

ANAMNESIS: PAUL CELAN'S TRANSLATIONS OF POETRY

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In Flannery O'Connor's story "The Displaced Person," Mr. Shortley, the white migrant worker on Mrs. McIntyre's dairy farm, observes:

That's where we make our mistake, . . . letting all them people onto English. There'd be a heap less trouble if everybody only knew his own language. My wife said knowing two languages was like having eyes in the back of your head. You couldn't put nothing over on her.¹

One, perhaps the least obvious reason the Displaced Person—a Polish immigrant to the U.S. in the late 1940s—was displaced, was his knowledge of a language, and thus his awareness of differing cultural references, other than American English of the rural South. This alone proved latently threatening to the other characters, who despite the disparity of their racial and social backgrounds were reminded of their common culture, from which they too, on another level, would become displaced. Cultural identity becomes defensive in response as much to imagined threats as to real ones, the imagined threats being perhaps nothing more than an individual's conscious expression of activated cultural references, producing awareness of difference. Cultural references are the objects and recurring patterns of experience whose names the child first and repeatedly hears, the designations psychologically intertwined with the phenomenon designated. The intrusion of another language, replete with baggage, represents a raid on a heretofore stable system.

Whether we perceive this consciously or not, translation confronts us daily, especially since acts of translation are part of every attempt to understand the utterances and messages of another human

or other animated being or even to perceive with language the self-expression of some phenomenon in nature—a quasi-metaphysical operation which moves in and out of language mysticism. Thus we may follow Benjamin: “Die Übersetzung der Sprache der Dinge in die des Menschen ist nicht nur Übersetzung des Stummen in das Lauthafte, sie ist die Übersetzung des Namenlosen in den Namen” [Translating the language of things into that of humans entails not only translating silence into audibility; it means translating the nameless into the name].² Communication and translation are often one and the same.³ Translations are linguistic documents, usually written texts, constructed by someone who as a rule is unknown to the reader but who is inconspicuously present in the text, someone to whom we rarely pay attention or, if we do, then in passing, only to dismiss him or her from our consciousness. Or if we take more than passing notice, then it is because we are perhaps upset because the translator does not sufficiently master his craft and his own language, or because he or she wants to rouse the reader, and for good reason: this, gentle reader, is and shall remain a translation. If we are still successful in ignoring the translator, then we do so, quite assuredly, not out of malice but out of apathy. And yet it is the translator who makes the “strange” or “foreign” other text speak (in German one commonly refers to the original text as *fremd*)—the story, drama or poem, the philosophical or scientific treatise—and who makes it accessible and legible for a reading public which otherwise would have had no access or at best limited access to the text. The translator mediates such legibility and does so, often enough, under thankless conditions. Without this *Meister*, a specific reading public—whether it be literary, scientific or other—would not be confronted with and challenged by a text which might open significant perspectives for political, social or cultural thinking. Lost opportunities may be the result. It is an uninformed and complacent assumption that anything that is important will be translated, and that, conversely, whatever is not translated is simply unimportant.

The ways in which a text becomes articulated and audible in another language (a target language) are manifold. Goethe’s *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, to cite but one example of indirect mediation of texts, was published in English for the first time in London in 1779—five years after its publication in German. Five years were not a lengthy delay two centuries ago. What is remarkable about this translation, which Goethe himself found praiseworthy, was that the

anonymous translator (Daniel Malthus) based his translation, not on Goethe's German (of which he was innocent), but on a French translation of *Werther*. It was not until 1786 that English readers had access to a translation from the German.⁴

But the translation, in a tangible way, can also reflect its light back onto the original and the original's changing mode of being. In conferring with Samuel Beckett on difficult text passages, Elmar Tophoven, Beckett's German translator, provided Beckett with solutions for his own translation of the same work from the original French into English. Tophoven related this process to me in a recent letter:

bei der gemeinsamen Arbeit, d.h. Becketts Abhören meiner deutschen Version, konnte das Passieren der Intention des Autors durch das Medium der deutschen Sprache die Übersetzung, die Selbstübersetzung z.B. ins Englische, in einem gewissen Sinne beeinflussen. Darum wohl die Äusserung, die ich mir gleich ins Deutsche übersetzte, die aber nicht deutsch gemacht wurde: "Deine Übersetzungen wirken aufs Original zurück."

[during our collaboration—i.e., Beckett's listening to my German version—the passage of the author's intention through the medium of the German language was able in a certain sense to influence the translation, Beckett's translating Beckett into English, for example. This is probably how we should understand his statement, which I immediately translated into German, although it was not said in German: "Your translations influence the original retroactively."]

Tophoven also recounted in conversation a discussion he had once had with Paul Celan in which both sought a solution for the expression "wellhead" in Beckett's "Words and Music":

Through the scum
Down a little way
To where one glimpse
Of that wellhead.

One obvious solution, "Urquell" [wellspring], had to be rejected because of the beer with the same name. Celan, who was Tophoven's

predecessor as lecturer at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, suggested that Tophoven retain one member of this expression and make a composite with another word such as “Punkt” [point, place]. Tophoven’s rendering of these lines thus became:

durch den Feim
hinab, ein kleines Stück
dahin, wo ein Schimmer
von jenem Quellpunkt.⁵

“Quellpunkte,” as it happens, is the initial word of a poem in Celan’s last collection, *Lichtzwang* (1970):

Quellpunkte, nachts,
auf den Fernstrecken,
göttergewärtig,

deine Ausläufer, Hirnberg,
im Herz-Du,
von ihnen
umschäumt.⁶

[Wellsprings by night
on the long-distance routes,
expectant of gods,

your foothills, Mount Cerebrum,
in the heart, my collocutor,
befoamed by them
on all sides.]

The probable source of the word “Quellpunkte” in Celan’s text notwithstanding, one must resist the temptation of identifying Celan’s “Quellpunkte” with Beckett’s “wellhead” or even assuming an allusion to Beckett’s poem.⁷ It may, to be sure, qualify as an intertextual reference, but one, if taken alone, which says next to nothing of Beckett’s importance for Celan and frustratingly little about the influence of translation problems on the origins of poetic speech—and this even despite the immanent theme of translation as a meshing of words and music into unity, the translation of musical intent into

textual content in Beckett's text. We are left with a tantalizing account which prepares ground for enquiry.

The problem has a specific focus with regard to poetry, for poetry, as one genre characterization has it, is *a priori* untranslatable. Gottfried Benn, to cite but one witness, explained it thus:

Das Wort ist . . . national verwurzelt. Bilder, Statuen, Sonaten, Symphonien sind international—Gedichte nie. Man kann das Gedicht als das Unübersetzbare definieren. Das Bewusstsein wächst in die Worte hinein, das Bewusstsein transzendiert in die Worte.⁸

[Words have . . . national roots. Pictures, statues, sonatas, symphonies are international—poems never. One can define the poem as that which is untranslatable. Consciousness grows into the words, consciousness transcends the words.]

Benn—who, incidentally, did not translate poetry—does not state explicitly that it can or cannot be done, nor does he pass judgement on existing attempts. Benjamin, translator of Baudelaire, follows Romantic tradition when he sees poetry, of all literary forms, as most closely related to music and thus inherently presenting the severest difficulties for the translator.⁹ The presumed impossibility of translation has its roots in the genre-specific mode of language (as a vehicle for perception), with implicit semantic structures, aural suggestion, *Sprachgestik*, ellipses, and a tradition of metaphoric expression which is uncompromisingly condensed, relentlessly precise and hence not paraphrasable. Poets themselves, among translators of poetry, assume a special position for reasons of vocation: "Was nicht selber Poesie ist," Hans Magnus Enzensberger wrote aphoristically, "kann nicht Übersetzung von Poesie sein [what is not itself poetry, cannot be a translation of poetry]."¹⁰ This is what Novalis had in mind when he wrote, the translator "muss der Dichter des Dichters seyn und ihn also nach seiner und des Dichters eigener Idee *zugleich* reden lassen können" [the translator is necessarily the poet of the poet and should be able to let the poet speak according to his and the poet's own idea *at the same time*].¹¹ Not infrequently do poets turn to translating. Karl Krolow, himself a seasoned translator, suspects that a poet's curiosity about poetry in another tongue is natural.¹² At least half of the forty-three poets Paul Celan translated were occasional or

obsessed translators. Poets are drawn to testing or to demonstrating the translatability of other poetry into their own idiom, to seeking the stress limits of their mother tongue and to exploring the *limes* of their own linguistic competence and creative resources. These poets are concerned with expanding and enriching their own mode of speech, and the result is often enough both an idiosyncratic and incorporated part of their original work—witness George, Rilke, Pound or Pasternak. The motivation of a poet to translate may even originate, quite literally, in a vital need to reach out and reach into and appropriate another poetic corpus, the “strange” one of the other poet. One will now have to read “strange” as incorporating that which is familiar and recognizable in the other poet’s texts (affinity otherwise being questionable), or, indeed, recollected as some form of *déjà vu*, of anamnesis, which assumes pre-existence of ideas or, by extension, the recognizability of a voice speaking at once in the text and in the translating poet. Benjamin’s concept of “pure language” is, by analogy, such anamnesis, since all languages similarly strive to evoke, liberate and make transparent a postulated “pure language” underlying all languages. Thus all translations are related in their intention towards language (“intention” meaning here not purpose, but direction of attention towards an object). Benjamin does not attempt to fathom “pure language” by metaphysical speculation, but deduces its presence in translation. Translations, for their part, are historically determined and represent a further stage in the afterlife of literary works.¹³ In this context Benjamin’s thought and Celan’s poetics intersect, since the poet saw his poetry as grounded in history and not in an aesthetic continuum supposedly untouched by the dirty ravages of time and history. In translating, Celan exercised forms—meters, rhythms, rhymes, though not consistently metaphor—that were viable and at home neither in his own poetry nor in his own time, for literary, but also for historical reasons.

Seeking access to Paul Celan’s translations of poetry entails confronting oneself with unaccustomed, perhaps with unsettling readings (*Les-Arten*). Just as in his own poems, which are anything but exoteric, Celan does not appreciably facilitate accessibility, but the hermeneutic exertion leads the reader to surprising areas of perception and experience. His poetic translations bear testimony to the effort of determining the nature or peculiarity of his encounter with other poets, with other poems, with the Other (*Begegnung* is a

category explicitly central to Celan's poetics). They are not mere embellishments or simply stations of his *Belesenheit*, but rather visible markers left by the poetic visitations of other poets in his home territory. They are landmarks of self-recognition and a coming home by way of distant poetic expeditions.

The simultaneity of languages and thus the polyphony of his experienced surroundings were for Celan as natural as they were formative. Born in 1920, Celan belonged to the Ashkenazim in Czernowitz in Northern Bukovina, a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918, a region of Romania between 1918 and 1944, and part of Ukraine since 1944. Celan wrote in 1958:

Es war eine Gegend, in der Menschen und Bücher lebten. Dort, in dieser nun der Geschichtslosigkeit anheimgefallenen ehemaligen Provinz der Habsburgermonarchie. . . (III, 185)

[It was a region in which people and books were alive—in the former province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which now suffers the fate of existing outside history.]

In Czernowitz, where half of the population was Jewish, different cultures and different languages—German, Romanian, Ukrainian, Polish and others—coexisted in what Rose Ausländer has termed a “baroque linguistic milieu.”¹⁴ German, spoken by a majority of Czernowitz’ inhabitants, was the cultural and colloquial language of the city. “Everywhere in the city,” writes Celan’s biographer Israel Chalfen, “one heard Bukovina German, which was filled with Yiddish expressions and was spoken with Austrian nonchalance and Slavic breadth.”¹⁵ Celan’s mother rejected colloquial Bukovina German and insisted that High German, *Schriftdeutsch*, be spoken at home (Chalfen, p. 40). Thus German was and remained Celan’s mother tongue and first language, in spite of the coexistence and the simultaneity of languages in Czernowitz; it remained his mother tongue during the German occupation of the Bukovina, during his one and a half years at a work camp, and remained his mother tongue even after the murder of his parents, relatives and friends in a concentration camp on the Southern Bug River, which flows through the Ukraine and into the Black Sea. Celan’s early poem “Nähe der Gräber” mentions this river explicitly in its opening lines:

Kennt noch das Wasser des südlichen Bug,
Mutter, die Welle, die Wunden dir schlug? (III, 20)

[Do the Southern Bug's waters still know
the wave, Mother, which caused you such wounds?]

Despite the horrors, Celan retained German, although German—albeit another German—was also the language of the murderers, although the linguistic community within his family and his homeland no longer existed, and although he, with the exception of six months in Vienna in 1948, never again lived in a German-speaking country, choosing instead Paris, where he lived for over 20 years until his suicide in 1970. He did not betray or repress his German under these pressures; it hardened in order to survive. George Steiner succinctly characterizes this language:

All of Celan's own poetry is translated *into* German. In the process the receptor-language becomes unhoused, broken, idiosyncratic almost to the point of non-communication. It becomes a "meta-German" cleansed of historical-political dirt and thus, alone, usable by a profoundly Jewish voice after the holocaust.¹⁶

In the same poem "Nähe der Gräber," which he wrote after the murder of his parents in the winter of 1942–43, Celan apostrophizes his dead mother, seeking her consent to write in his—their—German:

Und duldest du, Mutter, wie einst, ach, daheim,
den leisen, den deutschen, den schmerzlichen Reim?

[And would you suffer, Mother, as once back home,
the quiet, German and painful rhyme?]

At the urging of Romanian friends, he did attempt to write Romanian texts during his stay in Bucharest from 1945 to 1947: several poems, surrealistic prose texts and translations (e.g., Čekhov's "Peasants" and a few stories by Kafka). These attempts were not frustrated by linguistic insecurity, but by a lacking cultural identity, by lacking original references. He deemed it necessary, not only to retain, but especially to intensify his use of German while "rejecting the vernacu-

lar that was not his . . . , rarefying and condensing, rather than merely purifying the language of the tribe"¹⁷—and to a degree that today it is impossible to speculate about his poetic development had he stayed with Romanian. To my knowledge, Celan was at no point seriously tempted to write poetry chiefly or exclusively in another language—as Rilke once considered relinquishing German in favor of Russian or George in favor of French, or as Rose Ausländer, also from Czerowitz and a pre-war and post-war acquaintance of Celan's, actually did turn to English during her American exile. To Yves Bonnefoy Celan later expressed his isolation as a poet writing German—this time not in a Romanian, but in a French environment: “Vous êtes chez vous, dans votre langue, vos références, parmi les livres, les oeuvres que vous aimez. Moi, je suis dehors. . . .” [You are at home, in your language, your references, among the books, the works you love. But I am on the outside].¹⁸

Home and family were irretrievably lost, and their absence, together with the repartitioning of the Bukovina, blocked a homecoming. In 1958 Celan wrote:

Erreichbar, nah und unverloren blieb inmitten der Verluste dies eine: die Sprache.

Sie, die Sprache, blieb unverloren, ja, trotz allem. Aber sie musste nun hindurchgehen durch ihre eigenen Antwortlosigkeiten, hindurchgehen durch furchtbares Verstummen, hindurchgehen durch die tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede. Sie ging hindurch und gab keine Worte her für das, was geschah; aber sie ging durch dieses Geschehen. Ging hindurch und durfte wieder zutage treten, “angereichert” von all dem.

In dieser Sprache habe ich, in jenen Jahren und in den Jahren nachher, Gedichte zu schreiben versucht: um zu sprechen, um mich zu orientieren, um zu erkunden, wo ich mich befand und wohin es mit mir wollte, um mir Wirklichkeit zu entwerfen. (III, 185f.)

[One thing remained attainable, close and unlost amidst all the losses: language.

Language was not lost, in spite of all that happened. But it had to go through its own responselessness, go through horrible silences, go through the thousand darknesses of death-bringing

speech. It went through and offered no words for what happened; but it went through these events. It went through and was able to emerge once again, enriched by all that had transpired.

I have attempted to write poems in this language, in those years and in the years that followed—in order to speak, in order to orient myself, in order to explore where I was and where I was yet to go, in order to define reality for myself.]

Language is the wanderer's "Wüstenbrot," as it is termed in "Osterqualm," a poem published in the collection *Atemwende* in 1967.

Wir hier, wir,
überfahrtsfroh, vor dem Zelt,
wo du Wüstenbrot bukst
aus mitgewanderter Sprache. (II, 85)

[We, here,
grateful for the passage, before the tent
where you baked bread-of-the-desert
from co-wandered language.]

It was language, specifically the German language, that nourished the homeless poet during his twenty-three years of exile. Language was the part of *Heimat* which was salvaged and thus had to stand for *Heimat*, vouch for it, constantly, relentlessly. Thus the idea of a homecoming was directed inextricably towards a linguistic *Heimat*: *Heimat* had become a spiritual and intellectual location, although not a *locus amoenus*. For this reason he wrote at the close of his speech in Darmstadt in 1960:

Ich suche die Gegend [i.e., the spiritual and biographical Bukovina], aus der Reinhold Lenz und Karl Emil Franzos, die mir auf dem Weg hierher und bei Georg Büchner Begegneten, kommen. Ich suche auch, denn ich bin ja wieder da, wo ich begonnen habe, den Ort meiner eigenen Herkunft.

Ich suche das alles mit wohl sehr ungenauem, weil unruhigem Finger auf der Landkarte—auf einer Kinder-Landkarte, wie ich gleich gestehen muss.

Keiner dieser Orte ist zu finden, es gibt sie nicht, aber ich

weiss, wo es sie, zumal jetzt, geben müsste, und . . . ich finde etwas!

. . . ich finde . . . einen *Meridian*. (III, 202)

[I am looking for the region [i.e., the spiritual and biographical Bukovina] from which Reinhold Lenz and Karl Emil Franzos came; I encountered them in Georg Büchner and on the way to you here. I am also looking for the place of my own origins, for I am again where I began.

I am looking for all of this with an unsteady and thus probably inaccurate finger on the map—on a child's map, as I should admit outright.

None of these places can be found, they do not exist, but I know, and now especially, where they ought to exist, and . . . I find something!

. . . I find . . . a *Meridian*.]

Having come from this geographic and biographic region, having so often sojourned in border regions and intersecting cultures, having been a *Grenzgänger* between German and Jewish, Romance and Slavic and Anglo-Saxon cultures and yet fully at home in none, Celan transposed other poets into German, into that which was most familiar and intimate. He drew them towards himself, moved in and out of their metaphors and motifs as part of his endeavor “mir Wirklichkeit zu entwerfen” (III, 186). “All das,” he wrote to Hans Bender in 1961, with reference to his Büchner-Preis-Rede and his translations, “sind Begegnungen, auch hier bin ich mit meinem Dasein zur Sprache gegangen” [all of these have been encounters; here, too, I have gone with my very existence to language].¹⁹

Begegnung is a metaphor which in recent decades, and especially since Adorno's rigorous critique in *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit* (1964), has lost meaning proportionate to its increased currency in German social and political discourse. For Celan, *Begegnung* still signified a confrontation, identification and coming to terms with another entity or phenomenon (a perception, concept, person or thing) that approached him, regardless of its form. It helped him define his own identity in linguistic and poetic terms and locate or determine his position in a first poetic person—an effort fully analogous to Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue and of the interaction between an *Ich* and a *Du*. The *Begegnung* with poems by William

Shakespeare and Osip Mandel'stam belonged to the most crucial and far-reaching events of his poetic development. Time and again, *Begegnung* became *Selbstbegegnung*, an encounter with himself, as unexpected as it was intense.

Another metaphor for this phenomenon is that of the *Flaschenpost* [message in a bottle], a term Celan gleaned from Mandel'stam's essay "About the Interlocutor" ("O sobesednike," 1913) to designate the modes of existence and reception of a poetic text. In his speech in Bremen (1958) Celan said:

Das Gedicht kann, da es ja eine Erscheinungsform der Sprache und damit seinem Wesen nach dialogisch ist, eine Flaschenpost sein, aufgegeben in dem—gewiss nicht immer hoffnungsstarken—Glauben, sie könnte irgendwo und irgendwann an Land gespült werden, an Herzland vielleicht. Gedichte sind auch in dieser Weise unterwegs: sie halten auf etwas zu. (III, 186)

[The poem can be—since it is a manifestation of language and thus by nature dialogical—a message in a bottle; as such it is dispatched with the belief—a belief, to be sure, not always sustained by unshakeable hope—that it might, somewhere and at some time, be washed ashore, perhaps on the shores of the heart. Poems are also in this manner under way: they are headed for something.]

Such poems are those of Shakespeare and Mandel'stam, Rimbaud and Esenin, Ungaretti and Blok, Apollinaire and Pessoa, Dickinson and Michaux. Celan translated into German poetic texts from seven literatures: French, Russian, English, American, Romanian, Italian, Portuguese and Hebrew. They include short individual texts by Apollinaire, Mallarmé, Eluard, Dickinson, Služevskij, Evtušenko, Rokeah and others), long poems by Blok, Valéry and Rimbaud, and collections of poems by Mandel'stam, Esenin, Shakespeare, Michaux, Char, Supervielle, Ungaretti. Apart from three English poets of the seventeenth century, almost without exception the poets of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that Celan translated belong to the forerunners and founders of modern poetry; they were symbolists or surrealists or strongly influenced by symbolism or surrealism, important representatives of modernism in the respective literatures, and contemporaries of Celan.

Paul Ancel—"Celan" being an anagram assumed in 1945 or 1946—began translating as a *Gymnasiast* and then as a student in Czernowitz, often together with his friend Immanuel Weissglas, a poet and journalist who lived and worked in Bucharest after the war. Shakespeare, Apollinaire, Yeats, Housman, Eluard and Arghezi were the first poets he translated; the texts of these translations are mostly unpublished and are among his papers in Bucharest or Paris or in private collections. We do know that some of the Shakespeare sonnets belonged to the early translations and that Sonnet 57 was in a little black book he carried with him while in a work camp. Later, in Vienna and Paris, he turned to the Surrealists (Breton, Césaire, Péret), and in the 1950s he published translations of poems by Apollinaire, Marianne Moore, Picasso, Pessoa, Char and others. In the mid-1950s Emanuel Raïs, a Slavist living in Paris, introduced, or re-introduced, him to Russian poetry of this century. Osip Mandel'stam especially, but also Anna Akhmatova and Marina Tsvetayeva (neither of whom he translated) and later Velimir Khlebnikov. Between 1958 and 1964 Celan was uncannily prolific, producing, among other things, two important volumes of poetry, *Sprachgitter* (1959) and *Die Niemandrose* (1963), the prose text "Gespräch im Gebirg" (1959), speeches in Bremen (1958) and Darmstadt (1960) which elucidate major aspects of his poetics, and large and exceedingly difficult translations: *Das trunkene Schiff* by Rimbaud (1958), *Die Zwölf* by Blok (1958), *Gedichte* by Mandel'stam (1959), *Die Junge Parze* by Valéry (1960; Rilke had refused to touch this text because of its difficulty), *Gedichte* by Esenin (1961), eighteen sonnets by Shakespeare (1964), and commencement of his work as editor and co-translator of Michaux's *Dichtungen, Schriften I* (1966). In addition, during this period he translated and published single texts or several shorter texts by one author.

All of these translations deserve being characterized as *Nachdichtungen*, some even—if one discriminates keenly—as *Umdichtungen*, although the term "imitations" would be incorrect and misleading. They are texts which are recognizably by Celan, even to the point that some critics interpreted this as a fault, an inexcusable flaw. The polemics ran something like this: Celan failed to make the foreign poets at home in German, but took possession of them instead, confiscated and expropriated them, disfigured them beyond recognition; in a word: he "Celanified" them. This was justification enough to

view them as ephemeral. And this then became their fate, since literary reception was virtually non-existent and nearly the entire corpus remained out of print until 1983. After 1964 Celan sought a considerably higher degree of literalness in his translations of poets such as Michaux, Supervielle, Ungaretti and Rokeah than he had in his earlier, post-surrealistic texts, while at the same time straining the limits of language in his experimental translations of Khlebnikov.

The fundamental question concerning what expectations one may or should place on translations, and on translations of poetry in particular, leads us to the elusive and hence questionable concept of "faithfulness." An unequivocal definition of faithfulness is impossible, unless, of course, normative, prescriptive demands be made on the text or the translator. But who can determine, and on the basis of which criteria or which of the many and sometimes mutually contradictory theories, models and methods of translation, how a particular text should be translated? How would one have to translate Hans Arp's line "Ich bin der grosse Dardanas" into, for example, Russian or Latin, languages which have no definite article?²⁰ To be sure, several solutions are conceivable—detours, compensatory maneuvers or out-maneuverings, interpolations—some better and more effective than others; but the point is precisely that there are several approximations and none of them authoritative. The irretrievability of the genesis of a poem in language and individuality, in time and history, thwarts any duplication of the original text. (Is it not significant that "duplication" and "duplicity," pertaining here to ostensible reproducibility, share the same root?) This is not to mention the language and individuality, the time and history of the translator himself. As Wilhelm von Humboldt wrote, translations are

eben so viel Bilder desselben Geistes; denn jeder giebt den wieder, den er auffasste, und darzustellen vermochte; der wahre ruht allein in der Urschrift.

[(Translations are) just so many images of the same spirit; for every translator renders that spirit which he understood and was able to represent. The true one lies solely in the original text.]

For which reason he recommended:

Auch lernt der Theil der Nation, der die Alten nicht selbst lesen

kann, sie besser durch mehrere Uebersetzungen, als durch eine, kennen.²¹

[That part of the nation that cannot read the authors of antiquity of its own, does well to become acquainted with them through several translations rather than through one.]

The “faithfulness” of a poet-translator is, in the final analysis, directed towards the translator himself, without consideration of normative expectations of critics. And this implies that a translation should liberate, not incarcerate, the original text.

Celan stated his intentions in his Mandel'stam translations to Gleb Struve in 1959:

glaube ich sagen zu dürfen, dass meine Übersetzungen auch von meiner ständigen Bemühung um philologische Genauigkeit zeugen. . . . Freilich ging es mir vor allem darum, bei grösster Textnähe das Dichterische am Gedicht zu übersetzen, die Gestalt wiederzugeben, das Timbre des Sprechenden.²²

[I believe I may rightly say that my translations bear testimony to my constant endeavor towards linguistic precision. . . . To be sure, I was chiefly concerned, not only with staying as close to the original text as possible, but also with translating the poetry in the poem, with rendering form and timbre of the voice speaking in the poem.]

The determining factors of these translations are the translator's rendering of “das Dichterische,” the poetic quality of the texts as understood by Celan, and Celan's own poetic voice in its own time and place in history. Or to put it more precisely: not only Celan's own concept of what is the immanently poetic quality of a particular poem went into the translations, but his own historical period as well—that is, biographical factors, specifically the suffering of the Jews under German persecution, the experience of homelessness (*Heimatlosigkeit*) and the constant proximity to death. In 1958 Celan said:

das Gedicht ist nicht zeitlos. Gewiss, es erhebt einen Unendlichkeitsanspruch, es sucht, durch die Zeit hin-

durchzugreifen—durch sie hindurch, nicht über sie hinweg.
(III, 186)

[The poem is not timeless. To be sure, it does lay claim to being infinite, it attempts to reach through time—through it, not over and beyond it.]

Under such conditions it would thus have been an act of ‘faithlessness’ and even of sabotage on his own poetry if Celan had employed a harmonizing and mellifluous mode of speech for texts that existed in, shall we say, traditionally polished or refined styles in the originals—if he had, for example, translated Esenin’s nature poetry by imitating Eichendorff or even Lenau. (Can stylistic imitation, if not intended as parody, produce a non-epigonous text?) In 1958 he wrote about contemporary German-language poetry and thus about his own:

Düsterstes im Gedächtnis, Fragwürdigstes um sich her, kann sie, bei aller Vergegenwärtigung der Tradition, in der sie steht, nicht mehr die Sprache sprechen, die manches geneigte Ohr immer noch von ihr zu erwarten scheint. Ihre Sprache ist nüchterner, faktischer geworden, sie misstraut dem Schönen, sie versucht, wahr zu sein. Es ist also . . . eine “grauere” Sprache, eine Sprache, die unter anderem auch ihre “Musikalität” an einem Ort angesiedelt wissen will, wo sie nichts mehr mit jenem “Wohlklang” gemein hat, der noch mit und neben dem Furchtbarsten mehr oder minder unbekümmert einhertönte. (III, 167)

[With extreme bleakness in its memory and extreme dubiousness surrounding it on all sides, and despite the presence of the tradition in which it stands, poetry can no longer speak the language which many a willing ear still seems to expect from it. Its language has become more austere and factual; it distrusts the beautiful, and it attempts to be true. It is thus . . . a “grayer” language, a language which among other things wants to see its “musicality” situated in a region where it has nothing in common with that “harmoniousness” which in a more or less unconcerned manner sounded with and alongside the horrors.]

Celan exercised faithfulness both to the texts he was translating and to his own, although the category "faithfulness," *Treue*, should be replaced by the category of commitment and obligation, *Verbindlichkeit*, in which the notions of "bind" and "bond" are present: the *Verbindlichkeit* of the translation towards the original resembles the *Verbindlichkeit* of the poet's own poems towards the experienced reality through which and out of which he created his texts. A minuscule example, the two opening lines of Jules Supervielle's poem "Paris," may serve to illustrate the point:

O Paris, ville ouverte
Ainsi qu'une blessure,

Du offene Stadt, du wunden-
offene Stadt Paris, (IV, 412–13)

The poetic energy of the translation attains a higher concentration than the diction of the original, despite equal word-count and the repetition of "du" and "offen." The apostrophe "O Paris" is intensified when the city is twice addressed with "du," a prominent stylistic usage in Celan's verse; the torn-open word "wunden- / offene" symbolizes in a Baroque manner *das Offene*, a term crucial to Celan's poetics (cf. his speeches: III, 186, 199, 200) and an expression demonstrating visually that the city was experienced as an open wound. The original, by contrast, places the simile harmoniously in a line for itself. Paris as a "ville ouverte" refers to the status of the city during the German occupation between 1940 and 1944, a period in which, as it happens, Supervielle was living in exile in South America. By repeating "offen" Celan revokes any association of "weltoffen" with the expression "du offene Stadt," after which "du wunden- / offene Stadt Paris" follows harder and with heightened impact. Biographical aspects of Celan's relationship to Paris, where he lived from 1948 to 1970, may have further motivated the translation.

The analysis of translations of texts by Mandel'stam, Apollinaire and Shakespeare takes us farther and uncovers relationships between original and translation on the one side and Celan's translation and his poetry on the other. At the same time these translations exhibit a theme central both to Celan's poems and to his translations: that of death and remembrance or commemoration,

Eingedenken. In a letter to Struve in 1959, Celan mentioned his “Begegnungen mit den Gedichten Mandelstamms,” although the word “Begegnung” conceals more of the impression Mandel’shtam made on Celan than it divulges.²³ He is also reported to have said that he considered translating Mandel’shtam into German to be a no less important task than writing his own poems.²⁴ One might name several texts that would seem to support this statement: poems whose impetus was *Sprachmystik*, poems with a Jewish theme, poems dealing with the Russian Revolution and the dawn of a new epoch. All of these themes were of extraordinary importance for Celan. Mandel’shtam’s poem “Eta noch nepropravima” (1916) recalls the memory of his deceased mother on the occasion of her funeral. Celan translated, rewrote the poem presumably in memory of his own mother, whose hour of death and grave he did not know. Celan’s own poem “Esenbaum,” which was originally entitled “Mutter” [“Mother”] and which evokes the painful absence of his murdered mother, may be read as a counterpart to Mandel’shtam’s poem and as a prerequisite to its translation:

Esenbaum, dein Laub blickt weiss ins Dunkel.
Meiner Mutter Haar ward nimmer weiss.

Löwenzahn, so grün ist die Ukraine.
Meine blonde Mutter kam nicht heim.

Regenwolke, säumst du an den Brunnen?
Meine leise Mutter weint für alle.

Runder Stern, du schlingst die goldne Schleife.
Meiner Mutter Herz ward wund von Blei.

Eichne Tür, wer hob dich aus den Angeln?
Meine sanfte Mutter kann nicht kommen. (I, 19/III, 40)

[Aspen, your leaves look whitely into the dark.
My mother’s hair never turned white.

Dandelion, so green is the Ukraine.
My blond mother never came home.

Round star, you tie the golden bow.
My mother's heart was torn by lead.

Oaken door, who pulled you from your hinges?
My gentle mother can not come.]

Mandel'stam became an *alter ego* and provided Celan with a sense of the "Irréfutable" and the "Vrai"²⁵ within an awareness of intense affinity and occasional identification, as these lines from his poem "Es ist alles anders" indicate:

... ein Weg
nach Russland steigt dir ins Herz,
die karelische Birke
hat
gewartet,
der Name Ossip kommt auf dich zu, du erzählst ihm,
was er schon weiss. ... (I, 284)

to Russia rises to your heart,
the Karelian birch
has
waited,
the name Osip moves towards you, you tell it
what it already knows]

Celan was also acutely aware of *déjà vu* experiences concerning Mandel'shtam, things that went beyond superficial similarities: Jewishness; persecution; relationship to parents and acquisition of language; related imagery centering around "stone," "word," "silence" and "time"; suicide attempt(s); even unfounded allegations of plagiarism leveled at both. These were a few of the "meridians," an important concept in Celan's poetics (e.g., III, 202), that connected him with often distant times, objects, occurrences, poets.

The translation of “Diese Nacht: nicht gutzumachen” would seem to be an act of identification in the above mentioned sense:

Diese Nacht: nicht gutzumachen,
bei euch: Licht, trotzdem.
Sonnen, schwarz, die sich entfachen
vor Jerusalem.

Sonnen, gelb: grössres Entsetzen—
schlaf, eiapoepi.
Helles Judenhaus: sie setzen
meine Mutter bei.

Sie, die nicht mehr priesterlichen,
gnad- und heilsberaubt,
singen aus der Welt, im Lichte,
Eta noč' nepopravima,

Judenstimmen, die nicht schwiegen,
Mutter, wie es schallt.
Ich erwach in meiner Wiege,
sonnenschwarz umstrahlt.

Eta noč' nepopravima,
A u vas ešče svetlo.
U vorot Erusalima
Solnce černo vzošlo.

Solnce želtoe strašnee—
Baju bajuški baju—
V svetlom khrame iudei
Khoronili mat' moju.

Blagodati ne imeja
I svjaščenstva lišjony,
V svetlom khrame iudei
Otpovali prakh ženy.

I nad mater'ju zveneli
 Golosa izrail'tjan
 Ja prosnulsja v kolybeli,
 Černym solncem osijan. (V, 94–95)

[This night is irreparable,
 but near you it is still light.
 At Jerusalem's gates
 a black sun rose.

The yellow sun is more terrible—
 lull lull lullaby—
 In the bright temple the Jews
 performed last rites for my mother.

Bereft of grace
 and lacking priesthood,
 the Jews in the bright temple
 chanted psalms over a woman's dust.

And over my mother rang out
 the voices of the Israelites.
 I awakened in the crib,
 lit up by a black sun.]

This deceptively simple, enigmatic little poem allows entry up to a point, after which the interpretation runs into serious difficulties. The translation follows the original closely, but for reasons which are not readily evident. Of the stylistic elements in Celan's text, an inconspicuous though salient one is worth noting, one which occurs four times in the first seven lines and which can be found throughout Celan's poetry, prose and translations: the colon. Here and elsewhere, the colon compresses and abridges the text and helps make it semantically denser by eliminating semantically weak connectives; it replaces eliminated verbs, especially the verb "to be"; and it is a device used to break down hypotactic structures into paratactic ones. The consequence of such a usage of the colon is discontinuity in the poem's flow.²⁶ Another significant feature is the translator's consistent use of the present tense (with the exception of "schwiegen," v. 13)

instead of the past tense of the original. The past, one should conclude, existed in Celan's mind—and poetics—only as part of the present; Hans Mayer, speaking of the poet from personal knowledge, wrote that a naked and pervasive sense of the present dominated Celan's life.²⁷

"Nepopravima" connotes the quality of what caused this night to be: the word refers to something which is irretrievably lost, shattered, past. The primary lexical definition is usually "nicht wiedergutzumachen," a word Celan avoids presumably because of its association with the West German policy of a financial *Wiedergutmachung*, reparation payments to Jews in Israel, beginning in the early 1950s at Konrad Adenauer's initiative, as an official acknowledgement of German responsibility and guilt for the Jewish catastrophe.²⁸ The notion that the suffering of the Jews might in any way be made good again must have seemed absurd, if not odious, to Celan. One should add that this example does not stand isolated. Celan nowhere translated the French "la race" by "Rasse," choosing instead circumlocutions such as "Geschlecht," "Gebüt" and "ihresgleichen."²⁹

The image of the black sun cannot be fully interpreted without reference to other poems and prose passages in Mandel'stam's work which complement it in an expanded context. For the moment it suffices to note the contrast between the black sun over Jerusalem's gates and the brightly illuminated "Judenhaus" where the burial ceremony takes place—although such a ceremony would never take place in a synagogue. The death of the poet's mother causes a subjectively experienced macrocosmic darkening of the entire earth. The night of the vigil (v. 1) and the rising black sun (v. 4) surround the light of the temple; "u vas [with you]" and "U vorot [at the gates]" contrast with one another. Mandel'stam's black sun—a single one—shines on the gates of Heavenly Jerusalem, the passage between time and eternity, between man and God. Celan expands the metaphor by using a plural "Sonnen" and placing the epithet "schwarz" after the noun. The last line of the poem returns to the black sun, for which Celan retains the phonetic sounds of "Sonnen, schwarz" in a homonymic adverb "sonnenschwarz."

The yellow sun of the second stanza is more terrible, although it presumably alludes to the light of candles and lends the ceremony an aura of drowsiness, sleep and dream: "Baju bajuški, baju" / "schlaf, eiapopei." The death of the poet's mother takes the child back to

earliest childhood, which lay in unremembered and now suspended time. The last two lines of the poem—"Ich erwach in meiner Wiege, / sonnenschwarz umstrahlt"—terminate the child's pre-conscious state and throw him back into the darkness of the unprotected present.

The most obscure lines of the poem—"Sie, die nicht mehr priesterlichen, / gnad- und heilsberaubt" (vv. 9-10)—may reflect Mandel'stam's (at least nominal) conversion to Christianity whereby only Christian clergy could become recipients of grace.³⁰ Jewish priests, the *Kohanim*, are not rabbis and cannot lose their priesthood. Mandel'stam sees them divested of their holiness and their own vocation; their liturgical gestures are thus empty ones. The poem occasions eschatological reflections on time and the place of the individual in the cosmos, hence Celan's change of tense from past to present. The temple, Mandel'stam is saying, is the Heavenly Temple in Heavenly Jerusalem which the dead mother has entered outside of time. For this reason, too, Celan reads the mystical bent of the poem by translating "v svetlom khrame" [in the bright temple] by "im Lichte"; that can only mean the mystical light of the Godhead.

Guillaume Apollinaire's "L'Adieu" (1903) appeared in 1954 in a translation that is close, both in language and use of motif, to Celan's volume of poetry *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (1952):

J'ai cueilli ce brin de bruyère
L'automne est morte souviens-t'en
Nous ne nous verrons plus sur terre
Odeur du temps brin de bruyère
Et souviens-toi que je t'attends

Ich pflück den Halm vom Kraut der Heide.
Der Herbst ist tot—sei eingedenk.
Auf Erden scheiden wir nun beide.
O Duft der Zeit, o Halm der Heide.
Und dass ich warten werde, denk. (IV, 790-91)

The "bruyère" (*Heidekraut*, heather) becomes an image, in this poem, for time and for the suspension, or suspensibility, of temporality. Upon taking leave from the woman he loves, the poet breaks off a piece of heather in order to show, with this symbolic gesture, that time transcends the impossibility of the present.

Dead autumn (v. 2) and the prospect of never again meeting in this world (v. 3) show time to be a short span that must be overcome. Apollinaire associates the piece of heather with time, whose token the heather has become: the heather bears the scent of time ("Odeur du temps"). The qualities of heather—that it does not wilt and only gradually fades—support its poetic function in the poem.

Celan's translation decentralizes the image of "brin de bruyère" and makes its botanical designation less specific; it replaces the demonstrative pronoun in "ce brin" by a definite article which in "den Halm" only appears to be definite. "Halm vom Kraut der Heide" sounds like "Heidekraut" and it reminds the reader of "Heidekraut"; it does not, however, mean "Heidekraut," the translation of "bruyère," but rather something far more general. "Heidekraut" does not have "Halme," blades; "brin" suggests a small piece, perhaps a small stem, of heather. The alliteration on *br* in the original motivates an alliteration on *h* in the translation, and in this manner Celan prepares the way for abridging "Halm vom Kraut der Heide" in v. 1 to "Halm der Heide" in v. 4. The presence of a piece of a plant and its symbolic meaning was more important to Celan than the lexically correct translation of botanical nomenclature; presumably the sounds of "brin de bruyère," next to its function as a bringer of good fortune in French folklore, were decisive for its usage in the original. "Brin" and "Halm" have the same function in the text; they are related by intention, without designating the same object. "Halm" also belongs to those words frequently used in Celan's *Mohn und Gedächtnis*. A trace of the original's meaning ("Heidekraut") remains in "Kraut" (v. 1), and in v. 4 one still hears this word, despite its absence, since it is, in a sense, twice removed and lingers echo-like and non-verbally. This step-by-step withdrawal and disappearance of the plant (in Celan's text) corresponds, in its movement, both to the passing of time and to the departure of the woman the poet loves. In this way Celan also takes into account that the expression "brin de bruyère" in v. 4 is not a mere repetition, not an identical recurrence of "brin de bruyère" in v. 1, but has itself become echo and reminiscence.

The verse "O Duft der Zeit, o Halm der Heide" conceals even more references. In the first half of the line Celan approximates the original phonetically with "O Duft" for "odeur" and etymologically with "Zeit" for "temps." Despite such strict parallelism the number of syllables remains constant. Furthermore, this verse alludes unambivalently to the last lines of Celan's poem "Umsonst":

einst, als in Flammen das Schloss stand, als du sprachst wie die
 Menschen: Geliebte . . .
 Er kennt nicht den Mantel und rief nicht den Stern an und folgt
 jenem Blatt, das vorausschwebt.
 'O Halm', vermeint er zu hören, 'o Blume der Zeit'. (I, 13)

[once, when the castle stood in flames, when you spoke as
 humans do: Beloved . . .
 He knows not the cloak and evoked not the star and follows that
 leaf which glides ahead.
 'O blade', he seems to hear, 'o blossom of time'.]

The last line, similar to v. 4 of the translation, is an echo of v. 5 of "Umsonst":

die Halme der Schwermut verteilt er im Heer und die Blumen der
 Zeit,

[in the regiment he distributes the blades of melancholy and the
 blossoms of time]

Celan wrote "Umsonst" in 1945 and published it in 1948 for the first time in the post-war Austrian magazine *Plan* and in his first volume of poetry, *Der Sand aus den Urnen*. A lithograph by Edgar Jené faces the title page of the latter; the same lithograph entitled "O Blume der Zeit" was published simultaneously in a collection of Jené's lithographs in 1948. If we did not know with certainty that "Umsonst" was written in 1945 and thus predated Jené's picture, we might logically assume that Celan and Jené had collaborated on this publication in a manner typical of surrealist writers and artists. The year 1948 suggests in any case cooperation between Celan and Jené.

Observing and defending memory, *Gedächtnis*, is a crucial concern. When Celan translates "L'automne est morte souviens-t'en" as "Der Herbst ist tot—sei eingedenk," he names a category central to his thinking and his poetics: *Eingedenkbleiben*. He emphasizes the importance of *Eingedenksein* at the outset of his Bremer Rede:

Denken und Danken sind in unserer Sprache Worte ein und
 desselben Ursprungs. Wer ihrem Sinn folgt, begibt sich in

den Bedeutungsbereich von: "gedenken," "eingedenk sein," "Andenken," "Andacht." (III, 185)

[In our language, thinking and thanking are words of the same origin. If one pursues their meaning, one enters the semantic range of "commemorate," "remember," "remembrance" and "devotion."]

For the poem itself, a becoming intensely aware of time and transience means the survival or after-life in language of that which once was. The past that was once a present lives today solely in the preterite tense; present existence is marked, for Celan specifically, by *Eingedenken*.

The razing effect of time, the constant presence of death, and memory as a defiant wall and hoped-for salvation from both are the spheres through which Shakespeare's fifth sonnet and, even more, Celan's translation of this sonnet move. As Henriette Beese has pointed out, this sonnet is only one of approximately half of the *Einundzwanzig Sonette* (1967) that are devoted to the theme of *Erinnerung*. For Celan this is not astonishing, although critics and reviewers of the collection failed to recognize the criteria involved in the selection. Celan's encounter with Shakespeare's sonnets by way of translation encompasses a large period of time and includes his beginnings as a poet and the latter poetic forms of *Eingedenken*. These are Celan's only translations of sonnets, apart from a single one each by Nerval, Baudelaire and Desnos; among his own published poems he never used the sonnet form, and otherwise only three early texts from 1938, 1939 and presumably 1942–43 are known. This documents merely the infrequent use of the sonnet form and does not imply that sonnet form and *Eingedenken* express a causal relation.

The publication itself of "Achtzehn Sonette" by Shakespeare occurred for a commemorative occasion, Shakespeare's four-hundredth birthday, and on 23 April 1964—the assumed birthday—the Northern German Radio broadcast twenty sonnets in Celan's translation under the title "Die Rose Schönheit soll nicht sterben." Thus in many ways, with regard to Celan's biography, poetry, poetics and translations, this sonnet collection represents a culmination among his translations.

Those hours that with gentle work did frame
 The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell
 Will play the tyrants to the very same,
 And that unfair which fairly doth excel:

For never-resting time leads summer on
 To hideous winter and confounds him there,
 Sap check'd with frost, and lusty leaves quite gone,
 Beauty o'ersnow'd and bareness everywhere:

Then were not summer's distillation left
 A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,
 Beauty's effect with beauty were bereft,
 Nor it nor no remembrance what it was.

But flowers distill'd, though they with winter meet,
 Leese but their show: their substance still lives sweet.

Sie, die den Blick, auf dem die Blicke ruhn,
 geformt, gewirkt aus Zartestem: die Stunden—:
 sie kommen wieder, Anderes zu tun:
 was sie begründet, richten sie zugrunde.

Ist Sommer? Sommer *war*. Schon führt die Zeit
 den Wintern und Verfinstrungen entgegen.
 Laub grünte, Saft stieg . . . Einstmals. Überschneit
 die Schönheit. Und Entblösstes allerwegen.

Dann, blieb der Sommer nicht als Sommers Geist
 im Glas zurück, verflüssigt und gefangen
 das Schöne wär nicht, wäre sinnverwaist
 und unerinnert und dahingegangen.

Doch so, als Geist, gestaltlos, aufbewahrt,
 west sie, die Blume, weiter, winterhart. (V, 324–25)

Of all Shakespeare sonnets in Celan's translation, that of the fifth sonnet is characterized pre-eminently, not by the grinding friction resulting from unresolved textual resistance, but rather by a sover-

eign idiom deeply rooted in Celan's poetry. This is not to say that Shakespeare's text was merely a pre(-)text and an object for Celan's expropriation, for Shakespeare is too authoritative to use for arbitrary transformations. Perhaps this sovereignty is the potential and indeterminable quality of a text that makes it translatable, at least into a specific language and at a specific time. Why might one poem by the same poet—by Dylan Thomas, for example—be more readily translatable into German than another? Is it metaphoric structure and tradition, is it the coincidence of similar syntactic structures and culturally accessible images?

Be the answer as it may, the sovereignty confers upon the translation a poetic identity of its own, even if an atypical absence of apostrophe (*Du-Anrede*) makes the *Nachdichtung* more relaxed and distanced than is the case in many, perhaps most, of Celan's texts. The break between Shakespeare's and Celan's texts becomes conspicuously manifest in the change of tense between the first and second quartets: where Shakespeare structures his argument upon the uninterrupted universal present, Celan transports, between v. 1 and v. 7, the argument from the present into the past. The juxtaposition of "Schon" in "Schon führt" and the stressed preterite "war" (v. 5) produces a suspension of time dimensions, similar to the transitional musical chords in a modulation. Up until v. 8, the past proves to be the cause of the shift of meaning, as Henriette Beese has shown on the basis not only of the diction but also of the punctuation in vv. 2–3 and especially v. 7: "the past signs of summer are named in the awareness that they are past ('Laub grünte, Saft stieg'), and then after three periods, during which memory recalls that time, time's transience is stressed once again: 'Einstmals'.³¹

The deliberation of reflection in the entire second quartet retards the verse cadences correspondingly. Thus as a topical manifestation in Shakespeare's text becomes in Celan's text an experience of time that has more in common with certain aspects of Mandel'stam's notion and perception of time than with that of Shakespeare's argument in the fifth sonnet. Whereas Shakespeare articulates time as gnawing at all living and organic things, Mandel'stam sought everywhere to hear or perceive, relentlessly and affirmatively, the noise, hum or rustle of time (depending on how one translates the "šum" of Mandel'stam's prose text *Šum vremena*). His widow Nadežda Mandel'stam wrote that his love for slowly moving things originated in his desire to feel the movement of time. These included observing

the heavy movements of Armenian women while extracting honey, when the honey dripped out of the centrifuge.³² The second quartet of the Shakespeare/Celan text attempts to capture the movement of time. It attempts to develop Shakespeare's argument, not discursively, but *sprachgestisch*—that is, by the use of language suggestive of metaphorical or symbolic movement—and at the same time to make this unfolding perceptible in its slowness, in its own time.

Ist Sommer? Sommer *war* . . .
Laub grünte, Saft stieg . . . Einstmals. Überschnait
die Schönheit. Und Entblösstes allerwegen.

The stylistic means are brief question and answer, emphasis, monosyllabism with etymological reference to the original ("Laub"/"leaves," "Saft"/"sap"), *points de suspension*, and ellipsis.

The translation develops toward a symbolic statement on the nature of poetry and on the relationship of poetry to reality. Poetry becomes the vehicle of anamnesis. The translation concludes a series of sonnets within Celan's selection (sonnets 1–5) and is not embedded, as with Shakespeare, in a longer series of texts devoted to the beauty of the poet's friend. "Das Schöne" in v. 11 ("das Schöne wär nicht") bequeaths in parental fashion the essence of its meaning to an artifact which makes this meaning visible and allows it to live on. Otherwise "das Schöne" would be fully "sinnverwaist/und unerinnert and dahingegangen." "Das Schöne" is transmitted as "Geist," as essence and "substance."

Doch so; als Geist, gestaltlos, aufbewahrt,
west sie, die Blume, weiter, winterhart.

[But flowers distill'd, though they with winter meet,
Leese but their show: their substance still lives sweet.]

The word "Geist," having roughly the same meaning as "distillation" only in the primary, intended meaning of the word (v. 9: "summer's distillation", v. 13: "flowers distill'd"), possesses connotations which differ markedly from those of the source word. Old High German "geist" originated, by the way, through the influence of Old English "gást" as the translation of Latin "spiritus"; the theological

meaning of this word—"breath," from Greek "pneuma"—found too much resistance in the word "âtu," which was used chiefly in everyday contexts. In the sixteenth century "geist" belonged to the chemical terminology of the alchemists, which brings us back to the image of "flowers distill'd," to the essence of the Beautiful.

Such a mode of existence, such *Vorhandensein*—that is, the *substantia* of "their substance . . . lives"—lives on in Celan's translation as "als Geist . . . /west sie, die Blume," to the extent that the archaic Heideggerian word "west" in v. 14 participates semantically in the existence of both "substance" and "lives." But in the context of this living-on, the survival of this being, this *Wesen*, the two texts of the sonnet close with a dissonance that characterizes the difference of epochs in which Shakespeare and Celan lived and that illuminates them both. Both texts end with the attribute that determines, for each of the respective epochs, the essence of "weiterwesen": "sweet" and "winterhart." In his own time Celan was not able to call the survival even of "das Schöne" "sweet," especially since the German of post-war poetry, as he termed it in 1958, was "eine 'grauere' Sprache" (III, 167). "Das Schöne" and its living-on are conceivable, in this time, only as "winterhart," the word that closes the translation. "Winterhart" occupies an emphatic position at the end of a sonnet translation whose style is best described by the term *harte Fügung*: "west sie, die Blume, weiter, winterhart."

Celan used "winterhart"—defined in Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch* as "hardened against winter" and "hardened by winter frost"—only one other time, in his poem "in der Luft," which he wrote most probably in the same year as the translation of the fifth sonnet. The word occurs in a context which puts what is "sweet" and what is hardened in immediate juxtaposition to one another.

In der Luft, da bleibt deine Wurzel, da,
in der Luft.
Wo sich das Irdische ballt, erdig,
Atem-und-Lehm.

Gross
geht der Verbannte dort oben, der
Verbrannte: ein Pommer, zuhause
im Maikäferlied, das mütterlich blieb, sommerlich, hell-
blütig am Rand

aller schroffen,
winterhart-kalten
Silben.

Mit ihm
wandern die Meridiane. . . (I, 290)

[In the air, there lies your root,
in the air.
Where the terrestrial gathers, earthly,
breath-and-loam.

Eminently
the banished one moves up there, the
burned one: A Pomeranian, at home
in the May beetle song, which was maternal, summerly, light-
blooded at the edge
of all precipitous
cold-hardy
syllables.

The meridians
wander with him]

In spite of the “tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede” (III, 186), the “Maikäfer-Lied”³³ not only survived, but it also kept alive the memory and the commemoration, *Erinnerung* and *Eingedenken*, of the poet’s mother: in its fracturing hyphenation “mütterlich. . . , sommerlich, hell-/blütig” alludes emphatically to the older homonymic proximity of “Blut” and “Blüte” (in “bluot”). The Pomeranian whose Pomerania—analogous to Celan’s Czernowitz—became a “Land Verloren” (I, 224), that is, a land whose name was “Verloren,” survives solely in the “Maikäfer-Lied.” “. . . am Rand / aller schroffen, / winterhart-kalten / Silben” states the habitat of the Maikäfer-Lied—at the periphery of language, at the boundary between the well of language and the abyss of silence. “Das Schöne,” which has been saved in order that it might survive, is like the poetry of which Celan’s translation of Shakespeare’s sonnet speaks; it is like language itself: “Sie, die Sprache, blieb unverloren, ja, trotz allem” (III, 185).

Here are some facets of one possibility of translating poetry—not the only possibility, to be sure, but one which cannot justifiably be ignored. Other poets might translate differently, in several cases—Ingeborg Bachmann or Karl Krolow—they have created completely different texts. But the situation is the same as that to which Goethe refers: “Das Gedichtete behauptet sein Recht, wie das Geschehene” [poetry claims its right to exist just as do occurrences].³⁴ Two aspects of Celan’s translations are worthy of serious consideration: first, they afford a new and idiosyncratic view of a translated poet, even if the transformations appear at first, and perhaps correctly, as anamorphoses; and second, they provide an access to Paul Celan’s poetry and poetics. Readers must master new patterns of reading in order to learn to read his language; moments of perception, *Erkenntnisvorgänge*, have to be mapped. Comprehension will then come, gradually. In all probability we shall understand Celan’s texts in ten or twenty years considerably better and more precisely than we do today, and not solely because of the assistance of critical editions and scholarly books. Only after some delay will readers enter the regions into which Celan has penetrated, and will do so on the paths he has traced for us, as uncomprehending as we might be at the outset. We absorb his texts, understand them not at all or only fragmentarily, return to them later—after days, weeks or years—enriched with our own experiences and perceptions which those texts had accompanied in our subconsciousness. In Hölderlin’s *Hyperion* (II, 1) we read:

Ich bringe mich mit Mühe zu Worten.

Man spricht wohl gerne, man plaudert, wie die Vögel, so lange die Welt, wie Mailuft, einen anweht; aber zwischen Mittag und Abend kann es anders werden, und was ist verloren am Ende?

Glaube mir und denk, ich sags aus tiefer Seele dir: die Sprache ist ein grosser Überfluss. Das Beste bleibt doch immer für sich und ruht in seiner Tiefe, wie die Perle im Grunde des Meers.³⁵

[I find my way to words only with difficulty.

People talk gladly, they chat like the birds, as long as the world breathes upon them like the air of May; but things can

change between midday and evening—and what is lost in the end?

Believe me and consider my words; I tell you this out of the depths of my soul: language is a great abundance. But the best always keeps to itself and rests in its own depths, like the pearl at the bottom of the sea.]

But the more light the reader conveys to those depths, the stronger the reflection, weak at first, will become.

NOTES

1. Flannery O'Connor, "The Displaced Person," *The Complete Stories* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1982), p. 233.
2. Walter Benjamin, "Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen," *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2: *Aufsätze, Essays, Vorträge*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), p. 151.
3. Cf. George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (London/Oxford/New York: Oxford UP, 1976), p. 47.
4. Anton Kippenberg, "Die erste Ausgabe des 'Werther,'" *Jahrbuch der Sammlung Kippenberg* 5 (1925), 5, 18f., 20. As to Goethe's satisfaction with this translation, see his letter to Charlotte von Stein, 24 April 1783, in: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Briefe*, vol. 1: *Briefe der Jahre 1764–1786*, ed. Karl Robert Mandelkow with Bodo Morawe (Hamburg: Christian Wegner, 1968), p. 427.
5. Samuel Beckett, *Aus einem aufgegebenen Werk und kurze Spiele*, bilingual ed. [English-German], trans. Erika and Elmar Tophoven (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1966), pp. 108–9 and 110–11. Tophoven's account also in his "Translating Celan Translating," in *Argumentum e Silentio. International Paul Celan Symposium/Internationales Paul Celan-Symposium*, ed. Amy Colin (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1987), pp. 382f.
6. Paul Celan, *Gesammelte Werke in fünf Bänden*, ed. Beda Allemann and Stefan Reichert (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), II: 325. References to this edition will be made with roman numerals for volume, arabic numerals for page number.—For a detailed treatment of the following discussion and interpretations, the reader may

wish to consult my *Der feste Buchstab: Erläuterungen zu Paul Celans Gedichtübertragungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985).

7. The word, by no means a neologism, is well documented in vol. 7 of the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (1889).

8. Gottfried Benn, "Probleme der Lyrik," *Gesammelte Werke in vier Bänden*, vol. 1: *Essays, Reden, Vorträge*, ed. Dieter Wellershoff (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1965), p. 510.

9. "Übersetzungsunbedürftigkeit der Musik. Lyrik: der Musik am nächsten—grösste Übersetzungsschwierigkeiten." Walter Benjamin, "La Traduction—Le pour et le contre," *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 6: *Fragmente vermischten Inhalts, Autobiographische Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1985), p. 159.

10. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Foreword to *Museum der modernen Poesie*, Edited by Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1960), p. 18.

11. Novalis, *Schriften*, vol. 2: *Das philosophische Werk I*, ed. Richard Samuel with Hans-Joachim Mähl and Gerhard Schulz (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960), p. 438.

12. Karl Krolow, "Der Lyriker als Übersetzer zeitgenössischer Lyrik," in *Die Kunst der Übersetzung*, ed. Bayerische Akademie der Schönen Künste (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1963), p. 118.

13. See Walter Benjamin, "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 4: *Kleine Prosa, Baudelaire-Übertragungen*, ed. Tillman Rexroth (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1972), pp. 9–21.

14. Rose Ausländer, "Erinnerungen an eine Stadt," *Aschensommer: Ausgewählte Gedichte*, ed. Berndt Mosblech, with an essay by Jürgen P. Wallmann (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1978), p. 207.

15. Israel Chalfen, *Paul Celan: Eine Biographie seiner Jugend* (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel, 1979), p. 19.

16. Steiner, *After Babel*, p. 389.

17. Michael Hamburger, *A Proliferation of Prophets: Essays on German Writers from Nietzsche to Brecht* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), p. 277.

18. Yves Bonnefoy, "Paul Celan," *Le Nuage rouge: Essais sur la poétique* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1977), p. 306.

19. *Briefe an Hans Bender*, ed. Volker Neuhaus with Ute Heimbüchel (Munich and Vienna: Hanser, 1984), p. 54.

20. Hans Arp, "Opus Null," v. 1, in *Die deutsche Literatur: 20. Jahrhundert. Texte und Zeugnisse 1880–1933*, ed. Walther Killy (Munich: Beck, 1967), p. 753.

21. Wilhelm von Humboldt, Introduction to "Agamemnon," in *Das Problem des Übersetzens*, ed. Hans Joachim Störig (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973), p. 87.

