
The Lyric Theory Reader

A Critical Anthology

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398 the other. "Poetically man dwells." Do we dwell poetically? Presumably we dwell altogether unpoetically. If that is so, does it give the lie to the poet's words; are they untrue? No. The truth of his utterance is confirmed in the most unearthly way. For dwelling can be unpoetic only because it is in essence poetic. For a man to be blind, he must remain a being by nature endowed with sight. A piece of wood can never go blind. But when man goes blind, there always remains the question whether his blindness derives from some defect and loss or lies in an abundance and excess. In the same poem that meditates on the measure for all measuring, Hölderlin says (lines 75-76): "King Oedipus has perhaps one eye too many." Thus it might be that our unpoetic dwelling, its incapacity to take the measure, derives from a curious excess of frantic measuring and calculating.

That we dwell unpoetically, and in what way, we can in any case learn only if we know the poetic. Whether, and when, we may come to a turning point in our unpoetic dwelling is something we may expect to happen only if we remain heedful of the poetic. How and to what extent our doings can share in this turn we alone can prove, if we take the poetic seriously.

The poetic is the basic capacity for human dwelling. But man is capable of poetry at any time only to the degree to which his being is appropriate to that which itself has a liking for man and therefore needs his presence. Poetry is authentic or inauthentic according to the degree of this appropriation.

That is why authentic poetry does not come to light appropriately in every period. When and for how long does authentic poetry exist? Hölderlin gives the answer in verses 26-69, already cited. Their explication has been purposely deferred until now. The verses run:

... As long as Kindness,
The Pure, still stays with his heart, man
Not unhappily measures himself
Against the Godhead...

"Kindness"—what is it? A harmless word, but described by Hölderlin with the capitalized epithet "the Pure." "Kindness"—this word, if we take it literally, is Hölderlin's magnificent translation for the Greek word *charis*. In his *Ajax*, Sophocles says of *charis* (verse 522):

Charis charin gar estin he tiktous aei
For kindness it is, that ever calls forth kindness.

"As long as Kindness, the Pure, still stays with his heart..." Hölderlin says in an idiom he liked to use: "with his heart," not "in his heart." That is, it has come to the dwelling being of man, come as the claim and appeal of the measure to the heart in such a way that the heart turns to give heed to the measure.

As long as this arrival of kindness endures, so long does man succeed in measuring himself not unhappily against the godhead. When this measuring appropriately comes to light, man creates poetry from the very nature of the poetic. When the poetic appropriately comes to light, then man dwells humanly on this earth, and then—as Hölderlin says in his last poem—"the life of man" is a "dwelling life" (Stuttgart edition, 2, 1, p. 312).

VISTA

When far the dwelling life of man into the distance goes,
Where, in that far distance, the grapevine's season glows,
There too are summer's fields, emptied of their growing,

And forest looms, its image darkly showing.
That Nature paints the seasons so complete,
That she abides, but they glide by so fleet,
Comes of perfection; then heaven's radiant height
Crowns man, as blossoms crown the trees, with light.

NOTES

1. Martin Heidegger wrote "... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch" (1951) on the occasion of the death of a German musician, and the essay was published in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: G. Neske, 1954).

2. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Friedrich Hölderlins Sämtliche Werke*, Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe, ed. Friedrich Beißner (works) and Adolf Beck (letters and documents), 8 vols. in 16 parts (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1943-85), 2, 372ff.

Poetry as Experience: Two Poems by Paul Celan (1968; trans. 1999)

7.2

PHILIPPE LACOUÉ-LABARTHE Translated by Andrea Tarnowski

Expand art? No. But accompany art into your own unique place of no escape. And set yourself free.

"The Meridian"¹

Here are two poems by Paul Celan:

TÜBINGEN, JÄNNER

Zur Blindheit über-
redete Augen.
Ihre—"ein
Rätsel ist Rein-
entsprungenes"—, ihre
Erinnerung an
schwimmende Hölderlintürme, möwen-
umschwirrt.

Besuche ertrunkener Schreiner bei
diesen
tauchenden Worten:

Käme,
käme ein Mensch,
käme ein Mensch zur Welt, heute, mit
dem Lichtbart der

Patriarchen: er dürfte,
sprach er von dieser
Zeit, er
dürfte
nur lallen und lallen,
immer-, immer-
zuzu.

("Pallaksch. Pallaksch.")

TÜBINGEN, JANUARY

Eyes talked into
blindness.
Their—"an enigma is
the purely
originated"—, their
memory of
Hölderlin towers afloat, circled
by whirring gulls.

Visits of drowned joiners to
these
submerging words:

Should,
should a man,
should a man come into the world, today, with
the shining beard of the
patriarchs: he could,
if he spoke of this
time, he
could
only babble and babble
over, over
againagain.

("Pallaksh. Pallaksh.")²

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.

TODTNAUBERG

Arnica, eyebright, the
draft from the well with the
starred 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 wretched
tracks through the high moors,

dampness,
much.³

These two poems are well known; each of them has been translated into French at least twice. The first, which is part of the *Niemandrose* collection (1963), was initially translated by André du Bouchet (appearing in *L'Ephémère* 7, and then in *Strette*, published by Mercure de France in 1971) before figuring in the complete edition of *La rose de personne*, edited by Martine Broda (Le Nouveau Commerce, 1979). The second, issued on its own in 1968 and then republished in *Lichtzwang* in July 1970, two or three months after Celan's death, was translated by Jean Daive as early as 1970, and then, several years later, by André du Bouchet (*Poèmes de Paul Celan*, Clivages, 1978). Other published versions of these poems may exist.⁴

It is obvious that the titles of both are places: Tübingen, Todtnauberg. The poems seem, in each case, to commemorate a visit. But it is also obvious that these place names can additionally, even primarily, be names of people. Whatever trope we use, the indications, the quotations, the allusions are all perfectly clear; and in any case, we already know that Tübingen is Hölderlin, and Todtnauberg, Heidegger. I don't imagine it would be very useful to stress the reasons that prompt us today (*heute*: each poem includes the word) to associate the two poems. For everyone who is, as we say, "concerned about our times" and "mindful of history" (European history), the two names, Hölderlin and Heidegger, are now indissolubly linked. They give voice to what is at stake in our era (*dieser Zeit*). A world age—perhaps the world's old age—is approaching its end, for we are reaching a completion, closing the circle of what the philosophical West has called, since Grecian times and in multiple ways, "knowledge." That is, *technè*. What has not been deployed, what has been forgotten or rejected in the midst of this completion—and no doubt from the very beginning—must now clear itself a path to a possible future. Let us agree to say that this pertains, as Heidegger says himself, to the "task of thought." Such thought must re-inaugurate history, reopen the possibility of a world, and pave the way for the improbable, unforeseeable advent of a god. Only this might "save" us. For this task, art (again, *technè*), and in art, poetry, are perhaps able to provide some signs. At least, that is the hope, fragile, tenuous, and meager as it is.

While it may not be useful to stress, it is no doubt helpful at least to remark the following:

1. Such thinking, the thinking of History, is essentially German. It is not exclusively so, but since the end of the eighteenth century, Germans have brought it a dimension never attained before or elsewhere; one reason for this, among others, is that the question of the relation between Modern and Ancient, and of the possibility of uniqueness or identity for a whole people, has never been so much a *question* as it has been in Germany. That is, first and foremost, a question for the "nation"—the people—and in the language, a latecomer to the world after the sumptuous, "renascent" display of European Latinity. German has never ceased aspiring, on pretense of its strange similarity to Greek (the "language of origin"), to the unique relation it has believed it could establish to everything most authentically Greek about Greece.

2. Paul Celan (Ansel) was born in Czernowitz, Bukovina, of German Jewish parents. Whatever the fate of Bukovina in the years that marked the end of Celan's adolescence (he was born in 1920)—it was, successively, annexed by the U.S.S.R. in 1940, occupied by Germany and Romania in 1941, and reconquered by the Red Army in 1943—Celan was not just at the extreme fringes of *Mittleuropa*; he was of German birth, born into that language. In a true and understandably forgotten sense, his *nationality* was German. This did not in any way preclude his having a completely dif-

ferent origin, or to be more precise, a completely different heritage. Thus, his language always remained that of the Other, an Other language without an "other language," previously rather than laterally acquired, against which to measure itself. All other languages were necessarily lateral for Celan; he was a great translator.

3. Paul Celan knew, as everything he wrote attests (and first and foremost, his acceptance of German as his working language), that today (*heute*) it is with Germany that we must clarify things.⁵ Not only because Celan suffered as the victim of Germany's "Hellenic," "Hyperborean" utopia, but because he knew it was impossible to elude the question that the utopia's atrocity had transformed into an answer, a "solution." He embodied an extreme, eternally insoluble paradox in Germany as one of the few people, almost the only person, to have borne witness to the truth of the question that remains, as ever: (But) who are we (still, today, *heute*)?

4. The extermination gave rise, in its impossible possibility, in its immense and intolerable banality, to the post-Auschwitz era (in Adorno's sense). Celan said: "Death is a master who comes from Germany."⁶ It is the impossible possibility, the immense and intolerable banality of our time, of this time (*dieser Zeit*). It is always easy to mock "distress," but we are its contemporaries; we are at the endpoint of what *Nous*, *ratio* and *Logos*, still today (*heute*) the framework for what we are, cannot have failed to show: that murder is the first thing to count on, and elimination the surest means of identification. Today, everywhere, against this black but "enlightened" background, remaining reality is disappearing in the mire of a "globalized" world. Nothing, not even the most obvious phenomena, not even the purest, most wrenching love, can escape this era's shadow: a cancer of the subject, whether in the *ego* or in the masses. To deny this on pretext of avoiding the pull of pathos is to behave like a sleepwalker. To transform it into pathos, so as to be able "still" to produce art (sentiment, etc.), is unacceptable.

I want to ask the most brutal question possible, at the risk of being obnoxious: Was Celan able to situate not himself, but *us vis-à-vis* "it"? Was poetry still able to? If so, which poetry, and what, in fact, of poetry? Mine is a distant way (distant now by many degrees, heavily layered over the very man who first asked) of repeating Hölderlin's questions: *Wozu Dichter?* What for, indeed?

Here is how the two poems I believe carry all the weight of this question have been translated into French:

TÜBINGEN, JANVIER

(TR. ANDRÉ DU BOUCHET)

A cécité même
mues, pupilles.
Leur—'énigme cela,
qui est pur
jaillissement'—, leur
mémoire de
tours Hölderlin nageant, d'un battement de mouettes
serties.

Visites de menuisiers engloutis par
telles
paroles plongeant:

S'il venait,
venait un homme,
homme venait au monde, aujourd'hui avec
clarté et barbe des
patriarches: il lui faudrait,
dût-il parler de telle
époque, il lui faudrait
babiller uniquement, babiller
toujours et toujours ba-
biller iller.

("Pallaksch. Pallaksch.")

(TR. MARTINE BRODA)

Des yeux sous les paroles
aveuglés.
Leur—"énigme
ce qui naît
de source pur"—, leur
souvenir de
tours Hölderlin nageant, tournoyées
de mouettes.

Visites de menuisiers noyés
à ces
mots qui plongent:

S'il venait,
venait un homme,
venait un homme au monde, aujourd'hui, avec
la barbe de clarté
des patriarches: il devrait,
s'il parlait de ce
temps, il
devrait
bégayer seulement, bégayer
toutoutoujours
bégayer.

("Pallaksch. Pallaksch.")

TODTNAUBERG

(TR. JEAN DAIVE)

Arnika, centaurée, la
boisson du puits avec, au-dessus,
l'astre-dé,

dans le
refuge,

écrite dans le livre
(quel nom portait-il
avant le mien?),
écrite dans ce livre
la ligne,
aujourd'hui, d'une attente:
de qui pense
parole à venir
au coeur,

de la mousse des bois, non aplanie,
orchis et orchis, clairsemé,

de la verdure, plus tard, en voyage,
distincte,

qui nous conduit, l'homme,
qui, à cela, tend l'oreille,

les chemins
de rondins à demi
parcourus dans la fange,

de l'humide,
très.

(TR. ANDRÉ DU BOUCHET)

Arnika, luminet, cette
gorgée du puits au
cube étoilé plus haut du dé,

dans la
hutte,

là, dans un livre
—les noms, de qui, relevés
avant le mien?—

là, dans un livre,
lignes qui inscrivent
une attente, aujourd'hui,
de qui méditera (à
venir, in-
cessamment venir)

un mot
du coeur
humus des bois, jamais aplani,

orchis, orchis,
unique,

chose crue, plus tard, chemin faisant,
claire,

qui nous voitura,
l'homme,
lui-même à son écoute,

à moitié
frayé le layon de rondins
là-haut dans le marais,

humide,
oui.

(At the end of André du Bouchet's slim volume, we read the following note: "'Todtnau-berg' was translated using the initial version of the poem, dated 'Frankfurt am Main, 2 August 1967.' From a word-for-word translation suggested by Paul Celan, I have kept the French 'qui nous voitura' for 'der uns fährt.' A.d.B.")

I am not juxtaposing these translations here in order to compare or comment on them. It is not my intention to "critique" them. At most, I think it necessary to remark that what we might call the "Mallarméan" style of André du Bouchet's translations, their effete or precious quality, does not do justice to the lapidary hardness, the abruptness of language as handled by Celan. Or rather, the language that held him, ran through him. Especially in his late work, prosody and syntax do violence to language: they chop, dislocate, truncate or cut it. Something in this certainly bears comparison to what occurs in Hölderlin's last, "paratactic" efforts, as Adorno calls them: condensation and juxtaposition, a strangling of language. But no lexical "refinement," or very little; even when he opts for a sort of "surreal" handling of metaphor or "image," he does not depart from essentially simple, naked language. For example, the "such" (*telle*) used twice as a demonstrative in the "Mallarméan" translation of "Tübingen, January" is a turn of phrase totally foreign to Celan's style. Even more so the "A cécité même / mue, pupilles" ("To blindness itself / moved, pupils") that begins the same poem in what is indeed the most obscure way possible. But I do not wish to reopen the polemic initiated a decade or so ago by Meschonnic.⁷

No, though I recall these translations, and though I will even, in turn, try my hand at translating, I do not wish to play at comparison—a game of limited interest. Nor do I cite them as an obligatory preamble to commentary. I give the translations only so we can see where we stand. I believe these poems to be completely untranslatable, including within their own language, and indeed, for this reason, invulnerable to commentary. They necessarily escape interpretation; they forbid it. One could even say they are written to forbid it. This is why the sole question carrying them, as it carried all Celan's poetry, is that of meaning, the possibility of meaning. A transcendental question, one might say, which does to some extent inscribe Celan in Hölderlin's lineage or wake: that of "poetry's poetry" (without, of course, the least concession to any sort of "formalism"). And a question that inevitably takes away, as Heidegger found with both Hölderlin and Trakl, all forms of hermeneutic power, even at one remove: for example, envisioning a "hermeneutics of hermeneutics." For in any case, sooner or later one finds oneself back at "wanting to say nothing," which exceeds (or falls short of) all "wanting to say," all intention of signifying, since it is always caught in advance in an archetypal double bind of the "Don't read me" sort; in this instance, something like, "Don't believe in meaning anymore." Since Rimbaud's time, let's say, this has always amounted to saying "Believe

me, don't believe in meaning anymore," which at once raises and demotes, pathetically, risibly, or fraudulently, the "I" that thus projects itself to (and from) the function of incarnating meaning.

The question I ask myself is indeed that of the subject, that cancer of the subject, both the ego's and the masses'. But it is first the question of whoever today (*heute*) might speak a language other than the subject's, and attest or respond to the unprecedented ignominy that the "age of the subject" rendered itself—and remains—guilty of. At least since Schlegel and Hegel, it is also, indissociably, the question of the lyric: is lyric a "subjective" genre? In sum, it is the question of the banished singularity of the subject or, what amounts to the same thing, the question of idiom, of "pure idiom," if that can exist. Is it possible, and necessary, to wrench oneself out of the language of the age? To say what? Or rather, to speak what?

Such a question, as you perceive—and here I am barely shifting angles—is not different from that of the relation between "poetry and thought," *Dichten und Denken*, a question indeed specifically asked in German. What is a work of poetry that, forswearing the repetition of the disastrous, deadly, already-said, makes itself absolutely singular? What should we think of poetry (or what of thought is left in poetry) that must refuse, sometimes with great stubbornness, to signify? Or, simply, what is a poem whose "coding" is such that it foils in advance all attempts to decipher it?

I have been asking myself this question, which I grant is naïve, for a long time, and especially since reading Peter Szondi's analysis of "Du liegst . . .,"⁸ the poem on Berlin written in 1967 and published in *Schneepart* in 1971; it is, along with two essays by Blanchot and by Lévinas published in the *Revue des belles lettres* ("Le dernier à parler" and "De l'être à l'autre"), among the very few illuminating commentaries on Celan. But whereas Blanchot's and Lévinas's readings remain "gnomic," to recall Adorno's objection to Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin¹⁰—that is, they found their arguments on phrases lifted from Celan's poems (his verse contains many such isolatable bits, as does all "thinking poetry")—Szondi's analysis is to my knowledge the only one¹¹ to completely decipher a poem, down to its most resistant opacities, because it is the only one to know what "material" gave rise to the work: the circumstances remembered, the places traveled to, the words exchanged, the sights glimpsed or contemplated, and so on. Szondi scouts out the least allusion, the slightest evocation. The result is a translation in which almost nothing is left over; *almost*, because we must still explain, beyond Szondi's delight at having been present in the right place at the right time, a poetry based on the exploitation of such "singularity," and thus (i.e., in this respect) forever inaccessible to those who did not initially witness what the poetry transformed into a very laconic "story" or a very allusive "evocation."

The question that I have called that of idiom is therefore more exactly that of singularity. We must avoid confusing this with another, relatively secondary or derivative question, that of the "readable" and the "unreadable." My question asks not just about the "text," but about the singular *experience* coming into writing; it asks if, being singular, experience can be written, or if from the moment of writing its very singularity is not forever lost and borne away in one way or another, at origin or en route to destination, by the very fact of language. This could be due to language's impossible intransitivity, or to the desire for meaning, for universality, that animates voices divided by the constraint of a language that is itself, in turn, only one of many. Is there, can there be, a singular experience? A silent experience, absolutely untouched by language, unprompted by even the most slightly articulated discourse? If, impossibly, we can say "yes," if singularity exists or subsists despite all odds (and beyond all empirical considerations, the presence of a witness such as Peter Szondi, for example, or of someone else who knows), can language possibly take on its burden? And would idiom suffice for the purpose—idiom of course different

from the facile "crypting" or refusal to reveal one's point so terribly endemic to the "modern"? These questions pose neither the problem of solipsism nor that of autism, but very probably that of solitude, which Celan experienced to what we must justly call the utmost degree.

I reread "Tübingen, January" (a poem with an old-fashioned date, *Jänner* for *Januar* as if in allusion to Hölderlin's disconcerting manner of dating poems during his "mad" period); I reread it as I read it, as I understand it, as I thus cannot but translate it. This effort is partly unnecessary because of Martine Broda's beautiful French translation, which to my mind can hardly be improved upon, and from which I will at least borrow the unsurpassable phrase "wheeled with gulls" ("tour- / noyées de mouettes").¹² But I cannot help translating here. So I return, with emendations, to a rendering I attempted a few years ago while working on Hölderlin:

TÜBINGEN, JANVIER

Sous un flot d'éloquence
aveuglés, les yeux.

Leur—"une
énigme est le
pur jailli"—, leur
mémoire de
tours Hölderlin nageant, tour-
noyées de mouettes.

Visites de menuisiers submergés sous
ces
paroles plongeant:

Viendrait,
viendrait un homme
viendrait un homme au monde, aujourd'hui, avec
la barbe de lumière des Patriarches: il n'aurait,
parlerait-il de ce
temps, il
n'aurait
qu'à bégayer, bégayer
sans sans
sans cesse.

("Pallaksh. Pallaksh.")

TÜBINGEN, JANVIER

Beneath a flow of eloquence
blinded, the eyes.

Their—"an
enigma is the
pure sprung forth"—, their
memory of
Hölderlin towers swimming,
wheeled with gulls.

Joiners' visits submerged beneath
these
diving words:

If there came
if there came a man
if there came a man into the world today, with
the beard of light of the
Patriarchs; he would need only,
if he spoke of this
time, he would need only
to stutter, stutter
,without, without
without cease.

("Pallaksh. Pallaksh.")¹³

What these few, barely phrased phrases say, in their extenuated, infirm discourse, stuttering on the edge of silence or the incomprehensible (gibberish, idiomatic language: "Pallaksh"), is not a "story"; they do not recount anything, and most certainly not a visit to the *Hölderlinturm* in Tübingen. They undoubtedly mean something; a "message," as it were, is delivered. They present, in any case, an intelligible utterance: if a man, a Jewish man—a Sage, a Prophet, or one of the Righteous, "with/the beard of light of/the Patriarchs,"—wanted today to speak forth about the age as Hölderlin did in his time, he would be condemned to stammer, in the manner, let us say, of Beckett's "metaphysical tramps." He would sink into aphasia (or "pure idiom"), as we are told Hölderlin did; in any case, Hölderlin's "madness" came to define the aphasic myth:

MNEMOSYNE (II)

Ein Zeichen sind wir, deutungslos
Schmerzlos sind wir und haben fast
Die Sprache in der Fremde verloren.¹⁴

A sign we are, meaningless
Painless we are and have nearly
Lost our language in foreign places.

More precisely, we might say that to speak the age, it would be enough for such a man to stammer-stutter; the age belongs to stammering, to stuttering. Or rather, stuttering is the only "language" of the age. The end of meaning—hiccuping, halting.

Yet this message comes second in the poem; it is a little like the "lesson" or the "moral" of a classic fable; its presence makes explicit, within though slightly detached from the poem (see the colon at the end of the second stanza), what the poem says before—what it says *as* a poem. It is a translation. The idiomatic poem contains its own translation, which is a justification of the idiomatic. Or at least, we can formulate it this way; the problem then becomes knowing *what* it explicitly translates.

I propose to call what it translates "experience," provided that we both understand the word in its strict sense—the Latin *ex-periri*, a crossing through danger—and especially that we avoid associating it with what is "lived," the stuff of anecdotes. *Erfahrung*, then, rather than *Erlebnis*.¹⁵ I say "experience" because what the poem "springs forth" from here—the memory of bedazzlement, which is also the pure dizziness of memory—is

precisely that which did not take place, did not happen or occur during the singular event that the poem relates to without relating: the visit, after so many others since the joiner Zimmer's time, to the tower on the Neckar where Hölderlin lived without living for the last thirty-six years of his life—half of his life. A visit in memory of that experience, which is also in the non-form of pure non-event.

I shall try to explain. What the poem indicates and shows, what it moves toward, is its source. A poem is always "en route," "underway," as "The Meridian" recalls.¹⁶ The path the poem seeks to open up here is that of its own source. And making its way thus to its own source, it seeks to reach the general source of poetry. It says, then, or tries to say, the "springing forth" of the poem in its possibility, that is, in its "enigma." "An enigma is the pure sprung forth;"¹⁷ so speaks the first verse to the fourth stanza of the hymn "The Rhine," which in a way is the source here. Hölderlin adds: "Even / The song may hardly reveal it." But if the poem says or tries to say the source in this manner, it says it as inaccessible, or in any case unrevealed "even [by] the song," because in place of the source, and in a way which is itself enigmatic, there is dizziness, the instant of blindness or bedazzlement before the sparkling waters of the Neckar, the fragmenting glitter, the image of the visitors swallowed up. Or because there is also the stark reminder that precisely *in this place*, it was revealed to so many visitors that the source (of the poem, the song) had dried up. And that previously it had indeed been an enigma that sprang forth.

Dizziness can come upon one; it does not simply occur. Or rather, in it, nothing occurs. It is the pure suspension of occurrence: a caesura or a syncope. This is what "drawing a blank" means. What is suspended, arrested, tipping suddenly into strangeness, is the presence of the present (the being-present of the present). And what then occurs without occurring (for it is by definition what cannot occur) is—without being—nothingness, the "nothing of being" (*ne-ens*). Dizziness is an *experience* of nothingness, of what is, as Heidegger says, "properly" non-occurrence, nothingness. Nothing in it is "lived," as in all experience, because all experience is the experience of nothingness: the experience of dizziness here, as much as the anguish Heidegger describes, or as much as laughter in Bataille. Or the lightning recognition of love. As much as all the infinitely paradoxical, "impossible" experiences of death, of disappearance in the present. How poignant and difficult to think that Celan chose his own death (the most finite infinite choice), throwing himself into the waters of the Seine.

To say this again in another way: there is no "poetic experience" in the sense of a "lived moment" or a poetic "state." If such a thing exists, or thinks it does—for after all it is the power, or impotence, of literature to believe and make others believe this—it cannot give rise to a poem. To a story, yes, or to discourse, whether in verse or prose. To "literature," perhaps, at least in the sense we understand it today. But not to a poem. A poem has nothing to recount, nothing to say; what it recounts and says is that from which it wrenches away as a poem. If we speak of "poetic emotion," we must think of its cognate *émoi*,¹⁸ whose etymology indicates the absence or deprivation of strength. "A une passante" is not the nostalgic story of an encounter, but the entreaty that arises from collapse, the pure echo of such an *émoi*, a song or a prayer. Benjamin hardly dared say, though he knew perfectly well, that this is perhaps (and I stress the "perhaps") what Proust did not understand in understanding Baudelaire, and probably also what the overly nostalgic Baudelaire sometimes did not understand in understanding himself (though he did write the prose poems, which redeem all).¹⁹

But the poem's "wanting-not-to-say" does not *want* not to say. A poem wants to say; indeed, it is nothing but pure wanting-to-say. But pure wanting-to-say nothing, nothingness, that against which and through which there is presence, what is. And because nothingness is inaccessible to wanting, the poem's wanting collapses as such (a poem is always

involuntary, like anguish, love, and even self-chosen death); then *nothing* lets itself be said, the thing itself, and lets itself be said in and by the man who goes to it despite himself, receives it as what cannot be received, and submits to it. He accepts it, trembling that it should refuse; such a strange, fleeting, elusive "being" as the meaning of what is.

In the end, if there is no such thing as "poetic experience" it is simply because experience marks the absence of what is "lived." This is why, strictly speaking, we can talk of a poetic *existence*, assuming existence is what at times puts holes in life, rending it to put us beside ourselves. It is also why, given that existence is furtive and discontinuous, poems are rare and necessarily brief, even when they expand to try to stay the loss or deny the evanescence of what compelled them into being. Further, this is why there is nothing necessarily grandiose about the poetic, and why it is generally wrong to confuse poetry with celebration; one can find, in the most extreme triviality, in insignificance, perhaps even in frivolity (where Mallarmé occasionally lost himself), pure, never-pure strangeness: the *gift of nothing* or *present of nothing* comparable to the little token one describes, saying: "It's nothing." Indeed, it is never nothing, it is *nothing*; it can as well be pitiable or totally without grandeur, terrifying or overwhelmingly joyous.

We are told that when Hölderlin went "mad," he constantly repeated, "Nothing is happening to me, nothing is happening to me."

The dizziness of existence is what the poem "Tübingen, January" says. It says it inasmuch as it says *itself* as a poem, inasmuch as it says what arose from, or remains of, the non-occurred in the singular event it commemorates. "In-occurrence" is what wrenches the event from its singularity, so that at the height of singularity, singularity itself vanishes and saying suddenly appears—the poem is possible. *Singbarer Rest*: a singable remainder, as Celan says elsewhere.²⁰

This is why the poem commemorates. Its experience is an experience of memory. The poem speaks of *Erinnerung*, but also secretly calls upon the *Andenken* of Hölderlin's poem on Bordeaux, and the *Gedächtnis* where Hölderlin found Mnemosyne's resonance. The poem was not born in the moment of the *Hölderlinturm* visit. Properly speaking, it was not born in any moment. Not only because dizziness or bedazzlement by definition never constitutes a moment, but because what brings on the dizziness and recalls the waters of the Neckar is not those waters, but another river: the Hölderlinian river itself. A double meaning here: first the river, or rivers, that Hölderlin sings (the Rhine, the Ister, the source of the Danube, etc.), and then the river of Hölderlin's poetry. Or, as I've said, the "flood of eloquence."

In "Tübingen, January," the eyes are not in fact blinded; no bedazzlement takes place. They are *zur Blindheit überredete*, persuaded to blindness. But to translate *überreden* by "persuade," or "convince," does not convey the full sense of *über* and all it contains as a signifier of overflow. To be *überredet*—I take this on Michel Deutsch's authority—is simply "to be taken in," "run circles around," overwhelmed by a tide of eloquence. Less "taken for a ride" than "submerged," "drowned," or, most accurately, "to be had." The eyes—the eyes that see Hölderlin's tower, the waters of the Neckar, the wheeling gulls—are blinded by a flood of words or eloquence; the eyes are taken in, and the memory of the river poem "The Rhine" recalls and calls forth the memory of the dizziness, the engulfing bedazzlement: that is, as with all "involuntary memory," the memory of "what was neither purposely nor consciously 'lived' by the subject," as Benjamin perfectly demonstrated for Baudelaire using Freud's argument against Bergson.²¹ Thus dizziness here indicates the in-occurrence of which memory—and not merely recollection—is the paradoxical restitution. The dizziness is memory because all real memory is vertiginous, offering the very

atopia of existence, what takes place without taking place; giving a gift that forces the poem into thanking, into ecstasy. This is why the poem is obliged into thought: "To think and thank," says the Bremen speech, "*denken und danken*, have the same root in our language. If we follow it to *gedenken*, *eingedenk sein*, *Andenken* and *Andacht* we enter the semantic fields of memory and devotion."²²

Thus, "Tübingen, January" does not say any state of the psyche, any lived experience of the subject, any *Erlebnis*. Nor is it—this follows logically—a celebration of Hölderlin (it comes closer to saying how Hölderlin disappoints). It is definitely *not* a "sentimental" poem, whether in Schiller's or the common sense. The poem says "drowning" in Hölderlin's verse. It says it as its "possibility," a possibility infinitely and interminably paradoxical, because it is the possibility of the poem inasmuch as, possible-impossible, it says, if not the pure impossibility, then at least the scant possibility of poetry.

[...]

The time of distress is the time—now our history—of what Hölderlin also called pain (both *Schmerz* and *Leiden*), the word that runs through both "In Lovely Blueness" and modern lyricism, from Baudelaire to Trakl and Mandelstam. Pain, which is not exactly suffering, affects and touches man's "heart"; it is what is most intimate in him; the extreme interior where, in his almost absolute singularity (his ab-soluteness), man—and not the subject—is pure waiting-for-an-other; he is hope of a dialogue, of a way out of solitude. I again cite "The Meridian":

But I think—... I think that it has always belonged to the expectations of the poem in precisely this manner to speak in the cause of the strange—no, I can no longer use this word—in precisely this manner to speak in the cause of an Other—who knows, perhaps in the cause of a wholly Other.

This "who knows," at which I see I have arrived, is the only thing I can add—on my own, here, today—to the old expectations.

Perhaps, I must now say to myself—and at this point I am making use of a well-known term—perhaps it is now possible to conceive a meeting of this "wholly Other" and an "other" which is not far removed, which is very near.

The poem tarries, stops to catch a scent—like a creature when confronted with such thoughts.

No one can say how long the pause in breath—the thought and the stopping to catch the scent—will last....

The poem is alone. It is alone and underway. Whoever writes it must remain in its company.

But doesn't the poem, for precisely that reason, at this point participate in an encounter—in the mystery of an encounter?

The poem wants to reach the Other, it needs the Other, it needs a vis à vis. It searches it out and addresses it....

It becomes dialogue—it is often despairing dialogue.²³

From that place, that solitude—pain—Celan speaks. It is the same solitude and pain that Hölderlin felt in the end, when he had succumbed to the excess of eloquence and been

submerged, reduced to silence, by sacred pathos. "Tübingen, January" is a poem to this pain and solitude because it is the poem of this pain and of this solitude; that of always being thrown back from the dialogue one had thought possible and then, in withdrawal, "huddling," as Heidegger says of Hölderlin, no longer able to speak; stuttering, swallowed up in idiom. Or falling silent. In a world with nothing and *no one* to authorize or even "guarantee" the least dialogue, the slightest relation to one another, however or whoever he may be, how to wrench away from aphasia, from silence? The poem, says Celan, once again in "The Meridian," "today... shows a strong inclination towards falling silent.... It takes its position... at the edge of itself; in order to be able to exist, it without interruption calls and fetches itself from its now-no-longer back into its as-always."²⁴

The question of poetry's possibility—and Celan never asked another—is the question of the possibility of such a wrenching. The question of the possibility of *going out of the self*. This also means, as "The Meridian" again recalls, going "outside the human," in the sense, for example, (but is this still just *one* example?) that the (finite) transcendence of *Dasein* in the experience of nothingness, in ek-sistence, is a going outside the human: "Here we have stepped beyond human nature, gone outwards, and entered a mysterious realm, yet one turned towards that which is human."²⁵

It would be an understatement to say Celan had read Heidegger. Celan's poetry goes beyond even an unreserved recognition of Heidegger; I think one can assert that it is, in its entirety, a dialogue with Heidegger's thought. And essentially with the part of this thought that was a dialogue with Hölderlin's poetry. Without Heidegger's commentary on Hölderlin, "Tübingen, January" would have been impossible; such a poem could simply never have been written. And it would certainly remain incomprehensible if one did not detect in it a *response* to this commentary. Indeed, the dizziness on the edge of Hölderlinian pathos is just as much dizziness vis-à-vis its amplification by Heidegger; vis-à-vis the *belief* in which Heidegger persisted, whatever his sense of "sobriety" in other matters. A belief, not only in the possibility that the word Hölderlin "kept in reserve" might still be heard (by Germany, by us), but also, and perhaps especially, in the possibility that the god this word announced or prophesied might come. This, even though Heidegger maintained until the end, up through the last interviews granted to *Der Spiegel*, that it was also necessary to expect, and prepare for, the definitive decline or in-advent of the god. "Praise be to you, no one."

[...]

A dialogue like this in no way requires an encounter—an "effective" encounter, as we say. Probably the opposite. The encounter is also that which can prohibit or break off dialogue. Dialogue, in this sense, is fragility itself.

Yet between Celan and Heidegger, an encounter took place. It happened in 1967, probably during the summer. Celan went to visit Heidegger in Todtnauberg, in the Black Forest chalet (*Hütte*) that was his refuge, the place where he wrote. From this meeting—to which I know there were witnesses, direct or indirect—there remains a poem: a second version of which, in conclusion, I invite you to read.

Here is how I hear it:

TODTNAUBERG

Arnica, baume des yeux, la
gorgée à la fontaine avec
le jet d'étoiles au-dessus,

dans le
chalet,

là, dans le livre
—de qui, les noms qu'il portait
avant le mien?—,
dans ce livre
la ligne écrite sur
un espoir, aujourd'hui,
dans le mot
à venir
d'un penseur,
au coeur,

humus des bois, non aplani,
orchis et orchis, épars,

crudité, plus tard en voiture,
distincte,

qui nous conduit, l'homme,
à son écoute aussi,
à demi
frayées les sentes
de rondins dans la fange,

humidité,
beaucoup.

TODTNAUBERG

Arnica, eye balm, the
draught at the fountain with
the spray of stars above,

in the
hut,

there, in the book
—whose, the names it bore
before mine?—
in that book
the line written about
a hope, today,
in the coming
word
of a thinker,
in the heart,

woodland humus, unlevelled,
orchis and orchis, scattered,

crudeness, later, in the car,
distinct,

he who drives us, the man,
listening too,

half-
cleared the paths
of logs in the mire,

dampness,
much.

My translation is very rough; witness or not, who can know what the allusions refer to? "Todtnauberg" is really barely a poem; a single nominal phrase, choppy, distended and elliptical, unwilling to take shape, it is not the outline but the remainder—the residue—of an aborted narrative. It consists of brief notes or notations, seemingly jotted in haste with a hope for a future poem, comprehensible only to the one who wrote them. It is an extenuated poem, or, to put it better, a *disappointed* one. It is the poem of a disappointment; as such, it is, and it says, the disappointment of poetry.

One could of course supply a gloss, try to decipher or translate. There is no lack of readable allusions. The *Holzwege*, for example; here they are no longer ways through the forest toward a possible clearing, a *Lichtung*, but paths lost in a marsh where the poem itself gets lost (water again, but without a source—not even; dampness—no more about the dizzying Neckar, the "spirit of the river," the bedazzlement-engulfment. Only an uneasiness). Another example: one could pick, or *cast*, as it were, the image of the spray of stars above the man drinking from the fountain, throwing back his head to the sky: dice thrown like the "golden sickle" abandoned by Hugo's "harvester of eternal summer." And this could be a gesture toward Büchner's Lenz, the figure of the poet, of whom "The Meridian" recalls, "Now and then he experienced a sense of uneasiness because he was not able to walk on his head,"²⁶ only to add, "Whoever walks on his head, ladies and gentlemen, whoever walks on his head has heaven beneath him as an abyss."²⁷ An echo, perhaps, of Hölderlin's strange proposition: "Man kann auch in die Höhe *fallen*, so wie in die Tiefe" ("one can as well *fall* into height as into depth").²⁸ One could surely go very far in this direction, as in many another.

But that is not what the poem says, if indeed it is still a poem.

What the poem says is, first, a language: words. German, with Greek and Latin woven in. "Common" language: *Augentrost*, *Waldwasen*, *Hochmoor*, and so on. "Learned" language: *Arnika*, *Orchis*. But still simple, ordinary words. The kind of words in another of Celan's few explanatory prose texts, "Conversation in the Mountains" (a sort of tale, half-way between *Lenz* and *Hassidic Tales*, where two Jews discuss language): words like "turk's-cap lily," "corn-salad," and "*dianthus superbus*, the maiden-pink," that bespeak a native relation to nature (or to the earth, as Heidegger would have said):

So it was quiet, quiet up there in the mountains. But it was not quiet for long, because when a few comes along and meets another, silence cannot last, even in the mountains. Because the Jew and nature are strangers to each other, have always been and still are, even today, even here.

So there they are, the cousins. On the left, the turk's-cap lily blooms, blooms wild, blooms like nowhere else. And on the right, corn-salad, and *dianthus superbus*, the maiden-pink, not far off. But they, those cousins, have no eyes, alas. Or, more exactly: they have, even they have eyes, but with a veil hanging in front of them, no not in front, behind them, a moveable veil. No sooner does an image enter than it gets caught in the web. . . .

Poor lily, poor corn-salad. There they stand, the cousins, on a road in the mountains, the stick silent, the stones silent, and the silence no silence at all. No word has come to an end and no phrase, it is nothing but a pause, an empty space between the words, a blank . . . ²⁹

Once again, a matter of blindness or half-blindness ("they . . . have no eyes, alas"). But because blindness, blinding—we understand now—is *the empty space between the words* (and doubtless also *a blank*): not having the words to say what is. Words are not innate; language is not altogether a mother tongue (or a father tongue—it hardly matters). There is difficulty with it (there is also perhaps a question of *place* in language).

This difficulty—the difficulty—is named in the Bremen address when it evokes, as Blanchot says, "the language through which death came upon him, those near to him, and millions of Jews and non-Jews, *an event without answer*" (my emphasis):³⁰

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

In this language I tried, during those years and the years after, to write poems: in order to speak, to orient myself, to find out where I was, where I was going, to chart my reality.

It meant movement, you see, something happening, being *en route*, an attempt to find a direction.³¹

What "Todtnauberg" speaks about, then, is this: the language in which Auschwitz was pronounced, and which pronounced Auschwitz.

That is why the poem also says, and says simply, the meaning of the encounter with Heidegger—that is, its disappointment. I suspected as much, but I confess that I was told this, by a friend who had it on the best authority.

To Heidegger the thinker—the German thinker—Celan the poet—the Jewish poet—came with a single yet precise entreaty: that the thinker who listened to poetry; the same thinker who had compromised himself, however briefly and even if in the least shameful way, with just what would result in Auschwitz; the thinker who, however abundant his discussion with National Socialism, had observed total silence on Auschwitz, as history will recall; that he say just a single word: a word about pain. From there, perhaps, all might still be possible. Not "life," which is always possible, which remained possible, as we know, even in Auschwitz, but existence, poetry, speech. Language. That is, relation to others.

Could such a word be *wrenched*?

In the summer of 1967 Celan writes in the guestbook of the *Hütte* in Todtnauberg. He no longer knows who signed before him; signatures—proper names, as it happens—matter little. At issue was a word, just a word. He writes—what? A line, or a verse. He asks only for the word, and the word, of course, is not spoken. Nothing; silence; no one. The in-advent of the word ("the event without answer").

I do not know what word Celan could have expected. What word he felt would have had enough force to wrench him from the threat of aphasia and idiom (in-advent of the word), into which this poem, mumbled against the silence, could only sink as if into a bog. What word could suddenly have constituted an *event*.

I do not know. Yet something tells me it is at once the humblest and most difficult word to say, the one that requires, precisely, "a going out of the self." The word that the

West, in its pathos of redemption, has never been able to say. The word it remains for us to learn to speak, lest we should sink ourselves. The word *pardon*.

Celan has placed us before this word. A sign?

NOTES

1. "Der Meridian" is in volume 3 of Celan's five-volume *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Bodo Allemann and Stefan Reichert, in collaboration with Rolf Bücher (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983). This passage, p. 200. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations from "Der Meridian" are from Jerry Glenn's "The Meridian," in *Chicago Review* 29, no. 3 (1978): 29–49. This passage, p. 38. [Translator's note]
2. GW 1:226. English translations of Celan's poems will be Michael Hamburger's unless otherwise noted. "Tübingen, Jänner" is in *Paul Celan: Poems* (New York: Persea, 1988), 177. [Translator's note]
3. GW 2: 25; Hamburger, *Celan*, 293. [Translator's note]
4. Apart from Michael Hamburger's translations of both poems, there is an English version of *Tübingen, Jänner* in Joachim Neugroschel, *Paul Celan, Speech-Grille* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1971), 185. [Translator's note]
5. Lacoue-Labarthe's phrase is "c'est avec l'Allemagne qu'il faut . . . s'expliquer." *S'expliquer* in this context means primarily "to discuss," "to clarify matters," even "to have it out with someone." Yet the verb could also function as a simple reflexive; this would render the sense, "We must explain *ourselves* with Germany." The import of such ambiguity for reflections on the Holocaust is self-evident. [Translator's note]
6. From "Todesfuge": "der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland." GW 1:42, "Death Fugue," Hamburger, *Celan*, 63. [Translator's note]
7. Henri Meschonnic, "On appelle cela traduire Celan," in *Pour la poétique II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980).
8. GW 2:334. Peter Szondi, "Eden," in *Poésies et poétiques de la modernité* (Lille: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1981).
9. Issues 2 and 3, 1972. Blanchot, *Le dernier à parler*, was reissued by fata morgana in Paris in 1984.
10. Theodor Adorno, "Parataxe," in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 2, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 109–49.
11. Along with, in an entirely different vein, Werner Hamacher, "The Second of Inversion: Movements of a Figure through Celan's Poetry," trans. Peter Fenves, in *Word Traces: Readings of*

Paul Celan, ed. Aris Fioretos (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 219–63.

12. The French "tour/noyées" plays on a double meaning: the verb *tournoyer* can be translated as "to wheel around, whirl, swirl," while dividing the past participle of the verb into two parts evokes "tower/drowned." [Translator's note]

13. It is worth stressing that this English version translates Lacoue-Labarthe's French translation, rather than Celan's German. [Translator's note]

14. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 2.1 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1951), 195.

15. I refer the reader to Roger Munier (responding to an inquiry on experience in *Mise en page I* [May 1972]): "First there is etymology. *Experience* comes from the Latin *experiri*, to test, try, prove. The radical is *periri*, which one also finds in *periculum*, peril, danger. The Indo-European root is *per*, to which are attached the ideas of *crossing* and, secondarily, of *trial*, *test*. In Greek, numerous derivations evoke a crossing or passage: *peirô*, to cross; *pera*, beyond; *peraô*, to pass through; *perainô*, to go to the end; *peras*, end, limit. For Germanic languages, Old High German *faran* has given us *fahren*, to transport, and *führen*, to drive. Should we attribute *Erfahrung* to this origin as well, or should it be linked to the second meaning of *per*, trial, in Old High German, *fara*, danger, which became *Gefahr*, danger, and *gefährden*, to endanger? The boundaries between one meaning and the other are imprecise. The same is true for the Latin *periri*, to try, and *periculum*, which originally means trial, test, then risk, danger. The idea of experience as a crossing is etymologically and semantically difficult to separate from that of risk. From the beginning and no doubt in a fundamental sense, *experience* means to endanger."

16. The French translation I will refer to is not André du Bouchet's in *Strette* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1971), but Jean Launay's (*Poésie* 9 [1979]). I make slight modifications when the argument warrants. [For this passage, see Glenn, 37: "The poem is . . . underway."—Translator's note]

17. In the original, this line reads "Ein Räthsel ist Reinentsprungenes." In English, Michael Hamburger renders it "An enigma are things of pure source"; see Hölderlin: *His Poems* (New York: Pantheon, 1952), 199. I have modified the English translation because of Lacoue-Labarthe's

- 418 repeated use of *jaili* and *jaillissement*. [Translator's note]
18. In English, agitation or excitement. [Translator's note]
19. Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire, Ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1.2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974). English references: *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: NLB, 1973).
20. GW 2:36. [Translator's note]
21. Benjamin, "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire," *Schriften*, 1.2:605–53; "Some Motifs in Baudelaire," *Charles Baudelaire*, 107–54.

22. Celan's Bremen address is published in the GW 3:186. The English translation cited here is by Rosmarie Waldrop, in *Paul Celan: Collected Prose* (Manchester, England: Carcanet Press, 1986), 33. [Translator's note]
23. Glenn, 35–37. [Translator's note]
24. *Ibid.*, 36. [Translator's note]
25. *Ibid.*, 32; GW 3:192. [Translator's note]
26. Glenn, 34; GW 3:195. [Translator's note]
27. Glenn, 35; GW 3:195. [Translator's note]
28. SW 4.1:233.
29. *Paul Celan*, trans. Waldrop, 18–19. [Translator's note]
30. Blanchot, *Le Dernier à parler*, 45.
31. GW 3: 185–6; *Paul Celan*, Waldrop, 34.

7.3 Summa Lyrica: A Primer of the Commonplaces in Speculative Poetics (1990)

ALLEN GROSSMAN

Introductory Note

My purpose in the *Summa Lyrica* is to bring to mind "the poem," as an object of thought and as an instrument for thinking, consistent with my account of poetic practice in the foregoing conversations. In particular, I intend to facilitate (and exemplify) *thinking* as it may arise in the course of inquiry directed toward the meaning of poetic structures. The *Summa Lyrica* proceeds by stating—aphoristically—some of the commonplaces by means of which poetry and poetic purposes are accounted for in the West. As a primer or handbook of commonplaces, it is designed to befriend the reader of poetry (always supposing that the reader of poetry needs a hermeneutic friend) by constructing a culture in which poetry is intelligible.

In aid of these intentions and purposes, the attempt has been made to make this work total (a *summa*), that is to say, to place individual analyses in the context of a version of the whole subject matter. This is of course not the same thing as attempting to make the work complete (supposing that were possible). What is attempted to identify the alliances and relationships of the specific terms and situations in poetic analysis (in something like the same way that they arise in my own mind, when my mind is engaged with poetry), as far out toward the horizon as possible (an aphorism is a proposition with a horizon), and thus to circumscribe a horizon in which poetry rises up and is present *as in a world*.

The basis of order in the *Summa Lyrica* is the procession of commonplaces (*loci communes*), assertions which are possible to be made (and generally are made) in the presence of poems. Commonplaces are not pieces of theory but points of outlook. In the commonplace (as

in the aphorism), everybody can start from the same spot, because discourse is *bound* into the authority of a human presence. Theory of poetry does not participate in the nature of poetry (as perhaps the theory of something else participates in the nature of that thing)—except insofar as the theory of poetry is also something that somebody says. In the *Summa Lyrica*, an attempt is made to stay inside the business of the thing, and to use the matrix of particular personal presence as a system of paths along which to move among realms of being (for this reason there is also a web of cross-references from title to title in the text). Flowing from the commonplaces are comments (*scholia*) which show, in increasingly open styles of discourse, how the commonplaces are amplified and serve to make audible the world-wide and history-long discourse which is always going on (30.6) in the presence of the poem—with the intention of putting poetry and poetic knowledge in the service of human interests.

Above all, therefore, this is a text for use, intended like a poem to give rise to thoughts about something else.

The Primer

Immortality I (14)

1. The function of poetry is to obtain for everybody one kind of success at the limits of the autonomy of the will.

Scholium "in the wake of language." Here we conceive of poetry as doing moral work, as having a function in the same way as a machine has a function but a machine that speaks. (43)

Like language (but not identical with language)—perhaps it would be well to say "in the wake of language"—poetry makes promises to everybody and keeps its promises only to some. So when we say "the function of poetry is to obtain for *everybody* one kind of success," we are running ahead of the fact (but doing so in the name of the fact), and raising the question of *justice*.

By "success" we mean "outcome." Poetry serves to obtain a kind of outcome (a success is any outcome) precisely at those points in experience where the natural will is helpless.

- 1.1 The limits of the autonomy of the will discovered in poetry are death and the barriers against access to other consciousnesses.

Scholium on limits. Poetry thematizes the abandonment of will of the speaking person as speaker. "Sing, muse. . . ." The maxim is: "No mortal man speaks immortal words." In this way poetry repeats its function as its subject matter. (This is what is meant when poetry is said to "be about poetry.")

The abandonment of the autonomy of the will of the speaking person as a speaker constitutes a form of knowledge—poetic knowledge. The knowledge that not "I" speaks but "language speaks" (Heidegger). The function of this knowledge is to rescue the natural will at the point of its death, that is to say, at the point where death arrests its intention.

Poetry is produced by the mortality of body and soul, the immiscibility of minds, and the postponement of the end of the world.