sup>17</sup> Pöggeler reports Heidegger’s inquiries about Celan’s parents’ death at an extermination camp (cf. Pöggeler, *Der Stein hinterm Aug*, p. 162). He has also insisted that the motivation for Heidegger’s intense occupation with Celan, which he personally attested to, having read Celan’s poetry together with Heidegger many times, had to do with the Holocaust (*Der Stein hinterm Aug*, p. 167; cf. also France-Lanord, *Paul Celan et Martin Heidegger*, p. 194).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Silvio Vietta, in Gadamer and Vietta, *Im Gespräch*, p. 82.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *TCA/Lichtzwang*, p. 48n, and Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger*, p. 168, as well as Celan’s correspondence with his wife Gisèle related to this matter.

<sup>20</sup> Celan was reportedly very annoyed at Neumann’s later article, which compared him with Mallarmé in terms of “absolute metaphor,” in spite of the fact that Celan had in the *Meridian* clearly distanced himself from Mallarmé, from metaphor, and from the idea of an “absolute poem” (cf. e.g. Pöggeler, *Der Stein hinterm Aug*, p. 175).

<sup>21</sup> This much we know partly from his correspondence with his wife Gisèle, partly from Jean Bollack’s already-mentioned article, partly from other sources (e.g. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger*, p. 164), and from an article in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* by Stephan Krass, who appears to have interviewed Neumann and reports his rather hesitant account of the “long pauses” and Celan’s question whether Heidegger would speak publicly about his involvement with National

Socialism (NZZ 2.–3. Aug. 1997, p. 57). Jean Bollack lists in his article several photocopied documents that Celan's widow Gisèle entrusted to him in 1981, apparently frustrated by those interpretations of the poem that had appeared until then; Bollack tells that he began his more intensive engagement with his late friend's poetry at about that time. Among these documents were two letters from Gerhard Neumann to Paul Celan, dated in October 1967 and January 1968. Bollack's description of the relationship between the young scholar and the poet is quite remarkable, and quite harsh: it is as if Celan had chosen this "human being" who happened to drive the car as the privileged witness of the "epochal conversation," and as if the poor young Germanist was both very much taken by this honour and wanted very much to shy away from this responsibility (cf. Bollack, "Vor dem Gericht der Toten," pp. 145–146).

<sup>22</sup> Cit. e.g. Pöggeler, *Der Stein hinterm Aug*, p. 172. A facsimile of these lines in Heidegger's guest book can be found in Axel Gellhaus, "«... seit ein Gespräch wir sind ...»," p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> The word was to come from the heart of the thinker, as the poem seems to say; actually the poem says this equivocally, because the syntax allows for more than two different readings. The hope for the word is in the heart of the one who hopes for it, or the word to come is itself a word in the heart of the one who is to pronounce it, in the thinker's heart and to come from his heart. But the advocate in "the tribunal of the dead," Jean Bollack, who summons "a school of harshness" against all reconciliation and weakness, also wants to ward off all Heideggerianism from the poem in which the poet speaks "in his own language, with his own words," and tells us that all those numerous interpretations that detach from the context the clause "coming/ word/ in the heart" or "word/ to come/ in the heart," instead of retaining the correct and natural syntactic relation, namely between "hope" and "heart," "a hope [...] in the heart," are based on a false syntactical analysis (cf. Bollack, "Vor dem Gericht," pp. 152–154). According to Bollack, the correct and natural syntax would not be "*Wort im Herzen*," as the Heideggereans and other Catholics or former Catholics would have it, but "*von einer Hoffnung [...] im Herzen*." Bollack reads his late friend's mind so that the poet never actually hoped and expected a word to come from Heidegger, let alone from his heart, or to the heart of the one who hopes for it, but knew already that it was a vain hope; especially since he shared the skepticism of his friend Bollack. The poet could perfectly anticipate everything that happened and that did not happen, Bollack seems to claim, and was only staging a drama in order to write the whole plot down in a poem. But why should there be this equivocality, this syntactical possibility of reading the drama otherwise? If there is only one "natural" way of reading the sentence and of attributing the heart, why opt for poetry, such a notoriously ambivalent way of speaking? And why should the poet efface all the Heideggerean traces in favour of his "own language and own words" if the whole poem consists of an address to Heidegger, however oblique it may be? And even more so, if the address is rather obliquely directed at once also past Heidegger, around the primary addressee, ironically to the third party which we all are as the readers of this poem? In any case, the mentioned word, word-to-come, is not known as such. The poem does not

record the conversation as such, neither directly nor indirectly, but rather mentions the hope, the expectation, that must have been pronounced during the conversation. It does not, so to say, record the content but only the form of the expectation.

<sup>24</sup> *Forgiveness*, trans. Andrew Kelly (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), p. 49; cf. p. 5: “True forgiveness, which is at the margins of all legality, is a gracious gift from the offended to the offender. True forgiveness is a personal relation with another person.” According to Jankélévitch, forgiveness should be “efficacious” and “lasting,” while also “one that comes to pass in the suddenness of the instant”; it should be an event involving “charity” and “the relation of one heart to another”; it must be a “gratuitous gift,” but in the last analysis, not “an absolutely gratuitous gift, since it is necessary to have committed misdeeds in order to merit it,” and so on (pp. 34, 35, 49, 124). The mentioned gratuity is as unlikely to be confused with generosity as clemency is to be confused with forgiveness: “Clemency is forgiveness that has no interlocutor. [...] Clemency is not forgiveness any more than generosity is love” (pp. 6, 7). In his own discussions on forgiveness, Derrida radicalizes Jankélévitch’s discourse on forgiveness, for instance with respect to the aporias of the gift; such a gesture of deconstructive radicalization is, as I would like to say, a sort of generosity that does not exclude love.

<sup>25</sup> Gerhard Baumann recalls that he met Celan and Heidegger the day after their encounter at Todtnauberg, and to his great surprise and joy he found them both in a very good mood, recollecting their day in the Black Forest. According to Baumann, Celan seemed as if relieved of a great weight, and many other witnesses have testified that the meeting went very well and had a good effect on Celan. Marie-Louise Kaschnitz wondered what had happened in Freiburg that had changed her friend so much for the better. It has been conjectured that Heidegger had at least mentioned to Celan the famous *Spiegel* interview that he had given the previous year on the condition that it would be published only after his death; there he would have made the explicit statements concerning his political “error”; so this would have been the public part of the explication (Baumann, Lyon, France-Lanord and Pöggeler all discuss these matters).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Gadamer, “In the Shadow of Nihilism,” p. 123; Pöggeler takes *Krudes* to be a designation of Heidegger’s language in his later works, cf. *Spur des Worts*, p. 267.

<sup>27</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 5 July 2007, <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50082514>>.

<sup>28</sup> These words are from Emily Dickinson’s famous poem “Because I Could Not Stop For Death.”

<sup>29</sup> *Das Deutsche Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm auf CD-ROM und im Internet (1854ff/2003)*, [based on:] *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm. 16 Bde. [in 32 Teilbänden]*. Leipzig: S. Hirzel (1854-1960;



Quellenverzeichnis 1971), Version 2.0 / Mai 2003, <http://germazope.uni-trier.de/Projects/DWB>, Bd. 27, Sp. 2276ff.; henceforth cited as *DWB*.

<sup>30</sup> Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger*, p. 179; cf. Pöggeler, *Spur des Worts*, p. 266 (and not 267 as Lyon signals); *Wasen* is sometimes used as a synonym for *Schindanger*, as Pöggeler remarks, i.e. *locus cadaverum publicus* (*DWB*, Bd. 15, Sp. 187).

<sup>31</sup> Many who have written on “Todtnauberg” have speculated upon the individual syllables of the title, the toponym itself, *Todtn-au-berg*, whose syllable *-au-* would not only mean *die Au*, meadow, but would in addition allude even to the interjection *au* as well as to *Augen*, namely the eyes of the dead, and *Auschwitz*. The word *Tod* in the first syllable reminds of “Todesfuge” and its famous phrase “*der Tod is ein Meister aus Deutschland*,” and the poem “Engführung” belongs to the same chain of allusions, without doubt. But this has more to do with the inescapable horizon of the encounter than with some sort of tribunal of the dead where Heidegger’s stands as the sole accused. Cf. e.g. Pierre Joris, “Translation at the Mountain of Death: Celan and Heidegger,” in Alfred Bodenheimer & Shimon Sandbank, eds., *Poetik der Transformation: Paul Celan – Übersetzer und übersetzt (Conditio Judaica #28)* (Tübingen: Niemeyer Verlag, 1999); online at <<http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/joris/todtnauberg.html>>.

<sup>32</sup> “A Poet’s Hope,” in *Boston Review. A Political and Literary Forum*, November/December 2005; online at <<http://www.bostonreview.net/BR30.6/perloff.html>>.

<sup>33</sup> “TODTENAUGE, n.: die blassen gestalten, die ihre todtenaugen noch einmal gegen uns aufheben. J. PAUL Hesp. 4, 75” (*DWB*, Bd. 21, Sp. 596).

<sup>34</sup> Charles Bernstein reports to have found this information on a “Herbal Information’ website” (“Celan’s folds and veils,” in *Textual Practice* 18(2), 2004, pp. 199–205, here p. 200); but this is also mentioned in most other commentaries and interpretations of this poem; you can also see the entries “euphrasia,” “euphrasy,” “eye-bright” in the *OED*. And esp. *DWB*: “*AUGENTROST*, m. *euphrasia*, eine den augen wolthuede, heilsame wiesenblume, sonst auch augendienst genannt, nnl. oogentroost, schw. ögontröst, dän. öientröst, altn. augnafrô (*augenrube*), ags. eágvyrt, engl. eyebright, wie mhd. der klee ougenbrehende heiszt und die euphrasia mit noch andern namen die tageleuchte, die weisze leuchte, der lichte tag, vgl. ags. dāges eāge (*tages auge*) *primula veris*, engl. *zusammengezogen in daisy*. schottisch sagt man ee o’ day (*auge des tags*) schön für mittag (JAMIESON 1, 350 und suppl. 1, 361). troesten aber wurde mhd. mehr gebraucht für wolthun in den augen :// [...] den gegensatz bildet der dorn im auge (s. Auge 7)” (Bd 1, Sp. 813). Let us follow the cross reference to “Auge”: “7) in den augen, in die augen. eine thräne im auge; thränen standen ihr im auge. GÖTTE 20, 34; [...] der stern im auge; der balken im auge; ormr i auga, wurm im auge, altn. beiname; ein dorn, ein stachel im auge: er ist mir ein rechter dorn im auge, sticht mich, thut mir weh im auge, ist mir unerträglich; er ist mir in den ougen nicht ein dorn (ich habe ihn sehr

*lieb*). MS. 1, 16b; [...]” (Bd. 1, Sp. 793). Ten years before they met, Celan would liked to have sent Heidegger his poem “Schliere im Aug” (*GW 1*, 159; cf. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger*, pp. 66, 95); but whether he did send it or not, is not known, I’m afraid.

<sup>35</sup> “Besetzbarkeit/Die Form – Leer<Hohl>form – des Gedichts, ist das auf das Gedicht wartende Herz des Dichters. –” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 504=777 [”ab 19.8.60”].)

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger*, p. 179. Franz Rosenzweig and his book *Der Stern der Erlösung* (1921) would seem to be the obvious direction to pursue.

<sup>37</sup> As Axel Gellhaus remarks, it would not necessarily have been indiscrete of Baumann to have mentioned Heidegger’s well-meaning wish to Celan or even to cite the letter (“... seit ein Gespräch wir sind ...,” p. 6). In a certain sense, this “drink from the well” also echoes a certain constantly flowing “rhetoric” of wells and sources in Heidegger (whose “rhetoricity” Heidegger would deny). See for instance the sentence Celan had underlined in “Wozu Dichter?” almost fifteen years earlier: “Schaffen bedeutet: schöpfen” (*La bibliothèque philosophique*, p. 364, no. 389; Heidegger, *Holzwege* [Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1950], p. 275). On the English expression “to drink the waters,” cf. e.g. *OED*, entry “drink, v. [1b]” (*The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, *OED Online*, 4 July 2007, <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50069929>>).

<sup>38</sup> That is, just a month after “May ’68.” When they discussed the Paris unrest, Heidegger spoke very approvingly of the student revolutionaries and their attempt to “br[eak] down ossified social and intellectual traditions and institutions in France,” and this must have struck Celan very positively. To use Lyon’s paraphrase of Otto Pöggeler’s account, “Celan claimed that conversations with the thinker helped him see this revolution in the proper perspective” (*Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger*, p. 205; cf. Pöggeler, *Der Stein hinterm Aug*, pp. 173–174).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Pöggeler, *Der Stein hinterm Aug*, p. 163; cf. also France-Lanord, pp. 122, 189.

<sup>40</sup> Gellhaus concludes his essay with this laconic remark: “Celan decided otherwise [*Celan entschied sich anders*].” But let us not make a symbolical *Blumensprache* out of all this dialectic or dialogue of waters and flowers. (I hope this “mixed metaphor” is not too sarcastic or morbid. Actually I find in the line “*Orchis und Orchis, einzeln*” to be an instance of Celanian humour, very delicate, profound, and dark.)

<sup>41</sup> Heidegger’s letter to Celan is dated January 30, 1968; it is cited and translated by James K. Lyon, in *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger*, p. 189.

<sup>42</sup> The verb *zuschweigen* is actually briefly listed in the Grimm dictionary, but only as a synonym to *zuhören*, which means just approximately attentive “listening to” (*DWB*, Bd. 32, Sp. 817). Derrida has told of the very few words he ever exchanged with Celan; actually they seem to have exchanged more books than

spoken words. But the dedications in these books confirmed their silent friendship, in spite of the long pauses which might have been interpreted in a rather negative way, and which indeed made Derrida anxious (“La langue n’appartient pas : Entretien avec Évelyne Grossman,” in *Europe*, vol. 79, no. 861–862 [Paul Celan] [Jan.–Feb. 2001], pp. 81–91, here pp 81–83; En. trans. Thomas Dutoit and Philippe Romanski, “Language is never owned,” in Derrida, *Sovereignities in Question. The Poetics of Paul Celan*, ed. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen [New York: Fordham U.P., 2005], pp. 97–107, here pp. 97ff). But cf. also “To Forgive”: “Must forgiveness pass through words or must it pass [beyond] words? [...] Can one only forgive or ask forgiveness when speaking or sharing the language of the other, that is to say, by already identifying sufficiently with the other for this, and, by identifying with the other, making forgiveness both possible and impossible? Must one refuse the experience of forgiveness to whoever does not speak? Or, on the contrary, must one make silence the very element of forgiveness, if there is such a thing?” (p. 47). A little later in the text, Derrida affirms that “one cannot deny this possibility, even this necessity of extra-verbal forgiveness” (p. 48).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. e.g. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 604, 612, 472/44; on *schweigen*, *anschwweigen* cf. Ms. 513: “*So Gedichte schreiben, daß sie wenn nicht auf unser Sprechen, so doch auf unser Schweigen, auf unser Mit-dem-Genannten-Mitschweigen gestimmt bleiben; so daß wir nur als Mitlaute ein fremdestes Du anschwweigen – und ihm eine Chance geben*” (Celan’s emphasis, here in roman type). The verb form *totzuschweigende* in the poem “Lichtenbergs Zwölf” (*TCA/Atemwende*, pp. 156–157), written in May 1965, is a construct which has nothing to do with *zuschweigen*, while the poem does seem to refer obliquely to Heidegger, too.

<sup>44</sup> A few lines later, before the final greeting (“*In freundschaftlichem Gedenken*”), Heidegger added: “And my wishes?/ That at the appropriate hour you will hear the language in which what is to come forth as poetry speaks to you [*Und meine Wünsche?/ Dass sie zur gegebenen Stunde die Sprache hören, in der sich Ihnen das zu Dichtende zusagt*]” (cit. and trans. Lyon, pp. 189–190). This happens to correspond rather faithfully to what Celan had written years earlier, in a letter to Werner Weber (March 26, 1960), concerning his translation of Valéry’s “Jeune Parque”: “it was, if I may let my words be accompanied by Martin Heidegger’s, a waiting for the speaking of language [*es war, wenn ich hier ein Wort Martin Heideggers mitsprechen lassen darf, ein Warten auf den Zuspruch der Sprache*]” (Celan’s letter has been cited by Axel Gellhaus in Gellhaus et al., *Fremde Nähe. Celan als Übersetzer* [Marbach: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 1997], p. 398. Cf. also Lyon, p. 78). It takes some bad faith to read Heidegger’s letter of thanks as nothing but a frustrating elusion, indicating feigned ignorance concerning the poet’s very distinct hope.

<sup>45</sup> “Radix, Matrix,” in *Die Niemandrose (GW 1, 239)*; trans. John Felstiner: “Who,/ who was it, that/ stock, that murdered one, that one/ standing black into heaven:/ rod and testis –?// (Root./ Root of Abraham. Root of Jesse. No One’s/ root – O/ ours” (*Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, p. 167). Trans. Michael Hamburger: “Who,/ who was it, that/ lineage, the murdered, that looms/ black into the sky:/ rod and bulb? [etc.]” (*Poems of Paul Celan*, p. 165).

<sup>46</sup> Werner Hamacher, “The Second of Inversion: Movements of a Figure through Celan’s Poetry,” trans. William D. Jewett, in *Yale French Studies*, No. 69 (1985): “The Lesson of Paul de Man,” pp. 276–311, here pp. 295ff.; original German version in Hamacher et al., *Paul Celan* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1988), pp. 81–126, here pp. 101ff.; cf. also Gellhaus, “... seit ein Gespräch wir sind ...,” p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Heidegger, “Wozu Dichter?” in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1950), p. 251; cit. Celan, *La bibliothèque philosophique*, p. 363, no. 377.

<sup>48</sup> *Schibboleth – pour Paul Celan* (Paris: Galilée, 1986), p. 96; En. trans. Joshua Wilner, revised by Thomas Dutoit, in Derrida, *Sovereignities in Question*, ed. Dutoit and Outi Pasanen (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), p. 53.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 33. Rodolphe Gasché sums up Heidegger’s view as follows: “For the *logos* is nothing like an abstract universal; it manifests itself always (*es gibt*) and only in an extreme singularity (*schärfster Vereinzelung*)” (“On the Nonadequate Trait,” trans. [from French] Leonard Lawlor, in *Of Minimal Things. Studies on the Notion of Relation* [Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1999], pp. 195–220, here p. 210).

<sup>50</sup> On the aporetic “logic of givingtaking,” and the apriorical necessities of being “forgiven the gift,” and not only the necessity of being forgiven “for not giving, for never giving enough,” as well as the fact that “one would even have to be forgiven forgiveness,” namely for the mastery and sovereignty implied by the power of granting forgiveness, cf. e.g. “To Forgive,” p. 22 (*Pardonner*, pp. 9–10). Cf. also “Hospitality,” in *Acts of Religion*, trans. Gil Andijar (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 358–420, here p. 386. Cf. also Amos Friedland, “Evil and Forgiveness: Transitions,” in *Perspectives on Evil and Human Wickedness* Vol. 1 No. 4 | 29 (2004; online at <[http://www.wickedness.net/ejv1n4/friedland\\_amos.pdf](http://www.wickedness.net/ejv1n4/friedland_amos.pdf)>; accessed Nov. 18, 2006), pp. 24–47.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *Donner la mort* (Paris: Galilée, 1999), pp. 182–183: “*Pardonne-moi de te pardonner, voilà une phrase qu’il est impossible de réduire au silence dans tout pardon, et d’abord parce qu’elle s’attribue coupablement une souveraineté.*” I wonder whether there is not an error in Derrida’s text: the feminine relative pronoun *elle* seems to refer to “une phrase,” namely to the sentence “*Pardonne-moi de te pardonner*,” although it would seem to apply, first of all at least, to “*tout pardon*,” “[*le*] *pardon*,” namely the initial act of forgiveness for which we must thus, implicitly or explicitly, ask for forgiveness. And of course, also the inverse is true (cf. p. 183).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Heidegger, “Wozu Dichter?,” in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1950), pp. 286–287; cit. Celan, *La bibliothèque philosophique*, p. 364, no. 394; Heidegger, *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1996 [1st ed. 1967]), pp. 333, 355–356, 358.

<sup>53</sup> Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Forgiveness*, p. 162: “Fortunately, nothing ever has the last word! Fortunately, the last word is always the penultimate word... so that the debate between forgiveness and the unforgivable will never have an end.”

<sup>54</sup> *TCA/Sprachgitter*, p. 91. Michael Hamburger’s translation: “Came, came./

Came a word, came,/ came through the night,/ wanted to shine, wanted to shine.// Ash./ Ash, ash./ Night./ Night-and-night. – Go/ to the eye, the moist one” (*Poems of Paul Celan* [2002], p. 119). Felstiner’s translation is almost identical, except for the plural “ashes” and the line “would glisten, would glisten” (*Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, p. 123).

<sup>55</sup> There is also the very important and remarkable *Feldweggespräch* dialogue in the book *Gelassenheit* (1960), which Celan also possessed, but seems to have purchased and read only as late as 1964 (cf. *La bibliothèque philosophique*, pp. 338, 355, no. 187). “Der Feldweg,” written in 1949, is reprinted in the 13th volume of Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe*, pp. 87–90. The word “*das »Kuinzige«*” (“*Dieses heitere Wissen ist das das »Kuinzige«*”) has been explained by the French translator André Préault as follows: “*Littéralement : « Ce gai savoir est das Kuinzige. » Ce terme dialectal, propre à la Souabe du Sud (où se trouve Messkirch, ville natale de Heidegger), correspond étymologiquement à keinnützig, « bon à rien », « propre à rien », dont le sens est passé à celui d’ « espiègle », « malicieux », et finalement désigne aujourd’hui un état de sérénité libre et joyeux, aimant à se dissimuler, marqué par une ironie affectueuse et par une touche de mélancolie : mélancolie souriante, sagesse qui ne se livre qu’à mots couverts. (Renseignements fournis par l’auteur)” (*Questions III et IV* [Paris: Gallimard, 1990]).*

<sup>56</sup> Gellhaus (“seit wir ein Gespräch sind...,” p. 8) cites Heidegger’s letter in response to Marcuse from Rüdiger Safranski, *Ein Meister aus Deutschland. Heidegger und seine Zeit* (München, 1994), pp. 483f. This letter has also been published in volume 16 of Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe* (pp. 430–431). Here is the paragraph in question: “*Ein Bekenntnis nach 1945 war mir unmöglich, weil die Nazianhänger in der widerlichsten Weise ihren Gesinnungswechsel bekundeten, ich aber mit ihnen nichts gemein hatte.*” An English translation, by Richard Wolin, of the Heidegger-Marcuse correspondence of 1947–1948, which scandalously distorts one of the sentences in this letter, has appeared in *New German Critique*, no. 53 (Spring/Summer 1991), pp. 28–32, here pp. 30–31. Wolin outrageously misconstrues the beginning of the following paragraph in Heidegger’s reply to Marcuse: “*Zu den schweren berechtigten Vorwürfen, die Sie aussprechen ‘über ein Regime, das Millionen von Juden umgebracht hat, das den Terror zum Normalzustand gemacht hat und alles, was ja wirklich mit dem Begriff Geist und Freiheit u. Wahrheit verbunden war, in sein Gegenteil verkehrt hat’, kann ich nur hinzufügen, daß statt Juden ‘Ostdeutsche’ zu stehen hat und dann genauso gilt für einen der Alliierten, mit dem Unterschied, daß alles, was seit 1945 geschieht, der Weltöffentlichkeit bekannt ist, während der blutige Terror der Nazis vor dem deutschen Volk tatsächlich geheimgehalten worden ist.*” The paragraph is problematic enough even without Wolin’s erroneous pseudotranslation, here signalled with italics: “To the *charges of dubious validity* that you express ‘about a regime that murdered millions of Jews, that made terror into an everyday phenomenon, and that turned everything that pertains to the ideas of spirit, freedom and truth into its bloody opposite,’ I can merely add that if instead of ‘Jews’ you had written ‘East Germans’ [i.e., Germans of the eastern territories], then the same holds true for one of the allies, with the difference that everything that has occurred since 1945 has become

public knowledge, while the bloody terror of the Nazis in point of fact had been kept a secret from the German people” (trans. Wolin). The original phrase “*Zu den schweren berechtigten Vorwürfen, [...]*” has nothing to do with the negationist innuendo that Wolin imposes upon Heidegger. Had the text read *schwerlich berechtigten*, or even *schwer berechtigten*, it could have been rendered as “of dubious validity,” but “*Zu den schweren berechtigten Vorwürfen, die Sie aussprechen [...]*” must be rendered altogether differently: “To the grave, justified accusations that you express [...]” Whatever one may think of Heidegger’s reply as a whole or in part, Wolin’s error is scandalous. It is in any case not a question of a “typographical error.” In a recent article also published in *NGC*, Robert Kaufman has corrected Wolin’s translation (“To the serious legitimate charges that you express [...]”), and diplomatically adds the following footnote: “Wolin, *Heidegger Controversy*, 163; Marcuse, *Technology, War, and Fascism*, 266 (where the text reads, apparently in typographical error, ‘To the charges of dubious validity that you express...’)” (“Poetry’s Ethics? Theodor W. Adorno and Robert Duncan on Aesthetic Illusion and Sociopolitical Delusion,” in the *New German Critique*, Vol. 33, No. 1, Winter 2006, pp. 73–118, here pp. 84–85). Wolin himself sent me an electronic mail, after I had contacted *NGC*, and explained the “translation error” by the fact that he had commissioned the translation from some “graduate student” and “must have missed this point in reviewing his work” (personal e-mail from Richard Wolin, December 6, 2006).

<sup>57</sup> *TCA/Sprachgitter*, p. 5. Trans. John Felstiner: “Jacob’s voice./ The tears./ The tears in a brother’s eye./ One stayed clinging, grew./ We dwell inside./ Breathe, that/ it come loose” (*Selected Poems and Prose*, p. 91).

<sup>58</sup> Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim: The Early Masters*, trans. Olga Marx [New York: Schocken Books, 1968], pp. 185–186. The citation *in extenso* reads as follows in the original German: “*Es heißt [Sohar II, 12], ‘die Erlösung komme nicht, ehe die Tränen Esaus Versiegt sind’. Flehen doch die Kinder Israels Tag und Nacht um Erbarmen – sollen ihre Tränen umsonst geweint sein, solange auch die Kinder Esaus weinen? Aber die Tränen Esaus, damit sind nicht die Tränen gemeint, die die Völker weinen und ihr nicht weint, sondern das sind die Tränen, die ihr allesamt, ihr Menschen, weint, wenn ihr etwas für euch begehrt und darum bittet. Und wahrlich, Messias, Sohn Davids, kommt nicht, ehe diese Tränen versiegt sind und ihr weinet, weil die Schechina verbannt ist und daß ihre Erlösung geschehe*” (*Die Erzählungen der Chassidim*, 11th ed. [Zürich: Manesse, 1990], p. 307).

<sup>59</sup> Trans. John Felstiner, in *Selected Poems and Prose*, p. 405; *GW* 3, 192; *TCA-Meridian*, “Endfassung,” section 18c.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Derrida’s *Schibboleth* on this theme of “the date.”