

VERBAL MIMESIS: THE CASE OF "DIE WINZER"

HOWARD STERN
Columbia University

DIE WINZER

Für Nani und Klaus Demus

Sie herbsten den Wein ihrer Augen,
sie keltern alles Geweinte, auch dieses:
so will es die Nacht,
die Nacht, an die sie gelehnt sind, die Mauer,
so fordert der Stein,
der Stein, über den ihr Krückstock dahinspricht
ins Schweigen der Antwort—
ihr Krückstock, der einmal,
einmal im Herbst,
wenn das Jahr zum Tod schwillt, als Traube,
der einmal durchs Stumme hindurchspricht, hinab
in den Schacht des Erdachten.

Sie herbsten, sie keltern den Wein,
sie pressen die Zeit wie ihr Auge,
sie kellern das Sickernde ein, das Geweinte,
im Sonnengrab, das sie rüsten
mit nachstarker Hand:
auf dass ein Mund danach dürste, später—
ein Spätmund, ähnlich dem ihren:
Blindem entgegegekrümmt und gelähmt—
ein Mund, zu dem der Trunk aus der Tiefe emporschäumt, indes
der Himmel hinabsteigt ins wächserne Meer,
um fernher als Lichtstumpf zu leuchten,
wenn endlich die Lippe sich feuchtet.

The Vintagers

For Nani and Klaus Demus

They harvest the wine of their eyes,
they wine-press all of the tears, even this:
the night wills it so,
the night that they lean against, lean on the wall,
the stone will demand it,
stone over which their crutch speaks out and away
into the answering silence—
their crutch, that once,
at harvest time once,
when the year swells up unto death, as a cluster of grapes,
that speaks out once through the dumbness and down
into the shaft of devising.

They harvest, they press out the wine,
they crush out time like their eyes,
they lay in the tricklings, the tears,
in a sun-tomb they ready
with night-strong hands:
that a mouth may thirst for it, later—
a late mouth, like unto theirs:
twisted toward blindness and lame—
a mouth to which the drink gushes up from the depth, as
 meanwhile
heaven descends into waxen seas
to burn like a candle-end, burn from afar
when the lip is moistened at last.

Note: The translation aims primarily at clarifying, for readers of Celan in English, the metrical argument of the present paper; but no great liberties have been taken with the literal sense.

I

In "Die Winzer" the reader of Celan's poetry will encounter several motifs familiar from other poems of *Mohn und Gedächtnis* and *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*¹: blindness, lameness, nocturnal energy, a ripening toward death, etc. It cannot be taken for granted that such familiarity is always useful. On the contrary, the sense of security it engenders can obscure the very processes that make the poem what it is. For whatever else may be said about "Die Winzer," clearly none of its elements can function exactly as they do in some other poem. This is not to argue that Celan has no "poetic world" that can be investigated synchronically across all of the early volumes; such investigations have been undertaken with profit.² The point is that the individual poems are also happening in time as we read them, each bringing to conclusion its own logical process, each structuring a unique event with the familiar objects and figures of speech.

What, then, is happening in "Die Winzer"? The poem is in two parts, the second of which resembles the first closely enough to suggest that something is happening twice. Especially the repetition of "Sie herbsten . . . sie keltern" at the opening of the second stanza suggests a return to the origin and a reformulation. On an overview, the method of the poem can be loosely described as a kind of stammer—a description, admittedly, which would hardly be inevitable were it not supported locally in almost every line. For even a cursory reading of the poem must leave an impression of continual stopping and starting, repeating, renaming, painful and difficult expressing of its message. To call this process a stammer is of course to speak metaphorically and to posit the stammer as a rhetorical device akin to anaphora and perhaps to other figures. I mention this because it will be necessary to attribute to the rhetorical stammer properties not associated with a real stammer; the rhetorical variety, for example, comes very close to being an incantation, or invocation of a numinous power. The reformulations of the stammer, in this light, suggest that whatever power is being invoked has multiple aspects or spheres of influence, and that the names corresponding to each aspect must be pronounced if the invocation is to be successful.³

Two other effects of Celan's hesitating progress ought to be noted here. The first is that repetition of the major substantives makes it possible to add relative and temporal clauses without embedding them in the main clauses to which they are syntactically subordinate. Rewriting one passage will illustrate how much is won here in the way

of clarity; “so forderts der Stein, über den ihr Krückstock, der einmal im Herbst, wenn das Jahr zum Tod schwillt, als Traube durchs Stumme hindurch- und in den Schacht des Erdachten hinabspricht, ins Schweigen der Antwort dahinspricht.” Of course the liberty that Celan takes is quite common in German verse, and my only purpose in exhibiting this monstrosity is to show to what extent the poem avails itself of this liberty. It is as though the use of a stammer were dictated (among other considerations, certainly) by the simple necessity of maintaining readability in so complicated a syntax, by the necessity of reminding the reader where he is. The second effect of hesitation and reformulation, as these are practiced by Celan, is that the lines of verse as rhythmic entities are continually being brought up short. This is because a reformulation, more often than not, imitates the metrical pattern of its precursor; in such metrical parallels as “so will es die Nacht / so forderts der Stein” or “ähnlich dem ihren / Blindem entgegen,” there is a subtle suggestion that the line has somehow doubled back on itself, reconsidered an earlier decision, and set out in a new direction. The line, as it were, contains its revisions.

This last effect can be observed more clearly in the earlier poem “Spät und Tief” (E. “Late and Deep”) in *MuG*, I 35, where the relative looseness of texture allows it to dominate the surface of the poem:

wir stehen im Herbst unsrer Linden als
sinnendes Fahnenrot,
als brennende Gäste vom Süden.
Wir schwören bei Christus dem Neuen, den Staub
zu vermählen dem Staube,
die Vögel dem wandernden Schuh,
unser Herz einer Stiege im Wasser.

We stand in the autumn of our linden trees as pensive flag-red,
as burning guests from the south.
We swear by the New Christ to marry dust to the dust,
the birds to the wandering shoe,
our heart to a staircase in water.

Here Celan goes so far as to suggest that the shorter lines are, as it were, spare parts that may be fitted into the longer ones. No objection could be raised, for example, to the alternative line:

Wir stehen im Herbst unsrer Linden als brennende Gäste vom
Süden.

And in fact, one feels the presence of this alternative in reading the poem, not merely as a logical filling-out of an appositional phrase, but as a possible line of verse behind the poem, as though there could be (or once had been) another text than the one we now have before us. I am tempted to say that passages of "Spät und Tief" resemble the famous café napkins which are the bedevilment of Trakl's editors: layer upon layer of alternative readings, continually stretching the imagination of the reconstructor when he comes to consider how some of them could conceivably *be* alternatives for the same position in the text. Celan's art is of course to fashion a horizontal argument out of vertical possibilities (syntagmas out of paradigms); the energy necessary for understanding these possibilities as alternatives for the same position in the text is precisely the energy that drives the poem forward.

The relevance of "Spät und Tief" (E. "Late and Deep") to an analysis of "Die Winzer" lies in a closely related observation: that the earlier poem is perhaps the strongest evidence of the existence of *line fragments* in Celan. It is not simply a question of long and short lines, but of complete and incomplete ones. In the early Celan, the complete line is a dactylic hexameter: "Ein Lied in der Wüste" (E. "A Song in the Desert"), "Das Gastmahl" (E. "The Banquet"), and "Das ganze Leben" (E. "All of Life") (*MuG*, I 11, 25, 34) are almost entirely in this meter, and very few poems in the first two volumes are free of its echoes. In particular, "Die Winzer" is dactylic, with an occasional trochee, and can easily be recast to resemble "Ein Lied in der Wüste":

- 1 Sie herbsten den Wein ihrer Augen, auch dieses:
so will es die Nacht,
- 2 die Nacht, an die sie gelehnt sind, die Mauer;
so forderts der Stein,
- 3 der Stein, über den ihr Krückstock dahinspricht ins
Schweigen der Antwort—
- 4 ihr Krückstock, der einmal im Herbst, wenn das Jahr
zum Tod schwillt, als Traube,
- 5 der einmal durchs Stumme hindurchspricht, hinab in den
Schacht des Erdachten.

In this version, as seems reasonable, each major noun is allowed to determine and initiate its own hexameter; lines 3 and 5 are probably the most acceptable and the easiest to hear in the actual poem. This is certainly not the only way the poem can be rewritten, nor is it my

purpose to argue that Celan ever worked with a rough version resembling my own. The point is rather that a reader familiar with Celan's metrics can hardly fail to hear that "Die Winzer" might have been composed in hexameters; and if he is alert to the existence of the line fragment as a metrical entity, he can hardly fail to see in the printed text the fragments of that unachieved or suppressed or lost hypothetical poem in hexameters.

To summarize the argument up to this juncture: The lines of "Die Winzer" seem to have been broken up and compressed in a way that suggests great difficulty of expression, stammering, and hesitation; but in its compression the poem gains an evocative or incantatory power. I have postponed any discussion of the "content" of "Die Winzer" while making this "formal" argument simply to demonstrate that all aspects of the poem bring us to the same meditation: the proper metaphor for the rhetorical development of the poem is in fact the pressing of grapes to make a strong wine, a wine of tears later to gush forth in a sacramental act of communion or communication. The "sie" of "sie herbsten" therefore includes the poet, and his poem is the very wine of which it speaks.⁴

II

Why should Celan have decided to compress the sonorous hexameters of his early maturity? In what way did they prove to be an inadequate response to his poetic subject? "Ein Lied in der Wüste" (E. "A Song in the Desert") at the very beginning of *Mohn und Gedächtnis* suggests an answer:

Ein Kranz ward gewunden aus schwärzlichem Laub in der
Gegend von Akra:
dort riss ich den Rappen herum und stach nach dem Tod
mit dem Degen.
Auch trank ich aus hölzernen Schalen die Asche der
Brunnen von Akra
und zog mit gefälltem Visier den Trümmern der Himmel
entgegen.

(*MuG*, I 11)

A garland was wound of blackish leaves in the region of Akra:
there I swung my black horse around and lunged at Death with
my dagger.

Also I drank from wooden bowls the ash of the fountains of Akra
and advanced with lowered visor against the ruins of the
heavens.

The poem is a very odd chivalric romance with apocalyptic overtones.⁵ The heavens against which the speaker takes the field already lie in ruins. "Ich . . . stach nach dem Tod mit dem Degen"—the attempt to kill death itself may be an admirable conceit, but such conceits are hardly the stuff of a chivalric encounter. One feels that this pseudomedieval scene has been artificially populated, that the true adversary is absent, in fact that the central problem is absence:

Denn tot sind die Engel und blind war der Herr in der
Gegend von Akra,
und keiner ist, der mir betreue im Schlaf die zur Ruhe
hier gingen.

For dead are the angels and blind was the Lord in the
region of Akra,
and there is no one who might tend for me in sleep those who
went to their rest here.

This "keiner" is the only convincing character in the poem; one could say that Celan became this "keiner." As an isolated survivor of the war, with few living relatives and no prospect of returning to the Bukowina (which at any rate had been incorporated into the Ukraine and was no longer the German-Rumanian homeland of his childhood), Celan was carrying within himself all that remained of his world. Any attempt to project that burden onto an external scene of heroic combat was destined to collapse. A joust could scarcely provide the poet with adequate images of his battle against emptiness.

Celan's deconstruction of the hexameter can be seen in this light to represent a turning toward the true inwardness of his subject and to herald the creation of a radically reduced verse form. Right from the beginning it seems to have been clear to him that this process would

not be accomplished without considerable cost in immediate intelligibility:

Nun aber schrumpft der Ort, wo du stehst:
Wohin jetzt, Schattenentblösster, wohin?
Steige. Taste empor.
Dünnere wirst du, unkenntlicher, feiner!
(“Sprich auch du,” *SzS*, I 135)

But now the place where you stand shrivels:
Whither now, [you who are] stripped of shadow, whither?
Climb. Grope your way upward.
You become thinner, more indistinguishable, finer!

“Ein Lied in der Wüste,” for all the obscurity of its images, is not really a difficult poem; somewhat inept, perhaps, but I doubt that many readers fail to understand its tenor. (One ought not to confuse impossibilities with difficulties.) The same cannot be said, however, for a string of major poems in reduced dactylic verse: “Corona” (*MuG*, I 37), “Ein Körnchen Sands” (E. “A Grain of Sand”), “Vor einer Kerze” (E. “Before a Candle”), “Nächtlich geschürzt” (E. “Nocturnally Pouting”), “Argumentum e Silentio” (*SzS*, I 91, 110, 125, 138). These poems are genuinely difficult in their demand for a great deal of critical labor. Clearly Celan hoped that they would nevertheless reach their proper, if belated, audience:

Ich steh im Flor der abgeblühten Stunde
und spar ein Harz für einen späten Vogel:
er trägt die Flocke Schnee auf lebensroter Feder;
das Körnchen Eis im Schnabel kommt er durch den Sommer.
(*MuG*, I 55)

I stand in the bloom of the faded hour
and save a resin for a late bird:
it carries the flake of snow on a life-red feather;
the little grain of ice in its beak, it comes through the summer.

The speaker of these lines, surrounded by the luxuriant growth of an hour that has withered away, can be no one but the poet himself. It is characteristic of Celan to emphasize the reduction and concision of

his work by referring to it as a resin. (Compare "das Sickernde" in "Die Winzer"; in other poems we find similar images: "ein Körnchen Sands," "eine Krume Lichts.") As in "Die Winzer," the belated decoder of the poetic message will of necessity resemble the encoder; the bird for whom the resin is being saved is himself carrying a tiny remnant of a world which is no longer present in its fullness.

"Die Winzer," positioned near the end of *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, completes the line of thought implicit in the poems I have adduced. If the withering of the remembered world dictates a contraction of the poem, then the successful act of communication should be a reconstitution of the fullness from the withered remains. This is what happens in the second part of "Die Winzer," when the downward motion of the first part is reversed and wine gushes up to moisten the lip of some belated drinker:

ein Mund, zu dem der Trunk aus der Tiefe emporschäumt,
indes . . .

a mouth to which the drink gushes up from the depth,
as meanwhile . . .

The very line that predicts the reconstitution also accomplishes it—it is the only complete hexameter in the poem. It is the fulfillment of all the poem's promises: the recreator's counterpart to the flowering of Aaron's rod (Numbers 17) and an imagined restoration of the original life or experience from which the poem is derived.⁶ In this sense, Celan's work can be said to provide a model for its own reception, and the fate of the hexameter can be seen as a metaphor for the whole process of aesthetic creation and recreation.

I hope that my exhibition of the one complete hexameter will convince the reader that the main outlines of my argument must be correct. Perhaps my description of the first stanza as an act of compression, analogous to the pressing of grapes, seemed at first somewhat arbitrary. Indeed, how could this fail to be the case? How could any verses, considered as a rhythmic structure apart from semantic content, represent unmistakably something as specific and nonverbal as the pressing of grapes? The validity of the description actually depends on a sequence of observations: 1. The pun-metaphor "den Wein ihrer Augen" justifies us in equating the vintage with the product of human experience; the step from "wine" to "fermented tears" brings us one step closer to "poem." 2. The verbs "keltern" and "pressen" dictate that the initial movement of the poem be read as one of reduction and compression. In the absence of such semantic constraints the movement would remain ambiguous; my rewriting of the poem in hexameters, if accepted as plausible, could

perhaps equally well be understood to demonstrate that Celan was attempting (unsuccessfully) to *expand* his verses into hexameters. 3. Finally, the coincidence of the one complete hexameter with the climax of the poem, the moment of sacramental communion, confirms the identification of the hexameter line as the implied measure of completeness; this identification in turn invites a reading of "Die Winzer" as a critical reflection on the whole series of poems in complete and partial hexameters beginning with "Ein Lied in der Wüste."

III

In the past decade two different critical vocabularies have been elaborated for the peculiar sort of self-reference I have attempted to demonstrate in "Die Winzer." One of these originates in the work of the Oxford philosopher J. L. Austin on "performative" utterances and leads into the general area of speech-act theory. The other is indigenous to literary studies, takes its most impressive examples from Shakespeare and Pope, and leads into the area scouted by W. K. Wimsatt in his magisterial paper "In Search of Verbal Mimesis."⁷ For the present purpose of classifying the case of "Die Winzer" I will follow Wimsatt and adopt two of his terms: "autonymy" and "kinaesthesia."

Both of these are exemplified by a famous passage of Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (Part II) in which negative and positive models are offered for poetic composition. First Pope castigates the critics who judge poetry solely "by numbers," that is by purely metrical considerations:

These equal syllables alone require,
Though oft the ear the open vowels tire,
While expletives their feeble aid do join,
And ten low words oft creep in one dull line:
While they ring round the same unvaried chimes,
With sure returns of still expected rhymes;
Where'er you find "the cooling western breeze,"
In the next line, it "whispers through the trees";
If crystal streams "with pleasing murmurs creep,"
The reader's threatened (not in vain) with "sleep";
Then, at the last and only couplet fraught
With some unmeaning thing they call a thought,
A needless Alexandrine ends the song
That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.
(lines 344-57)

This is autonymy (or "self-naming"). With great virtuosity Pope contrives that the naming of each literary vice be an actual instance of it, thereby obviating all further commentary. Having allowed his negative models to discredit themselves, Pope proceeds to a positive principle of composition:

The sound must seem an echo to the sense.
 Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,
 And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;
 But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,
 The hoarse, rough verse should like the torrent roar.
 When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
 The line too labors, and the words move slow;
 Not so when swift Camilla scours the plain,
 Flies o'er the unbending corn, and skims along the main.
(lines 365-73)

This is mostly kinaesthesia (internal physical analogy). When Camilla "flies o'er the unbending corn and skims along the main," the line of verse does not do the same; it behaves in a fashion that supports Camilla, it imitates her as well as it can, and we feel the imitation internally; but no line of verse can literally fly o'er the unbending corn. What is at stake is a logical extension of onomatopoeia to the field of prosody; the sound is an echo to the sense, a strikingly appropriate verbal representation of a nonverbal event. Actually, this second passage involves a considerable amount of autonymy pressed into the service of kinaesthesia, for example in line 371:

The line too labors, and the words move slow.

Here, as in the first passage, there is a near-identity of sound and sense, not a kinaesthetic "echo" or a decorous accompaniment; the line quite literally does what it says. (Such complications are quite typical of verbal mimesis in poetry.) But in general one can say that the compositional practice of which Pope disapproves is illustrated by autonymy, while the practice of which he approves is illustrated by, and would in fact yield, kinaesthesia.

The examples from the *Essay on Criticism* refer explicitly to the composition of poetry. If verbal mimesis were limited to such cases, it would constitute a technical curiosity, a kind of virtuoso cadenza to be inserted as a set piece in the course of a longer composition dealing with more abstract poetic matters. But there is no such limitation; any process that takes place in language or can be represented as a process in language offers an opportunity for verbal mimesis. An example of

this wider range is George Herbert's "Aaron," a much less ostentatious, but more sophisticated application of autonymy (actually a pseudo-autonymy to be specified presently):

Holinesse on the head,
Light and perfections on the breast,
Harmonious bells below, raising the dead
To leade them unto life and rest:
Thus are true Aarons drest.

Profanenesse in my head,
Defects and darknesse in my breast,
A noise of passions ringing me for dead
Unto a place where is no rest:
Poore priest thus am I drest.

Onely another head
I have, another heart and breast.
Another musick, making live not dead,
Without whom I could have no rest:
In him I am well drest.

Christ is my onely head,
My alone onely heart and breast,
My onely musick, striking me ev'n dead;
That to the old man I may rest,
And be in him new drest.

So holy in my head,
Perfect and light in my deare breast,
My doctrine tun'd by Christ, (who is not dead,
But lives in me while I do rest)
Come people; Aaron's drest.

The poem begins with two stanzas that contrast Aaron's priestly garments, including the Urim and Thumim ("Light and perfections"—Exodus 27), with Herbert's own unworthiness to minister to his congregation. Further reflection in the third and fourth stanzas reminds the poet that he is transfigured in Christ and thereby endowed with spiritual garments equal in perfection to those of Aaron. In the final stanza, the priest declares himself ready to receive

his congregation. That this *précis* of the poem does not do justice to its rhetorical structure is revealed only in the final line:

Come people; Aaron's drest.

For this line fails to bring the poem to its expected closure: it breaks off the syntax of the whole stanza, suddenly addresses the congregation (which has been absent until this point), and suggests finally that an actual process of "investiture" has been in progress and is now completed. The last line forces a reinterpretation of everything that has gone before. Far from being a mere reflection on the doctrine of the priesthood, the poem is in fact a representation of the donning of priestly garments. In rehearsing the doctrine of Christ's mediation, Herbert has before our mind's eye been preparing himself for ministry. The poem thus stands revealed as a ritual of investiture which is being performed in the time of its five stanzas. And this is possible only because the act of dressing has been redefined by the poem as a meditation in language.⁸

The case of "Die Winzer" is closely related to that of "Aaron." By virtue of the central metaphor of Celan's poem, the pressing of grapes is redefined as an act of the verbal imagination; as such it can be executed, and not simply imitated, by the lines of verse. Mr. Wimsatt did not treat any such cases, which lie somewhere between the two categories defined above. I propose to call "Aaron" a case of "metaphoric autonymy" and "Die Winzer" one of "autonymic kinaesthesia." In "Aaron" the element of kinaesthesia is absent or at best attenuated; the only physical analogy to the act of dressing is perhaps the sequential addition of stanzas to the poem's meditation—weak indeed if felt at all. But the poem is clearly autonymic, provided that the metaphor is acknowledged (roughly, investiture standing for a verbal meditation). "Die Winzer" also involves a central metaphor (the vintage standing for poetry in broken hexameters), but the vehicle lends itself well to kinaesthetic treatment, which in fact dominates the surface of the poem. The autonymic element resides in the fact that the physical process being imitated by poetic kinaesthesia is identified through the metaphor with a poetic act. Camilla, as far as I know, is innocent of any such metaphor.

Of Celan's many interpreters, two have called attention to this aspect of his work. Peter Horst Neumann writes of the tendency of individual words, in their mutilation or fragmentation, to exemplify human destinies as well as their own lexical meanings.⁹ To take only one of his examples, the word "zer- / spaltener" (*Atemwende*, II 82) is divided between two lines in an obvious imitation of its own sense.

The abundant play of isolated and reiterated syllables in *Niemandrose* and subsequent volumes can often be interpreted in a similar way: the word, as an object, must suffer the same fate as the human characters that the poem describes—must itself be maimed or crippled or reduced to helpless stuttering. Certainly this use of language, which Neumann explores in some detail, is a local application of verbal mimesis.

The only study that treats an entire poem of Celan from this viewpoint is Peter Szondi's brilliant essay on the translation of Shakespeare's Sonnet 105, "Let not my love be called idolatry."¹⁰ The purpose of Szondi's essay is to show that the theme of constancy, which is the subject of the original sonnet, has become in the translation a governing principle of language:

Constancy, the theme of Shakespeare's sonnet, becomes for Celan the medium in which his verse sustains itself and "confines itself to constancy." Constancy becomes a constitutive element of the verse, whereas in Shakespeare the verse [merely] sings of constancy and describes it with a variety of expressions. Celan's intention upon the language . . . is the realization of constancy in the verse.¹¹

The contrast that Szondi makes here between the original sonnet and its translation is precisely the one between common and autonymic mimesis. Since Celan's poem is printed opposite the original, Szondi legitimately reads the two together, not simply in the way any translation may be read with the original at hand, but in a way appropriate to an extreme situation in which a whole conception of language is being translated into another. To take the strongest example:

Therefore my verse, to constancy confin'd
One thing expressing, leaves out difference.

In der Beständigkeit, da bleibt mein Vers geborgen,
spricht von dem Einen, schweift mir nicht umher.

(7-8)

Szondi points out that Celan, rather than allowing his poem to claim that it leaves out difference, betrays the original to the extent of actually deleting differences—in fact, even declining to translate the

word "difference" except by a verb equivalent ("umherschweifen") that itself does not stray far from its subject ("mein Vers"). Similarly, Celan suppresses the suggestion of "confinement" by an external force; the translation is not allowed, even by implication, to widen its focus on its own constancy. The ironies that play between the two poems are astoundingly complex at this point, and Szondi treats them with thoroughness and precision; his essay ought to be taken as a model for future studies of Celan's language.

What I have attempted in my analysis of "Die Winzer" is to extend Szondi's results to an original poem by Celan and to remind the reader at the same time that verbal mimesis is not unique to this one poet. Celan's translation of a Shakespeare sonnet introduces an employment of language that is foreign to the original, but this employment is not without precedent in Pope and Herbert and other poets, in fact in Shakespeare himself.¹² No definite influence is necessarily at work here; Celan avails himself of a well established technique for intensifying the unity of a poem: he arranges for it to be a model of its subject. I adduce a final example of verbal mimesis to show that even the relation of Celan's translation to its original, ingenious as it is, has a parallel in another virtuoso poet of the twentieth century who belongs to a different tradition. The text is "The River of Rivers in Connecticut," by Wallace Stevens:

There is a great river this side of Stygia,
Before one comes to the first black cataracts
And trees that lack the intelligence of trees.

In that river, far this side of Stygia,
The mere flowing of water is a gayety,
Flashing and flashing in the sun. On its banks,

No shadow walks. The river is fateful,
Like the last one. But there is no ferryman.
He could not bend against its propelling force.

It is not to be seen beneath the appearances
That tell of it. The steeple at Farmington
Stands glistening, and Haddam shines and sways.

It is the third commonness with light and air,
A curriculum, a vigor, a local abstraction . . .
Call it, once more, a river, an unnamed flowing,

Space-filled, reflecting the seasons, the folk-lore
Of each of the senses; call it, again and again,
The river that flows nowhere, like a sea.

The poem describes a river that is a continuum of experience, the metaphysical equivalent, as it were, of the Connecticut. Only one sentence in the entire text fails to refer explicitly to the river—the second one in the central stanza:

It is not to be seen beneath the appearances
That tell of it. The steeple at Farmington
Stands glistening, and Haddam shines and sways.

There can be little doubt that the second sentence is an autonymic translation of the first. After warning the reader that the river cannot be seen beneath the appearances that tell of it, Stevens builds into his poem a model of that very situation: the river goes unmentioned beneath a sentence devoted entirely to its surface appearances. At the center, the poem translates itself into a delightfully witty case of verbal mimesis.¹³

NOTES

1. Hereafter abbreviated as *MuG* and *SzS*. Page numbers refer to the two-volume edition of his collected works entitled *Paul Celan. Gedichte*, ed. Beda Allemann (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1975).

2. See particularly Peter Horst Neumann, *Zur Lyrik Paul Celans* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968) and Hermann Burger, *Paul Celan: Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Sprache*, Zürcher Beiträge zur deutschen Literatur- und Geistesgeschichte, No. 42 (Zürich: Artemis, 1974). The latter contains an instructive reading of "Die Winzer," pp. 63-81.

3. That the poem can be read as a ritual invocation will become more evident below when its "performative" character has been elaborated.

4. Gert Kalow comes close to making this point in his comments on "Das ganze Leben": "Seine poetischen Resultate sind aus mächtigen Spannungen gekeltert." See p. 100 of "Das ganze Leben" in *Über Paul Celan*, ed. Dietlind Meinecke (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp. 95-100. The reliance of "Die Winzer" on the topos of the poet-priest cannot be explored here; but compare George Herbert's "Aaron," adduced below.

5. For comments on this poem and a conjecture about the identity of Akra, see Siegbert Praver, "Paul Celan" in *Über Paul Celan*, pp. 138-60.

6. The "Krückstock" is understood here as another detail in the "priestly" argument: the poet is Aaron's successor in a negative or "crippled" theology.

7. In *Day of the Leopards: Essays in Defense of Poems* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 57-73. See also Roger W. Wescott, "Linguistic Iconism," *Language*, 47, No. 2 (1971), 416-28. Anyone interested in the problems of the present paper will be delighted by John Hollander, *Rhyme's Reason: A Guide to English Verse* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), especially pp. 51-54.

8. In fact, the poem fulfills the criteria of a meditation as elucidated by Louis Martz in *The Poetry of Meditation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954). In the course of the poem, a personal confrontation is represented, and something is "won" by the speaker.

9. Neumann, pp. 20-27.

10. Peter Szondi, *Celan-Studien* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), pp. 13-45. The translation appeared in William Shakespeare, *Einundzwanzig Sonette*, tr. Paul Celan (Frankfurt/Main: Insel, 1967).

11. "Beständigkeit, das Thema von Shakespeares Sonett, wird für Celan zu dem Medium, in welchem sein Vers sich aufhält, zur Beständigkeit zwingt. Beständigkeit wird zum Konstituens des Verses, statt dass der Vers sie, wie der Shakespearesche, besingen, mit wechselnden Ausdrücken beschreiben würde. Celan's Intention auf die Sprache . . . ist die Realisierung der Beständigkeit im Vers." Szondi, p. 38. The term "Intention" is borrowed from Walter Benjamin's essay "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers" and is redefined by Szondi as "das Gerichtetsein des Bewusstseins auf die Sprache . . . die allem Sprechen vorausliegende Sprachkonzeption . . . die Art des Meinens, welche die Sprachverwendung prägt" ("the directedness of consciousness to language . . . the language conception that precedes all speech . . . the mode of meaning that stamps the [particular] use of language").

12. See especially the great altercation between Hotspur and Glendower in *1 Henry IV*, III, i, 119-33, which is of unparalleled metrical and rhetorical complexity.

13. For another illuminating case in Celan, the reader is referred to "Fernen" (*SzS*, I 95), where the key activity of "messen," i.e. to measure, is performed autonymically, in independent motion, by the two systems of syntax and semantics. I take this opportunity to thank the members of a seminar at Princeton University who heard an early version of the present paper and contributed much valuable criticism; this seminar had no name, but I remember it fondly as "the informal faculty seminar on critical theory in either the English or the German sense."