"Die herzhelle Zukunft":

Paul Celan's Utopian poetics and Ernst Bloch's philosophy of hope

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Contents

Abstract

The poetry of Paul Celan is written in the wake of the Shoah, and every word he speaks bares its traumatic, annihilatory trace. Yet his experience of the lethal nadir of history does not dominate his poetic expression, which is instead directed outwards and forwards into the positive emptiness of a better world to come. Moments of expectancy and salvation, creative and celebratory breaks with the past, and dialogical interfaces with the absent dead venture into the terrain of radical hope, even anticipation of Utopia. There are striking parallels between Celan's poetry and the writings of Ernst Bloch, the philosopher of hope and Utopia. Two German-speaking Jews whose lives were violently upended by the fascist genocide, both of their works are marked by a materialist conception of possibility inhering in the shared living world, motivated by their common humanist values, socialist commitments, and a secular appreciation of the religious tradition. This thesis interprets Celan's poetry while informed by the concepts elaborated by Bloch, presenting a case for the indispensability of this philosophical perspective for Celan's self-proclaimed appeal to be read "im Lichte der U-topie" (in the light of U-topia).

Resumé

La poésie de Paul Celan est écrite à la suite de la Shoah, et chaque mot qu'il prononce en révèle sa trace traumatisante et annihilatrice. Pourtant, son expérience du nadir mortel de l'histoire ne domine pas son expression poétique, qui est plutôt orientée vers l'extérieur et vers l'avant, vers le vide positif d'un monde meilleur à venir. Les moments d'attente et de salut, les ruptures créatives et réjouissantes avec le passé et les interfaces dialogiques avec les morts absents s'aventurent sur le terrain de l'espoir radical, voire de l'anticipation de l'Utopie. Il existe des parallèles frappants entre la poésie de Celan et les écrits d'Ernst Bloch, le philosophe de l'espoir et de l'Utopie. En tant que deux juifs germanophones dont la vie a été violemment bouleversée par le génocide fasciste, leurs œuvres sont toutes deux marquées par une conception matérialiste de la possibilité inhérente au monde partagé, motivées par leurs valeurs humanistes communes, leurs engagements socialistes et une appréciation laïque de la tradition religieuse. Cette thèse interprète la poésie de Celan tout en étant informée par les concepts élaborés par Bloch, en démontrant que cette perspective philosophique est indispensable pour répondre à l'appel autoproclamé de Celan à être lu « im Lichte der U-topie » (à la lumière de l'U-topie).

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I, Jared Evan Cohen, am the sole author of and contributor to this thesis.

Introduction

Upon receipt of the Georg Büchner Prize for 1960, Paul Celan delivered a speech that would be printed under the title "Der Meridian." While the speech on the one hand represents the most comprehensive expression of Celan's self-understanding as a poet available to readers during his lifetime, the "Meridian" remains enigmatic.[1] Celan's pronouncements on the ethics and aesthetics of poetry, far from standing at the ready to inform and delimit the interpretation of his work, demand thorough interpretation in their own right. The emphatic statement on Utopia and the Utopian to be found in the "Meridian" is in this light perhaps particularly startling because so seemingly counterintuitive, challenging in its apparent tension between the very emphasis and universality of the claim and its marked contradiction with some habitual perspectives of received opinion on Celan's work:

> Toposforschung?
> Gewiß! Aber im Lichte des zu Erforschenden: im Lichte der U-topie.
> Und der Mensch? Und die Kreatur?
> In diesem Licht.
> Welche Fragen! Welche Forderungen!
> Es ist Zeit, umzukehren (*Gesammelte Werke* III, 199f).[2]

The thought of Utopia hardly springs to mind during an initial, cursory reading of Celan's poetry, whose often sombre thematic, dark language, and recondite imagery excludes the optimistic and progressive connotations of the word. Darkness of course inheres here in the matter itself, in the experience of total loss and disillusionment in the post-Shoatic world which demands adequate expression in a language that itself bears the mark of "die tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede"

[1] For other prose writings by Celan, including novel and speculative excurses into poetological theorisation, see Paul Celan, *Mikrolithen sinds, Steinchen*, first published in 2005, thirty-five years after the poet's death.
[2] The five-volume edition of Paul Celan's collected works published by Suhrkamp are cited hereafter as *GW*.

(*GW* III, 186). It would seem an absurd suggestion, for example, that the topoi and tropes of so dark a poem as Celan's famous "Todesfuge" (*GW* I, 39) should be read "im Lichte" of Utopia, whatever that may well mean.

The poetic landscapes constructed in Celan's work would seem to be sooner characterised as dystopian, reflective of the unredeemed and depleted world left to the latter half of the twentieth century for a victim and survivor of the Shoah such as him. Yet Utopia is invoked in the quoted statement as that which ultimately informs the poetic project, the latent object behind each lesser literary topos. The term is left undefined and becomes further complicated in the relation that is subsequently led to bear on the "Mensch" as well as the "Kreatur." An ideal orientation towards poetry as well as life in general is anticipated here, namely that both be interpreted in the same Utopic light, an initially rather opaque demand. The injunction represents a climax in the central tension of the "Meridian" speech, namely that between poetry, *Dichtung*, and the aestheticising tendencies in language and art. While art projects itself beyond the particularities of life into eternity (so goes the aphorism: *ars longa, vita brevis*), Celan conceives of poetry as intimately connected to the subtle and fleeting. Indeed, the insistence on a mode of discourse that adequately speaks to and advocates for the creaturely, ephemeral quality of life is central throughout Celan's poetic oeuvre. Utopia consequently offers itself as a fundamental, perhaps the ultimate category of Celan's world, despite its apparent disharmony with the darkness of his expression, as of the lived historical and biographical experience from which it issues.

This is not to reduce the irreducible: Utopia and the post-Shoatic landscapes in which Celan's poetic voice situates itself remain incommensurable antipoles. The former, as the *summum*

bonum, comes under the sign of absolute light, while the latter resist illumination altogether.[3] This is the paradox posed by Utopia by definition, prior to any concrete description, for in Celan the notion needs not and cannot be exhaustively determined: "Und einmal waren wir auch, von der den Dingen und der Kreatur gewidmeten Aufmerksamkeit her, in die Nähe eines Offenen und Freien gelangt. Und zuletzt in die Nähe der Utopie" (*GW* III, 200). Utopia lies above and beyond each "Offenen und Freien" as the consummation of the positively indeterminate gap and can therefore not be construed as a determinately fulfilled space in terms of content. This sense of Utopia captures at once the originally intended ancient Greek pseudo-etymology of the word coined by Thomas More for his sixteenth-century book title – the negating prefix *ou-* followed by *topos*, "place" – as well as later usages that reinterpret this "no place" into a "good place" by misreading *ou-* as *eu-*.[4]

Poetry and Utopia belong for Celan to a single paradigm, one which stands opposed to the immortality presumed by aestheticising art, whose perfect and determinate forms exist changelessly outside of history. Using the accents of the French language as an analogy, Celan asserts that he has no choice but to speak and write under "den Akut des Heutigen" rather than "den Zirkumflex… des Ewigen" (*GW* III, 190). He states in no uncertain terms that poems have a "Hier und Jetzt" (*GW* III, 198) as much as the temporal things and creatures they attend to and, as such, are not exhausted by the formal analysis of their tropes. In stark contrast to prevalent notions of the time that upheld the idea of an absolute poem existing as a self-sufficient aesthetic entity without any connection to external reality, Celan challenges any such absolute autonomy of literary language,

[3] Compare Albrecht Schöne, *Dichtung als Verborgene Theologie*, writing of Celan's poetry that "[i]hre Dunkelheit und diese Klarheit bedingen einander," so that it is for the critic "das Verborgene aufzuweisen, ohne seine Verborgenheit anzutasten" (12).

[4] Celan puns on these meanings by positing "U-topie" as the answer to "Toposforschung," the purely formal study of literary topoi apart from extraliterary reality, concerned with art and language apart from "der den Dingen und der Kreatur gewidmeten Aufmerksamkeit."

considering it untenable.[5] As Celan explains in another speech, delivered on the occasion of his receipt of the Bremen Literature Prize for 1958, a poem certainly "erhebt einen Unendlichkeitsanspruch, [aber] es sucht durch die Zeit hindurchzugreifen – durch sie hindurch, nicht über sie hinweg" (*GW* III, 186). Unlike art that wishes to overcome its originating "Hier und Jetzt," the poem's Utopian aspiration to outlast and overcome death is itself an affirmation of life. By attending to life in its specificity and timeliness, pronouncing "den Akut des Heutigen" in the face of death, poetry shares a border with the "no place" of pure language even as it heralds the "good place" for the living creature. This is "der Ort, wo alle Tropen und Metapher ad absurdum geführt werden wollen" (*GW* III, 199), a prospective vanishing point where the poem exceeds the language that formally determines it. The greater freedom, openness, and indeterminacy towards which poetry tends when it attends to life surpass the supposed autonomy of absolute poetry and aestheticising art. The poem converges for Celan not on the fully determinate placelessness of pure language, but rather the fully and positively indeterminate place called Utopia.

In continuation of the spatial metaphor, which Celan freely courts, the Utopian space towards which poetry progresses "in die Nähe eines Offenen und Freien" must be first of all a habitable one. That is, the poem must admit life into itself, and not only that of its speaker. While aestheticising art induces "Ich-Ferne" (*GW* III, 193) by effacing the identity of the artist for the sake of the universality of the work, Celan associates poetry with the authentic expression of an embodied self. So too does it require the presence of an Other, perhaps remote and difficult to access, but no less real, and for that reason ultimately addressable. The poem "hält unentwegt auf

[5] The opinion of Celan as a "hermetic" writer of absolute poetry in the tradition of Stéphane Mallarmé was widespread in cultural magazines and newspapers in his life. One of the most comprehensive and representative scholarly discussions of Mallarmé's influence on Celan and the question of the latter's status as an absolute poet is Gerhard Neumann, "Die ‚Absolute' Metapher," which Celan himself read in 1968 and strongly rejected. See James K. Lyon, *Paul Celan & Martin Heidegger*, 208f.

jenes »Andere« zu, das es sich als erreichbar, als freizusetzen, als vakant vielleicht, und dabei ihm, dem Gedicht… zugewandt denkt" (*GW* III, 197).

Celan casts his attempts at addressing the Other out to sea, as it were, like messages in bottles, likening the poem in his Bremen prize speech to "eine Flaschenpost… aufgegeben in dem – gewiß nicht immer hoffnungsstarken – Glauben, sie könnte irgendwo und irgendwann an Land gespült werden, an Herzland vielleicht" (*GW* III, 186). The Other towards which Celan's poem is moving is unknown in terms of recipient as well as destination, the former being the absent person called "du" and the latter U-topia. The poem is both movement and the site of the unlikeliest of all encounters: that between presence and absence, familiar and strange, possibly between living and dead. The Utopian realisation of this doubly remote possibility fulfills the "topos" opened up by the poem, finally habitable for an at once poetic and creaturely I and Thou. It is in this sense that the poem is for Celan "einsam und unterwegs" (*GW* III, 198), insufficient by design and reluctant to finalise itself, maintaining an open space in the hope that something (or someone, or somewhere) entirely beyond it horizon will meet it there. Poetry is indeed "seinem Wesen nach dialogisch" (*GW* III, 186), but in the same hopeful and indefinite manner as the message in a bottle; it can furnish only one side of the conditions for a successful encounter, which meanwhile depends on that which is not and cannot yet be fully there. The double sense of the Utopic is inscribed into Celan's poetic act itself, on the one hand as the habitable good place and, on the other, as the not yet extant place that is still to be constituted.

Utopia as the indeterminate yet positively conceived destination is therefore inseparable from the most sustained and central subjects of Paul Celan's oeuvre: the commitment of *Dichtung* to world and life, the utterance of the creature, the possible rapprochement with the Other, and the commensurate commemoration of the dead within the newly constituted space of the poem. The

potentially broad applicability of the Utopian concept to an understanding of Celan's poetics demands elaboration, as does the sustained contrast between the "light" of Utopia and the darkness of the perspective from which the poet writes. Writing from the annihilatory nadir of the Shoah, the furthest possible state from a perfect society conceived in the tradition of Thomas More, an indefinable hope somehow takes form.

Celan's poetry looks forward to fulfilled openness and freedom from out of the destruction that has made of the world a traumatic, depopulated void. To write poetry here and now, if not barbaric, nevertheless means "Stehen, im Schatten / des Wundenmals in der Luft."[6] The experience of total loss, representing the primary lived reality available to Celan and hence his primary basis for expression, undermines his attempt at speech while at once spurring and necessitating it. The poetic I is forever scarred and the Thou to whom it addresses itself is irretrievable, meanwhile the imperative of commemoration is painful and perhaps ultimately insurmountable. Human life is reduced to violation and deprivation, and language itself is insufficient as a medium of meaning. Attenuated and inadequate expressive means are thematised in Celan poems, where communication is threatened by the very channels that enable it in the first place; encounters take place behind veils or through bars, and expression cannot escape silence.[7] Human life, but also speech and memory are in dire need of rescue. The resumption of life must somehow take place within the context of the shadow which the "Wundenmal" throws upon contemporary and post-Shoatic existence.

That such a resumption of life is for Celan necessarily intertwined with the Utopic calls for a holistic and informed approach to his poetry "[i]n diesem Licht." Towards an understanding of

[6] From "Stehen" (*GW* II, 23).

[7] To point to a few instances in Celan's poetry: "Ein seidener Teppich, so ward sie gespannt zwischen uns, dass getanzt sei von Dunkel zu Dunkel" ("Halbe Nacht," *GW* I, 17); "vom Augen-Du auf dem steten / Stern über dir / weiß überschleiert" ("Schliere," *GW* I, 159); "Augenrund zwischen den Stäben" ("Sprachgitter," *GW* I, 167); "zerschwiegenem Schwur" ("Allerseelen," *GW* I, 183); "Wortaufschüttung, meerüberrauscht, / vulkanisch" ("Wortaufschüttung," *GW* II, 29); "Gespräche / von Rauchmund zu Rauchmund" ("Landschaft," *GW* II, 59).

Utopia in the extensive, redemptive, and dynamic significance it has for Celan, there is no philosophical project more relevant than Ernst Bloch's. His theorisation of hope, progress, and Utopia is more incisive and radical than any other attempt by a secular thinker. Born in 1885, Ernst Bloch was a German philosopher and prolific author of books and contributor to popular newspapers and academic journals. He was a lifelong political *engagé* and public figure whose humanist philosophy of liberation and hope influenced his contemporaries and stirred controversy in the Weimar Republic through the post-war era. As a student during the First World War, Bloch was a frequent guest of the Max Weber circle in Heidelberg, where his thought already displayed the political and philosophical commitments of Marxism mixed with Christian theology and Jewish mysticism.

Refusing to take part in the imperial war out of pacifist principles, Bloch avoided conscription in Switzerland, completing there his first book, *Geist der Utopie*, in 1918. He celebrated the success of the socialist revolution in Russia and for many years remained a loyal supporter of the communist regime under Stalin. After the war Bloch moved to Berlin, where he befriended thinkers and artists like Theodor Adorno, Bertolt Brecht, and the neo-romantic sociologist Georg Simmel, cultivating an especially close relationship of collaboration and mutual admiration with the Marxist philosopher and literary critic Georg Lukács. *Geist der Utopie* was read even beyond the circles of Marxian philosophy, finding a wider audience among historians and theologians. It is an epochal work of dialectics, aesthetics, and ethics, synthesising divergent currents across Western philosophy and religion to present a critical vision of post-capitalist society.[8] Elements such as baroque music, Gothic architecture, mythology, folklore, apocalypticism, scholasticism, and German

[8] See Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia,* 140f: "Bloch used words charged with religiosity to develop his political ideas and his Marxist/libertarian, anarcho-Bolshevik utopia… Bloch emphasized that, from a socialist point of view, the state had to wither away and be replaced by a simple 'international organization of production and consumption'."

Romanticism figure into Bloch's book, which introduces the expectancy of a Messianic break into the Marxist theory of history. This innovation alone was crucially influential on the ideas of figures like Walter Benjamin[9] and the historian of Judaism and kabbalah, Gershom Scholem.[10]

During the rise of fascism in Germany, Bloch became an outspoken critic of the Nazi party, also targeting the failure of the German Left to sufficiently respond to the rising threat. He soon had to leave the country with his wife, both fearing for their lives as socialists and as Jews. After years of moving between European states as Nazism engulfed the continent, Ernst and Karola Bloch left Europe for the United States, remaining there until 1947. It was during this exile that Bloch wrote most of his magnum opus, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, an encyclopedic examination of hope as a fundamental lever of natural and human history, encompassing three volumes and over 1,500 pages. Exceeding *Geist der Utopie* in terms of breadth and revolutionary spirit, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* explores the potential for hope across history to challenge oppressive systems and construct freer, better futures. The book analyses art, literature, dreams, and everything else produced by human beings as evidence of Utopian thinking, laden as all culture is with the possibilities of social transformation.

Part of Bloch's innovation is his break with the habitual sense of Utopia as a schematic blueprint for the perfect society *à la* Thomas More; the Utopic rather comes to describe the forward-facing condition of humanity which informs all cultural expression. For him, the future is possessed of an irreducible openness and indeterminacy that he calls the *Noch-Nicht*, which is the realm of possible Being that has not yet been realised but is not for this reason to be excluded from inquiry. In fact, in our incomplete world, the Being which the future has in store has philosophical

[9] See, for instance, Walter Benjamin, "Theologisch-politisches Fragment," 280.
[10] See Gershom Scholem, "Wohnt Gott im Herzen eines Atheisten?"

priority.[11] As well as a monumental and unconventional work of Marxism which nevertheless remains committed to Karl Marx's original writings and his dialectical materialism, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* is an impassioned defence of socialist politics and the collective struggle for equality, justice, and emancipation. Bloch first published *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* in the German Democratic Republic, where he was appointed professor of philosophy at the University of Leipzig at the age of 64, welcomed as a committed champion of the early socialist republic. His heterodox Marxism eventually drew the disapproval of the Socialist Unity Party, and his growing criticism of the state and its official ideology made him the target of social and academic ostracisation, ending in forced retirement. Following the erection of the Berlin Wall, Bloch defected westward to the Federal Republic of Germany, where he taught philosophy at the University of Tübingen.

Bloch has exercised an enormous influence on contemporary philosophy, and his impact on the German-speaking world is difficult to overstate. Bloch's name continues to decorate a prestigious literary award hosted by his hometown of Ludwigshafen am Rhein, and it is still professed among some alumni of the University of Tübingen that the school should be renamed in his honour. Oskar Negt has called Bloch the philosopher of the October Revolution,[12] while Fredric Jameson and Michael Löwe, after the title of Bloch's own book on the radical reformer Thomas Münzer, have dubbed him theologian of the revolution.[13] Scholars and writers such as Siegfried Kracauer, Hans Mayer, and Hermann Hesse have acknowledged Bloch's influence.[14] Yet despite being one of the most important voices within the Marxist tradition of the twentieth century, Bloch's ideas have until recently achieved limited exposure before an international audience. *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, as his most

[11] See Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, 123: "Bloch refuses the 'metaphysical question' as Heidegger formulates it ('Why is it that there is something, rather than nothing at all?'), inasmuch as for him being is precisely incomplete, in process, not yet altogether there: what astounds is therefore not so much being itself, but rather the latency of being-to-come at work, the signs and foreshadowings of future being."
[12] See Oskar Negt, "Ernst Bloch — The German Philosopher of the October Revolution."
[13] See Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, 117; Michael Löwe, *Redemption and Utopia*, 138.
[14] See Douglas Kellner and Harry O'Hara, "Utopia and Marxism in Ernst Bloch," 11f.

significant contribution to Marxist thought and philosophy writ large, was not translated into English until 1986, nearly a decade after the philosopher's death.[15] Until then, Bloch's readership outside of the German-speaking world was largely theological; John Cobb compares Bloch's positive reception as a secular humanist among theologians in the 1960s to that of Albert Camus in the early postwar era.[16] Translations like *Man on his Own*, *A Philosophy of the Future*, and *Atheism in Christianity* emerged in this period, opening Anglo-American religious studies to writings that were already well received by the German theologians Dorothee Steffensky-Sölle and Jürgen Moltmann.

It is worth remarking, both in its own right and to make the comparison with Celan's biography, that Bloch produced *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, his impassioned treatise on hope, during the most hopeless period of life, indeed the darkest time for the countless victims and survivors of "dem faschistischen Höllenausbruch" (*Das Prinzip Hoffnung* 268).[17] Bloch cannot gloss over fascism but is compelled to return to it again and again throughout the book. His work is anything but naively optimistic, and he does not turn to Europe's romantic and enlightened cultural past to ignore the barbarism that has consumed its present. The present, as the narrow passage into the future, is rather Bloch's chief concern, and its insufficiency is one of the fundamental problems faced in his writings. The same uniquely particular "Hier und Jetzt," from which, according to Celan, the poem as site of an unlikely but potentially successful encounter originates, is for Bloch a Utopian category:

[15] See the bibliographic entry for *The Principle of Hope*, translated by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight, in works cited. *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* had, however, already been translated into French, Spanish, and Japanese before 1980.

[16] See John Cobb's review of Ernst Bloch, *A Philosophy of the Future*. See also Harvey Cox, "Ernst Bloch and 'The Pull of the Future'," 192: "Bloch's delayed 'discovery' has been largely the work of theologians. This became especially clear in 1965 when Bloch reached his eightieth birthday and a group of friends and admirers published a *Festschrift* in his honor (*Ernst Bloch zu Ehren*, Suhrkamp Verlag). To the astonishment of many readers, who knew Bloch as an old Marxist, nearly half the contributors to the volume turned out to be theologians, among them some of the youngest religious thinkers of Europe."

[17] Cited hereafter as *PH*.

> Und ebenso ist das Jetzt und Hier, dies immer wieder Anfangende in der Nähe, eine utopische Kategorie, je die zentralste; ist sie doch, zum Unterschied vom vernichtenden Umgang eines Nichts, vom aufleuchtenden eines Alles, noch nicht einmal in Zeit und Raum eingetreten… Mit anderen Worten: man braucht das stärkste Fernrohr, das des geschliffenen utopischen Bewußtseins, um gerade die nächste Nähe zu durchdringen (*PH* 11).

The present moment, not only during the historic nadirs of catastrophe but throughout the history of human oppression and indignity, is hungry and dissatisfied with its limitations, demanding Utopian fulfillment. Redemption is to be expected in this world and within history, but as its positively awaited end. While Bloch looks to the past for inspiration and images of unfinished perfection, true fulfillment can only come out of the openness of the sky-blue future. The originality of his conception of Utopia lies in this openness, which imposes no predetermined forms on the future but rather inscribes hopefulness as an anthropological property into the project of the human, permeating all cultural production and consciousness itself. Like Celan, Bloch's privileged orientation is towards the unknown destination, the perhaps vain effort that must nevertheless be pursued.

This affinity alone might sufficiently establish an unlikely and felicitous connection between Paul Celan and Ernst Bloch of the kind that the poet defines towards the end of the "Meridian":

> Meine Damen und Herren, ich finde etwas, das mich auch ein wenig darüber hinwegtröstet, in Ihrer Gegenwart diesen unmöglichen Weg, diesen Weg des Unmöglichen gegangen zu sein.
>
> Ich finde das Verbindende und wie das Gedicht zur Begegnung Führende.
>
> Ich finde etwas – wie die Sprache – Immaterielles, aber Irdisches, Terrestrisches, etwas Kreisförmiges, über die beiden Pole in sich selbst Zurückkehrendes und dabei – heitererweise – sogar die Tropen Durchkreuzendes –: ich finde… einen *Meridian* (*GW* III, 202).

But the meridian between Celan and Bloch runs still deeper. The two men share a common cultural heritage as German-speaking secular Jews attracted to the Romantic literary tradition and the politics of liberation. Though born over thirty years later and 1,200 kilometers east of Bloch, Celan belonged to a common Germanosphere that at its height dominated Central Europe through the

expansionist ambitions of the Hapsburg and Hollenzollern Empires, which imposed foreign rule and language on the diverse nations inhabiting the lands now annexed into Eastern border provinces. Particularly in the Austrian context, this region was treated with colonial paternalism and marginalised as a kind of "Halb-Asien," the Bukovina alone standing as an exception where the culture of the metropole had been embraced by the ethnically German, but especially the Jewish middle classes.[18] Celan was born in Czernowitz, once the cosmopolitan capital of the Bukovina where German was still regularly spoken alongside Romanian, Ukrainian, and Yiddish after the end of imperial rule.[19] It was a uniquely situated hub of multicultural symbiosis that the outbreak of fascism destroyed in its entirety. The Shoah took the lives of Celan's parents and conscripted him to years of forced labour; by the end of the Second World War, the Bukovina had been purged of its significant Jewish population and finally divided between two newly formed socialist republics of the soviet model.[20]

With the reshuffling of borders and mass displacement of populations, Celan embarked upon a lifelong exile, having no homeland to return to and finding the prospect of a life in post-war Austria or either of the two Germanies intolerable. Around the time Bloch returned to Germany, choosing the communist East, Celan settled in Paris to begin a career as a writer of German language poetry. Both men suffered acutely from the trauma of displacement and violent exclusion from the places they had called home. Their shared concern with liberty, equality, and community was not a matter of metaphysical abstracts but for each of them a personal commitment to human dignity originating in the experience of its catastrophic violation. Bloch and Celan were not idealists who shied away from the existing world or failed to account for the depths of its insufficiency;

[18] See Corbea-Hoişie, "The Poetry of Paul Celan and the Bukovinian Exceptionalism," 113f.
[19] For Celan's biography beginning in Czernowitz, see Israel Chalfen, *Paul Celan*.
[20] See Corbea-Hoişie, "The Poetry of Paul Celan and the Bukovinian Exceptionalism."

rather, ideals were for them the proper mechanisms for criticising the given and changing it for the better, indeed for the best. In their own lives and throughout human cultural expression, as it was Bloch's purpose to show in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, the hopeful expectancy for an improved world lies precisely in such situations of human need, even in the face of utmost deprivation and death.

The poetry of Paul Celan, like the philosophy of Ernst Bloch, is situated on a plane of Messianic expectancy facing an unknown and unknowable future, a destination that is not simply empty but fatefully charged with the possibility of Utopian fulfillment. Taking inspiration from religious narratives of redemption while remaining committed to liberation as an ecumenical and humanist goal, the respective works of Celan and Bloch constitute in this sense a secular renewal of the traditional eschatological hope of Jewish Messianism, which Gershom Scholem describes in terms of a communal, worldly state of salvation:

> Das Judentum hat, in allen seinen Formen und Gestaltungen, stets an einem Begriff von Erlösung festgehalten, der sie als einen Vorgang auffaßte, welcher sich in der Öffentlichkeit vollzieht, auf dem Schauplatz der Geschichte und im Medium der Gemeinschaft, kurz, der sich entscheidend in der Welt des Sichtbaren vollzieht und ohne solche Erscheinung im Sichtbaren nicht gedacht werden kann ("Zum Verständnis der messianischen Idee im Judentum" 121).

Or, as Benjamin says of the Messianic advent as the conclusion to and break from history:

> Erst der Messias selbst vollendet alles historische Geschehen, und zwar in dem Sinne, daß er dessen Beziehung auf das Messianische selbst erst erlöst, vollendet, schafft. Darum kann nichts Historisches von sich aus sich auf Messianisches beziehen wollen. Darum ist das Reich Gottes nicht das Telos der historischen Dynamis… Historisch gesehen ist es nicht Ziel, sondern Ende…
>
> Wenn eine Pfeilrichtung das Ziel, in welchem die Dynamis des Profanen wirkt, bezeichnet, eine andere die Richtung der messianischen Intensität, so strebt freilich das Glücksuchen der freien Menschheit von jener messianischen Richtung fort, aber wie eine Kraft durch ihren Weg eine andere auf entgegengesetzt gerichtetem Wege zu befördern vermag, so auch die profane Ordnung des Profanen das Kommen des messianischen Reichs ("Theologisch-politisches Fragment" 280).

It is in their sense of the public and unprecedented fulfillment of prior history that the Messiah and the Messianic are understood in this thesis. The Messiah comes, not just to save the living generation, but to redeem all past misery and make the world right again, so that nothing that has

vanished will have been forever lost or forgotten. Aware that both past and future have a stake in redemption, Celan and Bloch take a stance that remains situated in the "Hier und Jetzt" of the inadequate world, cognisant of the darkness that taints it, while facing resolutely forward.

Despite the many points of connection between them, the meridian between Paul Celan and Ernst Bloch has been largely neglected in the scholarship of their bodies of work. In the study of Celan's poetry, the contemporary personalities that loom most distinctly remain Adorno and especially Martin Heidegger. These two philosophers occupy significant sections in the *Celan-Handbuch*, published in its most recent edition by Markus May, Peter Goßens, and Jürgen Lehmann in 2012, and have also informed much valuable analysis, such as *Vom Engagement absoluter Poesie* by Marlies Janz, *Spur des Worts* by Otto Pöggeler, and *Remants of Song* by Ulrich Baer, to name only a few; Adorno and Heidegger also frequently recur in connection with Celan in the writings of Werner Hamacher, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Jean Bollack. The poet's occasional and ambivalent correspondence with Heidegger, which coalesced in a handful of sparsely undocumented encounters, has engendered its own body of biographical literature based on the fascination over the possibility of a survivor of the Shoah befriending a giant of contemporary thought who only somewhat repented for his Nazi affiliation and sympathies.[21] Celan research also places the poet in dialogue with the philosophical voices of Benjamin, Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, Alain Badiou, and to a lesser extent Scholem and Martin Buber. While there is clearly a broad and receptive space for the famous thinkers of twentieth century Europe in the scholarship of Celan's poetry, the affinities with Bloch's theory of Utopia have been largely overlooked. Meanwhile,

[21] James K. Lyon, *Paul Celan & Martin Heidegger*, is perhaps the most comprehensive exploration of correspondences between the lives and thought of Celan and Heidegger. See also, for instance, Pablo Oyarzún R., *Between Celan and Heidegger* and Hans-Peter Kunisch, *Todtnauberg*. Comparative articles include Antti Salminen, "Meridian Zero"; Tom Betteridge, "Alain Badiou's Anabasis"; Hagi Kenaan, "Celan and Heidegger at the Mountain of Death"; Asif Rahamim, "Beyond Thought's Limits"; Mark M. Anderson, "The 'Impossibility of Poetry'"; Todd Samuel Presner, "Traveling Between Delos and Berlin."

existing studies have thematised Celan's approach to Utopia, particularly in his poetological speeches.[22]

Negativität in der Dichtung Paul Celans by Georg-Michael Schulz devotes much rigorous thought to the topic, at several points invoking Bloch's philosophy to analyse death and nothingness in Celan's poems. A chapter of the more recent *Utopielyrik* by Björn Hayer also brings Bloch into conversation with Celan, productively demonstrating correspondences between the philosopher's terminology and poet's use of language. In his readings of Celan's poems, Hayer discovers convincing echoes of Bloch's thoughts on history, hope, and change. While the existing literature has by no means overlooked the presence of Utopia and the Utopian in Celan's poetry, this terrain is yet to be sufficiently explored in its irreducible ambiguity, its pervading urgency, and its material basis. Commonplace definitions of Utopia and naïve, optimistic invocations of hope collapse under the weight of the dark historical experience Celan brings to bear on them, and even most carefully derived philosophical understandings of these terms may fail to encompass the contradictory meanings he has them assume. Intuitions fail, synthesis refuses to intervene, and the call to see hope in all things rings hollow; with Bloch it becomes instead possible to see all things in hope. Nothing short of the most inclusive philosophy of hope can take seriously the claims of an anticipation of Utopia both concrete and vacant in this thoroughly unredeemed and ruined world. Only sustained recourse to Ernst Bloch and his first principle of hope bolsters the recognition that the anticipation of a perfect future is more than an affective disposition that first emerges in the escape from an intolerable present. The subtle but ubiquitous presence of hope in Celan's poetry, everywhere cautious and at all times contested, can be uniquely broached through Bloch's revolutionary

[22] See Dorothee Kohler-Luginbühl, *Poetik im Lichte der Utopie*; Wiebke Amthor, "Schneepart"; Franziska Schößler and Tobias Tunkel, "Utopie und Katastrophe"; Manuel Maldonado Alemàn, "Sprachkrise und Utopieverlust"; Marek Ostrowski, "Utopie bei Paul Celan"; Andrea Bánffi-Benedek, Andrea, "»durch die tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede…«."

understanding of the future and its irresistible forward pull. This thesis builds upon the work in this direction by Schulz and Hayer but also diverges from them by tracing an exclusive and sustained analysis of the meridian between Celan and Bloch, insisting on the uniqueness of their conception of Utopia as it pertains to secularised Messianic hope, the duty of the living toward the dead, and the natural world.

The present thesis aims above all to demonstrate the indispensability of Bloch's philosophy to a reading of Celan. To this end, the first chapter presents some fundamental Blochian categories and elaborates the conception of time, psychological reality, history, and redemption they convey, arguing for the relevance of this philosophical framework for the interpretation of Celan's poetry through close readings. These readings tease out moments of hope and anticipation in select poems while showcasing how such moments are by no means exceptional but rather determine the entire forward-facing orientation of Celan's work. What a superficial and naive underestimation of hope dismisses as mere flashes in the darkness is revealed under the lens Bloch supplies to be a deep commitment to a bright and human future. As Bloch teaches us, even the past has its share of futurity, and Celan's habit of looking forward even while looking back must be considered with this in mind. The following chapter contains a discussion of death and loss, the irreducible darkness surrounding Celan's personal experience and forming the point of departure for all his poetry. This traumatic space too has a clear Utopian edge in the rejection of lethality, both in its various historical forms as invoked in Celan's poems and his cautiously Messianic addresses to the dead. Bloch's deep engagement with *Todeshoffnungen* is especially relevant to the analysis of lethality. The third chapter shifts from the strictly human to the natural world, in particular the inorganic domain where notions of life and death initially appear inadmissible. Bloch furnishes a cosmological ontology of possibility that inspirits materiality itself with the same uncanny activity and hospitableness that emerge in

Celan's poetic scenes of rock and stone. These seemingly lifeless but in fact pulsing landscapes become the inspiration for continued existence in the post-Shoatic world.

The anticipation of Utopia is so consistently present in Celan's poetry, and not least of all in his poetological speeches, that an analysis of his project is incomplete if it does not take this aspect into consideration, and there is no philosopher who provides a framework to this conception of Utopia so effectively and fittingly as Bloch. Interpretation is otherwise at risk of diminishing the radical call for redemption that carries across Celan's work, and his attempts at commemoration are incomprehensible if understood as anything other than the forward-facing formulation of better futures. Blochian readings in the light of Utopia look out from the darkness of the immediate present without effacing it. With Bloch there is a rich perspective from which to theorise non-existence and the unknown as worthwhile sites of eventual human fulfillment, vindicating the struggle for change even in the seeming absence of grounds for hope. The fruitful parallels with Bloch make Utopian approaches to Celan available that do not fall either into inescapable pessimism or banal optimism. A selection of poems will be discussed in close detail to demonstrate the depth of analysis that these concepts enable, while more cursory mention will be made of other poems to gesture at how a Blochian reading can be generalised across Celan's oeuvre. This thesis limits its scope of inquiry to textual evidence, and as such it will not touch upon any biographical connection between the persons Paul Celan and Ernst Bloch. While there exists ample evidence that Celan was familiar with Bloch's thought and read some of the latter's books, the possible impact of such readings lies outside the scope of the present study.[23] We will content ourselves with a philosophically informed interpretation of the poetry alone, as Celan himself urged, "im Lichte der U-topie."

[23] See the appendix for a list of Bloch's works discovered in Celan's personal library.

Chapter One: Futurity

Bloch's endeavour to establish hope as the foundation of human experience, particularly in direct response to the ominous nadir of history embodied by the Third Reich, is undeniably remarkable and philosophically significant. However, what sets his work apart is his pioneering creation of the philosophical concept of the *Noch-Nicht*, which delves into the idea of futurity with rigorously philosophical precision. For at the core of Ernst Bloch's philosophy lies the conviction that human beings are fundamentally oriented towards the future. Not the present, which is but a dark blip in which one can never be fully present, nor the past, which philosophers of various traditions have supposed to rule life and direct its course in advance, but the future is the basic reference of human experience. The primacy of the future is for Bloch a phenomenological fact: "Primär lebt jeder Mensch, indem er strebt, zukünftig, Vergangenes kommt erst später, und echte Gegenwart ist fast überhaupt noch nicht da" (*PH* 2). In its more banally or optimistically psychological sense, this insight is to say that each person lives for tomorrow, but the consequences are far-reaching. "Die Hoffnungslosigkeit ist selber, im zeitlichen wie sachlichen Sinn, das Unaushaltbarste, das ganz und gar den menschlichen Bedürfnissen Unerträglichste" (*PH* 3).

Anticipation is irrepressible; waking, but also un- and subconscious existence is possessed by anxieties, fears, plans, hopes, calculations of desired outcomes, well-wished but unlikely fantasies, vague pangs of unfulfilled want, and this craving precedes any past experience that lends it form or intention. The fact that expectation is informed by experience does not imply that anticipation is merely an adjusted subjective disposition, balanced somewhere between probabilistic empiricism and dreaming affect, towards the already seen and heard. Rather, this reluctance to fully objectify past events into something that no longer has any concern or untapped potential for us puts the past at

the service of the future. Thought is not content with, let alone limited to revisiting the past exactly as it was, whether from the perspective of disinterested observation or of passive wistfulness. "Denken heißt Überschreiten" (*PH* 3), as the epitaph on Bloch's gravestone reads. However subtly, all our recollections play into a projection into the future, and even the fondest remembrance of things past is never without the desire to find the loved thing again as it never was, in a new form that both fulfills the longing and exceeds the memory. If not coloured by hope or dread, static memory could say nothing to us, and only then might the past be truthfully said to be done and gone. "[W]ird das Vergangene nicht erst interessant, wenn es sich mit dem Jetzt tingiert, wenn es ein in unsere Gegenwart Vorausgreifendes in sich hat?" ("Gibt es Zukunft in der Vergangenheit?" 287). Nostalgia and trauma continue to wound into the present because the past indeed lives on, if only in the insufficient form of loss. Even irremediable loss, though by all accounts a vacant, futureless condition, stings precisely with the less than hopeful, though nevertheless urgent anticipation of rehabilitation, and the anticipated state of restituted wholeness surpasses the original loss.

But to restrict the category of futurity to the experiential or affective level does injustice to the centrality of the concept in Bloch's thinking. The future is not only first and foremost in our minds; it is the engine of all historical development, which does not unfold along a track set out in advance but is rather pulled from ahead into still undetermined *terra nova*. That is to say, Bloch does not regard futurity only as a human or anthropological universal, but as a fundamental ontological category, if not the most essential category of Being itself. "Erwartung, Hoffnung, Intention auf noch ungewordenen Möglichkeit: das ist nicht nur ein Grundzug des menschlichen Bewußtseins, sondern, konkret berichtet und erfaßt, eine Grundbestimmung innerhalb der objektiven Wirklichkeit insgesamt" (*PH* 5). In Bloch's sense, rejecting the deterministic intuition, the pull of the future is here stripped of all positive teleology. An inevitable and pre-formed future is none at all, but only the premature foreclosure of that which remains unknown because it cannot yet be known. The

future rather exerts a pull with no destination, into ever greater openness and indeterminacy. Nowhere is the future to be read, neither in tea leaves, the scientific method, nor in the mind of God, for it is nowhere written. The future is yet unrecorded, and not only from out limited perspective. This blank is not the trick of insufficient knowledge or readiness on the subject's part, but the ontological fact of the universe's ongoing incompleteness.

History does not know where it is headed, for despite being born of the past it carries with it inexhaustible possibility, conditioned by what came before, yet limitless in terms of consequence:

> Das wirklich Mögliche beginnt mit dem Keim, worin das Kommende angelegt ist. Das darin Vorgebildete treibt dahin, sich zu entfalten, aber freilich nicht, als wäre es vorher schon, auf engstem Platz eingeschachtelt. Der »Keim« sieht selber noch vielen Sprüngen entgegen, die »Anlage« entfaltet sich in der Entfaltung selber zu immer neuen und präziseren Ansätzen ihrer potentia-possibilitas. Das real Mögliche in Keim und Anlage ist folglich nie ein eingekapselt Fertiges, das als ein erst Klein-Vorhandenes lediglich auszuwachsen hätte. Vielmehr bewährt es seine Offenheit als wirklich entwickelnde Entfaltung, nicht als bloße Ausschüttung oder Ausfaltung (*PH* 274).

Conditions ripen, narratives progress, historical tides shift, but there is no master script. The past furnishes a plenitude of competing tendencies, but which will prevail can only be decided in the moment of their latest emergence, through the dialectical interaction of existing currents, which historical analysis alone cannot subsume. A philosophy of the future is "überhaupt nur mit der Vorsicht betretbar, die der *bloßen* Möglichkeit zukommt, aber erst recht mit der Vor-sicht, die der *latenten* Möglichkeit, minus aller Schwärmerei, mit sachlicher Konsequenz, zukommt" (*Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie* 235f).[24] Faced with the real openness of the future, the reflective mode of thinking in which historical analysis is based reaches a maximum that is to be supplemented through a more dynamic method of analysis combining a theory-driven, experience-informed caution (*Vorsicht*) with a more daring and involved foresight (*Vor-sicht*) with respect to possible change.

[24] Cited hereafter as *TE*.

Whereas reflection is limited to that which already exists, thought that wishes to project itself constructively and not only *schwärmerisch* into the future must also seize on the conditions of change that may at any moment taken hold. True philosophy, for Bloch, is thus always the philosophy of change "nach Maßgabe der analysierten Lage, der dialektischen Tendenz, der objektiven Gesetze, der realen Möglichkeit" (*PH* 326f).

In Bloch's view, philosophy has largely neglected the pull of the future or else nullified the role of possibility in history. In this tradition "Geschehen wird Geschichte, Erkenntnis Wiedererinnerung, Festlichkeit das Begehen eines Gewesenen" (*PH* 4). At the risk of unjustly abbreviating the philosophical intertextuality of a body of work that dialogues with hundreds of thinkers, scholars, artists, and religious teachers, the prime target of such critique might be identified as Plato. For the original dialectical philosopher, all knowledge was anamnesis, which is the eternal soul's recollection of eternal truth forgotten upon entry into this transient world of appearances, and the reality of Being was the persistence of immutable forms in a world beyond our own. In such a state of affairs *Vor-sicht* falls away, since under the predominance of eternity the present moment is deprived of all real possibility, and the future is reduced to the quantitative recombination of that which already exists, indeed that which has always already existed. Human history is for Plato only the play of shadows on a cave wall, the drama of Being having ended before time began, the last stage upon which it is reenacted being the mind immersed in reflection.

The history of philosophy following Plato, where it does not eliminate the future entirely, nevertheless places an upper bound on its capacity to bring about something genuinely new, in essence depriving the future of its futurity:

> Es war letzthin immer wieder die Decke der Platonischen Anamnesis über dem dialektisch-offenen Eros, welche die bisherige Philosophie einschließlich Hegels vom Ernst der Front und des Novum abgehalten, kontemplative-antiquarisch abgeschlossen hat… Die Welt ist vielmehr voll Anlage zu

> etwas, Tendenz auf etwas, Latenz von etwas, und das so intendierte Etwas heißt Erfüllung des Intendierenden (*PH* 17).

Bloch inherits Hegel's theory of dialectic, according to which the process of world-historical unfolding generates forms that differ qualitatively from those that precede them, and real change emerges from the interaction of divergent tendencies. But in Hegel's grand narrative there can be no talk of the merely possible, let alone thwarted possibility, because change has been delimited *a priori* as the timely disclosure of Absolute Spirit; the content of world history has already been settled, we are only watching it run its course on a temporal scale.[25] Excluded from Hegel's circumscribed dialectic are two elements of Bloch's terminology. First, the *Novum* is that which has never before been seen and which lies in wait in the future, not yet in existence and only hinted at in tendency and latency. Altogether beyond the reach of reflective thought, the *Novum* is the unknown into which history is hurtling. Meanwhile the *Front* means "der jeweils voderste Abschnitt der Zeit, wo wir uns lebend und handelnd befinden" (*TE* 227), that is, the forward lean of the present into the future where history takes place, "on the spot," so to speak. The *Novum*, which for Bloch is the essential feature of the open future, and the *Front*, the essential feature of the fleeting present, are missing from Hegel's dialectic because, although it unfolds in historical time, nothing is decided in the moment. History, for Bloch, is not a stage upon which Being is reenacted, but the laboratory in which it is continually being recreated through various iterations. "Wesen ist nicht Ge-wesenheit, konträr: das Wesen der Welt liegt selber an der Front" (*PH* 18).

In this way Bloch construes his project as an answer to the disregard for futurity in much of prior philosophy, and it can furthermore be contrasted against all those that minimise the effectiveness of human activity. Human beings can change the most fundamental conditions of our existence, and modern modes of production have accentuated and reorganised our strengths into

[25] See *PH* 280ff.

planet-spanning structures that have already transformed our world beyond anything conceivable in the pre-capitalist era. These structures appear complex beyond the comprehension and control of any individual despite the fact that they are born of the revolution in our ability to create and recreate the world.[26] The owning classes rule by channeling human activity towards their ends without acknowledging how it might be mobilised differently; those who seize on this possibility by recognising their power are responsible for bringing about a freer future. The ever-increasing working class, as the group of individuals whose productive capacity has been most radically expanded by technological improvement and yet whose independent political influence remains among the most marginal, has been vested with the potential to herald the fully new in a way that prior philosophy can only deem impossible, inconsequential, or preordained. For Bloch, the anticipated success of Marxist politics is as unprecedented as it is unguaranteed.

Bloch thus differs from deterministic interpretations of Marxism in that nothing for him is inevitable. Nor does he reduce any particular class to the blind tool of history but rather sees the struggle for freedom as fundamentally open, impinging on irreducible human agency:

> Es ist die revolutionäre Entscheidung des Proletariats, welche heute, im Endkampf der Befreiungen, sich einsetzt, eine Entscheidung des subjektiven Faktors im Bund mit den objektiven Faktoren der ökonomisch-materiellen Tendenz… denn bleibt der subjektive Faktor isoliert, so wird er lediglich ein Faktor des Putschismus, nicht der Revolution… Konkrete Entscheidung zum Lichtsieg in der realen Möglichkeit ist das Gleiche wie der Gegenzug gegen das Mißlingen im Prozeß. Ist das Gleiche wie der Gegenzug der Freiheit gegen das vom Prozeß abgehobene, ihn aus Stockung und Verdinglichung konterkarierende sogenannte Schicksal. (*PH* 229).

For Bloch, to subject human freedom to "das vom Prozeß abgehobene… Schicksal" mistakenly takes for granted a future that is in fact still contested ground. The future is at each moment being constructed anew, and it is human actors, in building their own lives, who are also building the

[26] Compare Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, regarding "the irritating incompatibility between the actual power of modern man (greater than ever before, great to the point where he might challenge the very existence of his own universe) and the impotence of modern men to live in, and understand the sense of, a world which their own strength has established" (viii).

collective future. Dialectically, this means that the direction of our cumulative activity, though objectively lawlike and swayed by undercurrents of tendency and latency, is finally open-ended, and qualitatively new worlds are still to emerge depending on the undecided, non-deterministic successes of cooperative and competitive movements in mankind's political, economic, and social existence.

Moreover, each individual has a personal stake in the world to come and does whatever possible to improve its prospects, never by interpretation alone but also through hopeful involvement. There is room in this attitude, shared by all those whose hopes go beyond *schwämerische* daydreaming, for philosophical practice to become coequal with theory. Bloch's emphasis on practice may be summarised with Marx's well-known eleventh thesis on Ludwig Feuerbach: "Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden interpretiert; es kommt aber darauf an, sie zu verändern" (quoted in *PH* 319). Indeed, the writings of Marx supply Bloch with the ground upon which to combine theory with practice, *Vorsicht* with *Vor-sicht*, into a philosophy of the future that is not merely agnostic with respect to the quality of world that awaits us:

> »In der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft«, sagt das Kommunistische Manifest, »herrscht die Vergangenheit über die Gegenwart, in der kommunistischen die Gegenwart über die Vergangenheit.« Und es herrscht die Gegenwart zusammen mit dem Horizont in ihr, der der Horizont der Zukunft ist, und der dem Fluß der Gegenwart den spezifischen Raum gibt, den Raum neuer, betreibbar besserer Gegenwart (*PH* 329).

Hope in the future, informed by a timely understanding of present conditions and the recognition of their limitations, is not only an affective and interpretive stance, but the dynamic force by which freedom, equality, and human dignity are realised in history. Far from a distraction or disconnect from the present, practical-theoretical hope is for Bloch the truest and most radical movement towards becoming present. Human life and nature itself exist in a state of greater or lesser insufficiency, beginning with the darkness of the present which is "fast überhaupt noch nicht da" (*PH* 2) and intensifying over a history of alienation, exploitation, and violence, reaching catastrophic

nadirs in which life becomes subjugated to death and presence to absence. Consummate presence is always deferred into a possible future, whereas the bare fact of existence balances on the unoccupiable *Front*. Though the *Novum* is by definition blank, it is also the only space wide enough to accommodate the emancipated human community and bring our most daring plans to fruition. The most remote future may bring fulfillment or destruction, and the time until then may be marked by countless disappointments; but as the forbearing and all-encompassing realm of freedom and the object of all striving that originates in the initial "Nein zum Mangel" (*PH* 3), the future presages itself everywhere in traces of a more open, freer, better world to come: Utopia.

It is a similarly cautious, wavering, but nevertheless ardent approach to the future that we find in the poetry of Paul Celan. His poems are forward-, or at least outward-facing, surpassing the internal world of reflection; while remaining situated in the wake of the Shoah and speaking from the traumatic experience of that historical nadir, they at the same time refuse the closure catastrophe implies. Celan dwells in a darkness which, though it encompasses the poet's perspective, shades but never excludes the category of hope. Precisely by inhabiting and speaking from this dark reality, he remains attuned to the real possibility invisible to pessimism which retreats from the world into escapism or silence.[27] Celan's poetry is filled with moments of expectancy and protest, projections into hypothesised and anticipated futures, statements of salvation, creative and celebratory breaks with the past, restitution of loss, and rejection of lethality. The persistence of these elements allows for a Utopian reading of Celan even in the absence of a concrete determination of an idealised society since, as Bloch describes, it is this positively charged, open vacancy, as distinct from shortsighted, world-shy, or *schwärmerische* daydreaming, that grounds concrete Utopia. The Utopian element in Celan's poetry exists in the tension between the ambiguous occupation of that vacancy,

[27] See Björn Hayer, *Utopielyrik*, 169: "Sprache muss, da es kein Außerhalb ihrer geschichtlichen Prägung gibt, stets im Lichte ihrer Gebrochenheit gesehen werden."

and hence the urgent anticipation it precipitates, and the poem's orientation towards it as a space of fulfillment. Celan can be said to speak from the *Front*, since the locus of the poem is at once the poet's own position, which is the negative presence in the post-Shoatic world, and the directedness towards that which is no longer or not yet there, the positive absence of Utopia. Schulz states,

> [Celans] Gedicht [vergißt] seinen Standort in der Gegenwart nicht… und… es [weiß] den Entwurf von Utopischem als eine Möglichkeit seines eigenen Sprechens… Man kann selbst bei einer Aufzählung all jener Stellen, an denen Utopisches im herkömmlichen Sinne als inhaltliche Beschreibung eines Erhofften hervortritt, nicht einwenden, hier würde Zukunft als das doch prinzipiell Offenzuhaltende festgeschrieben (193).

Affirming in both the Bremen prize speech and in the "Meridian" that the poem has a temporally situated present, rather than flying somewhere above and beyond human history, the poet also describes it in the former as underway, "[a]uf etwas Offenstehendes, Besetzbares, auf ein ansprechbares Du vielleicht, auf eine ansprechbare Wirklichkeit" (*GW* III, 186), and in the latter attributes to its search for a certain "Ort" the movement "ins Offene und Leere und Freie" (*GW* III, 199). These ambiguous accounts of the spatiality of poetry described in Celan's poetological discourses demonstrate a strong affinity with Bloch's conception of Utopia and futurity.[28] The poet, as much as the philosopher, is concerned with the future as at once non-space and supremely open space, warmly and capaciously receiving the human community that cannot be contained in its entirety within the insufficient present.

That the future will indeed be hospitable and right all past wrongs is, of course, by no means certain. The corollary to the open *Novum* and the possibility of restitution it presents is the fleeting *Front*, upon which everything depends. However many factors decide the shape of the future, the decision is not ratified until the moment it comes into being. The opportunity to intervene lasts only an instant, and no one knows how to grasp it until it is already past. Bloch refers to the paradox of

[28] See Björn Hayer, *Utopielyrik*, 167: "Dass der Autor [Celan] für diese Praxis Begriffe wie das »Offene« respektive »Erscheinende[]« verwendet, lässt erneut Bezugspunkte zu Bloch erkennen."

our practical inability to exist within the most immediate present as the darkness of the lived moment, "das Dunkel des gelebten Augenblicks."[29] The sliver of time we actually occupy between the *Nicht-Mehr* and the *Noch-Nicht* is too slim to rightly experience: "Nicht das Fernste also, sondern *das Nächste ist noch völlig dunkel* und ebendeshalb, weil es das Nächste, das Immanenteste ist" (*PH* 341). At best we may have some awareness after the fact. There can be no mastery over or repose within the momentary present, but in that we occupy it as agents and not inactive passengers, the lived moment is a fertile ground for historical change. "Das hierin dunkelnde Nicht unseres gelebten Jetzt bietet sich noch nicht an, aber sein wenigstens aktuell vermittelter Ort bietet als Front sich an, vor allem, geschärfter Weise, in Wendezeiten" (*TE* 228). The lived moment is Eleatic-paradoxically the most static moment of all, because as the changeless "Hier und Jetzt" (*GW* III, 198; *PH* 11) it is only an isolated instant without before or after, yet it is there alone that change is possible. The narrowly habitable *Front*, which seemingly forecloses the effectiveness of human action on the future, is finally the last point of entry where action can still exert influence, for it is here that nothing is yet lost and the weight of the encroaching past is momentarily suspended. A door is left open to hope, not only as an affect but as an active stance towards the future, capable of seizing on opportunity even as it passes.

True hope, that is hope whose object is not a given but everywhere and at all times contested, is daring and mediated through history and tendency, which is paradoxically what enables it as a force of historical change to reroute or curb tendencies:

> Aber gerade weil rechte Hoffnung in der Welt, via Welt geht und mit deren objektivem Prozeß vermittelt arbeitet, steht sie mitsamt diesem Prozeß in einem Wagnis, als *dem der Front*… In sich selbst als hoffende Hoffnung durchaus entschieden, muß doch der Ausgang selber erst noch entschieden werden, in offener Geschichte, als dem Feld objektiv-realer Entscheidung. Das ist die

[29] See, for instance, *PH* 206, 221f, 334ff.

> Kategorie der Gefahr oder der objektiven Ungarantiertheit auch der vermittelten, der docta spes; es gibt noch keine unschwankende Situationslosigkeit eines fixen Resultats (*PH* 1624).

The anticipation and protest of Celan's poetry participate in such hope which, even because of the darkness in which it is situated and the challenges it faces, seeks to exert an influence in the here and now. Celan too is concerned with the wagers and hazards of attempts at truthful expression, as he expresses in his above quoted characterisation of a poem as "eine Flaschenpost" (*GW* III, 186). What is at stake in Celan's poetry is its reception, both by the reader and by any other person, living or dead, capable of occupying the vacant *Du* that so often appears. The presence of such an Other is, at least initially, a perilously virtual one, lopsided and unreal; the poet's words are at risk of falling on deaf ears.

In plain actuality the dead know only absence and stasis, and purely reflective approaches to remembrance are outweighed by the past that declares the finality of death. But in potentiality the dead are still part of the ongoing process of world history, involved as its agents and not merely its past and passive objects. By addressing the dead directly in the particular space of the poem, Celan is attempting to restore some measure of agency, possibility, change, and uncertainty to them, a project only possible under the aegis of hope:

> Das Celan'sche Möglichkeitsdenken unterläuft die Vorstellung fester, unabänderlicher Zustände, was zugleich dem Bloch'schen Begriff vom in alle zeitlichen Dimensionen ausgreifenden Denken ähnlich ist: »Wahres Denken bildet ab, was außer ihm geworden ist und wird. Was […] Im Begriff ist zu geschehen.«[30] Auch Celans poetische Denkweise steht im Zeichen der Vorausschau wie der Rückschau, wobei der Tod nie ein abgeschlossenes Ende darstellt (Hayer 186).

The poem becomes a Utopian space where futurity overcomes finality and even the dead are offered shelter from what Bloch calls "Urvergangenes oder geschichtslos Ewiges" (*PH* 7). The commemoration Celan undertakes, no longer a merely reflective posture, is indeed Utopian in Bloch's sense because it is wholly of this world and "trägt auf seiner Rückseite ein katastrophisches

[30] Quoted from Ernst Bloch, "Erkenntnis als Schlüssel und Hebel des Wirklichen," 118.

Bewusstsein, das ganz offensichtlich vom Historisch-Konkreten gezeichnet ist" (Schößler and Tunkel 133). Within the scarred post-Shoatic world, Celan detects traces of what has been lost as the latent possibility of what still may be to come, and hence not entirely lost.

The engagement with risk and possibility at the nadir of history, undertaken on behalf of the absent dead and in anticipation of a liberated and habitable world embodies the hope that Celan practices. A close reading of the poem "Gehässige Monde" (*GW* III, 70) will begin to demonstrate the pull of the future and its felicitous, redemptive *Novum* that permeate the entire body of Celan's work. Although it appears at the end of his career, first published in the posthumous collection *Zeitgehöft*, this poem may introduce hope in Celan's poetry as one of the few and final instances where the word itself appears:

> Gehässige Monde
> räkeln sich geifernd
> hinter dem Nichts,
>
> die sach-
> kundige Hoffnung, die halbe,
> knipst sich aus,
>
> Blaulicht jetzt, Blaulicht,
> in Tüten,
>
> Elend, in harten
> Trögen flambiert,
>
> ein Wurfsteinspiel
> rettet die Stirnen,
>
> du rollst die Altäre
> zeiteinwärts.

The poem is divided into six stanzas, each consisting of an independent clause, strung along by commas to the other stanzas, forming a paratactic chain of discrete minimal scenes. Sentence construction differs from stanza to stanza, though they uniformly begin with a sole grammatical subject: moons, hope, blue-light, misery, a throwing stone game, and Thou. Apart from the

opposition between hope and misery, and a degree of possible visual resemblance between the moons and blue-light, these subjects belong to entirely different categories, and there is no clear approach to unifying them.

The first two stanzas, both three lines in length, stand apart from the couplets that follow, giving the poem a sonnet-like structure in that a sestet can be somewhat artificially individuated from an octet. A volta of sorts occurs at the juncture between the second and third stanzas, where the doubled apparition of "Blaulicht jetzt, Blaulicht" marks a departure from the darkness that comes before ("Monde," "Nichts," "knipst… aus"). Other changes that develop past the volta include the proliferation of nouns, introducing more sensible physical objects into the poem as opposed to the remote and abstract ones that appear before. The style of action is also different after the volta, the initial sestet depicting rather static or completed scenes despite their present verb tense: the repose of the moons (*räkeln* being especially passive compared with the more common *strecken*) and the snapping off of hope. The two middle stanzas, though they contain no verb at all, are dynamic even as noun sentences, while the two final stanzas depict true movement and apparently continuous or ongoing action. A second order division can thus be traced between the verbless scenes in the middle of the poem and the use of the present tense before and after.

Hope appears in the second verse of the second stanza, only to be immediately halved and then snuffed out altogether; though "sach- / kundige," it is also only "die halbe," and just as soon, it is gone. It shuts off like an electric light switch, perhaps in acquiescence to the dark night signaled by the eclipse of the spiteful moons. The stasis of the moons behind "dem Nichts" renders them ineffectual as a source of light amid the darkness, while the disappearance of "Hoffnung" in phases, from whole through half to nothing, recalls the waning of the moon. Hope and moon are removed from the domain of beautifying lyric poetry and reduced to insufficiency; already the adjectives that

precede them cast doubt upon the subjects, like they had only been presentified in order to then be removed.[31] Verb and adverb both zoomorphise the moons into grotesque animals and anthropomorphise them into malicious human beings; the Grimm dictionary notes the pejorative social connotations of *räkeln*,[32] and *geifern* has the secondary sense of "spewing (insult, abuse)." In any case the moons are rendered in an organic register, and this uncanny animateness contrasts their absence in the moonless night. Hope, on the other hand, is rendered mechanical, further objectified by the enjambed extraction of *Sache* from *sachkundig*, suffering at once a sudden electrical *Ausknipsen* and a gradual phasal wane.

The darkness of the first two stanzas is thus ambiguously moonless and hopeless, and an unequivocal beacon arrives only with "Blaulicht jetzt, Blaulicht." The light snaps into immediate existence, without a verb to inaugurate it or adjective to qualify it, following the torpid and stepwise snapping off of hope. This apparition of light in artificial colour may be the flash of a photographer's bulb that *knipst*, snaps a photo, rendering a scene visible and recordable which had been obscure in the moonless night. Ironically, "jetzt" appears only in the part of the poem that forgoes the otherwise prevailing present tense. The present moment here is only a split second, a flash of light, a synchronous cross-section of time that does not last long enough for a verb. Until the volta, there is more past than present, despite the tense. The proliferation of "Monde" makes of them markers of elapsed time, metonymically referring to the month between two new moons.[33]

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[31] A grammatical, rather than rhetorical instance of correctio, as in "Engführung" (*GW* I, 197): "Der Ort, wo sie lagen, er hat / einen Namen – er hat / keinen. Sie lagen nicht dort." Immediately ensuing contradiction at once negates and does not negate. Here, the absence of a name not only negates the initially asserted presence of a name but also diminishes and amends it even while preserving it. See Peter Szondi, *Celan-Studien*, 62f.

[32] "Räkeln, verb. räkel sein, ungezogen dasitzen oder herumliegen" (*DWB*).

[33] That is, the idiomatic use of "moons" in the outmoded high register parodied in the opening lines of *Hamlet*'s play-within-a-play:

> "Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round,
> Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbèd ground,
> And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen

That this procession of moons is gathered "hinter dem Nichts" suggests that the nothingness itself belongs rather to the present, the persisting vacuum that holds sway in the world left over by catastrophe.

The obviation of the moons, the passage of time, may signal a repression or inability to properly commemorate the traumatising past from the position of a so thoroughly nullifying present. The undifferentiated accumulation of extended, multiplied past also indicates an inadequate form of commemoration that reduces the quality of experience into impersonal quantity. The insufficient stasis of the moons and the snapping off of hope recall that lethal past, and the extension, proliferation, and deferral of these stagnant or finished scenes in the present tense oppose the verbless instantaneity of the lived present. Brief and vacant, this present, which in the poem is simultaneously "Nichts" and "jetzt," can be equated with Bloch's darkness of the lived moment. As quoted above, "[d]as hierin dunkelnde Nicht [sic] unseres gelebten Jetzt bietet sich noch nicht an" (*TE* 228). This is the anxiety of one with no time in the present and whose thoughts are claimed by eternity and finality. Approached from an interpretive perspective informed by Bloch, the first two stanzas of "Gehässige Monde" weigh the futility of action in the scarred, vacant world of the present against the overwhelming and unalterable fact of disaster, which assumes the ontological status of "Urvergangenes oder geschichtslos Ewiges" (*PH* 7). The "sach- / kundige Hoffnung" proposed here is not true hope in Bloch's sense of "militanter Optimismus," which recognises uncertainty and pursues its goals in the space afforded there.[34] The hope evoked in "Gehässige Monde" is informed, it may possess *Vorsicht*, but in the absence of *Vor-sicht* it remains merely "die halbe" hope. The break in poetic form accompanying the advent of "Blaulicht jetzt" in the present,

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About the world have times twelve thirties been,
Since love our hearts, and Hymen did our hands,
Unite communal in most sacred bands" (3.2.145-150).

[34] See *PH* 227ff.

which is not precisely an advent because it has neither beginning nor end, is thus also a break with the dominance of the past. Light, and with it the possibility of photographically illuminating and capturing the scene of the poem, defies the reign of the moons as hostile astrological signs that haunt the dark night of history with the dread of inescapable fate.

The two middle stanzas present instantaneous snapshots, both of immaterial things glowing or burning in prosaic material containers, evoking the anticipated or possible emergence of redemption and genuine affect out of the world. The hardness of the "harten Trögen" expresses the concrete physicality of present-moment existence. That the emerging light is blue recalls the colour's significance for Bloch, who frequently invokes with it the open sky as the horizon of the welcomed new and unknown, describing pure expectancy and daydreaming as movements into the blue (*PH* 21; *PH* 98; *PH* 754; *TE* 98).[35] The flashes of "Blaulicht" and "flambiert[es]" "Elend" are unexpected departures from the mundanity of the objects that contain them, much like the Utopian content of daydreaming that surfaces out of ordinary life and pushes against its limits. Radiance is contained in concrete existence yet exceeds it, and the extent of this outward prospect is as yet undefined. This open-ended, immediate emergence is the antithesis to the closure and dissipation imposed in the first two stanzas; whereas the poem's beginning, in Bloch's terminology, proposes hope as mere *Vorsicht*, the middle verses bring unmixed *Vor-sicht*, "das Versprechende schlechthin" (*TE* 357). Though hope ceases to be named, a more militant kind is taking shape, one which exists both within and against the present, occupying it while rejecting its negative inheritance, the void of post-Shoatic existence. The poetic voice neither takes comfort in the present tense nor evades it:

> Vielmehr lebt hier echter Widerstand gegen ein herrschend Schlechtes in der Zeit wie auch echte Zustimmung zu übergehend Bedeutendem in ihr. Und beides wächst dann auf dem gleichen Holz:

[35] See also *PH* 96: "Einsame Spaziergänge oder schwärmerisches Jugendgespräch mit einem Freund oder die sogenannte blaue Stunde zwischen Tag und Dunkel sind für die Wachträumerei besonders geeignet."

> auf dem Baum des Morgen im Heute. Demgemäß und um die Geburt des Morgen zu befördern, ist sein Denken zwar mitten in der Zeit, doch so, daß es sie weisen kann und überholt (*TE* 91).

The scene of "Elend, in harten / Trögen flambiert" is just such a "Nein zum Mangel" of the "Nicht unseres gelebten Jetzt." Whereas the first stanza sees the repression of the lethal past as quality and the undifferentiated accumulation of such past as quantity, culminating in the dissipation of inadequate hope in the second stanza, now the poem does not shy away from existing misery but seeks it out in order to combat it. The way is paved for action constructively informed by hope.[36]

Utopian expectancy becomes fully formed and Messianic towards the end of the poem at the mention of *Rettung* and "Altäre," with their self-evident religious connotations. These latter stanzas concern action which is not yet completed, which is still to be fulfilled. In other words, where the poem previously treats the past and present, it ventures here most hopefully into the future. Holding onto the trauma previously embodied as stasis and finality, and speaking from the unchanging lived moment, the poet's purposiveness returns "zeiteinwärts." The return of lost time in the context of rescued foreheads signals the sudden, epiphanic moment of remembrance, the adequate purchase on memory despite the obscurity and hostility that dominates the poet's past. This gesture towards hurling stones and foreheads also inevitably conjures David's defeat of Goliath in the Hebrew Bible. David, a young shepherd's son and musician, faces the mighty Philistine warrior equipped with nothing but a sling, triumphing over the latter by striking him in the forehead with a stone.[37] By securing Israel's military victory, he finds favour with King Saul, who does not

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[36] See Dorothee Kohler-Luginbühl, *Poetik im Lichte der Utopie*, 67: "Dichten wird damit beschrieben als eine *Handlung auf Hoffnung hin*."

[37] The legend of David's improbable triumph, though achieved by violent means, is Utopian in its declaration of the vanity of prevailing secular forces and the anticipation of justice for the meek and downtrodden: "Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied… And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands" (1 Sam. 17:45-47). All references in this thesis to the Bible in English come from the King James Version of 1769 unless stated otherwise. See bibliographic entry in works cited.

know that the boy has already been appointed by God to inherit his throne. The reference to David, the just worldly ruler who in the Jewish tradition is named as the forefather of the coming Messiah, inverts the violent story by having "ein Wurfsteinspiel / rettet die Stirnen," saving rather than splitting and condemning. While David is evoked through a famous military feat, his importance does not belong to the history of violence but rather to the promise of future redemption bringing eternal justice and peace. The language of the poem is not otherwise religious, and this act of saving or rescue constitutes a desacralised salvation in line with the worldly and ecumenical mission of the human Messiah.[38]

The moons with which the poem opens then become points of reference to the lunar cycle of the Jewish calendar, which records worldly time while also self-consciously approaching its own end, the awaited day when ordinary history gives way to the world to come. Taking this rather evident biblical invocation as grounds to search for more subtle hints, we may return to the first stanza for another allusion to King David. The word *Geifer* appears only once in Martin Luther's translation of the Bible, namely in the story of David's exile. Fleeing the wrath of Saul, who has become insecure in his rule, David turns to the mercy of another ruler: "Vnd Dauid… furcht sich seer fur Achis dem könige zu Gath. Vnd verstellet sein geberde fur jnen / vnd kollert vnter jren henden / vnd sties sich an die thür / vnd sein geiffer flos jm in den bart" (1 Sam. 21:13-14).[39] In a show of helplessness in the face of "might makes right" as deployed by all wielders of worldly power, Saul as well as Goliath, David protects himself by feigning insanity. The spiteful moons take on yet another meaning as the classical symbol of madness. Celan, suffering acutely from deteriorating mental health at the end of his life, may have seen himself in this legend of exile and

[38] Consider also the final verse of "Einmal" (*GW* II, 107), which summarises creation and salvation in the human, sensible, and desacralised world: "Licht war. Rettung."

[39] All references in this thesis to the Bible in German will refer to Luther's 1545 translation as reproduced by the Württembergische Bibelgesellschaft unless stated otherwise. See bibliographic entry in works cited.

madness. As the writer of the psalms, David is the prototypical Jewish poet, to whom Celan allows himself to feel connected as one living in an unredeemed and inhospitable world, desirous of the most improbable salvation that comes not from beyond that world but within it.

The salvation of humanity is anticipated in the image of a "Wurfsteinspiel," a neologism constructed from the rare and antiquated *Wurfstein*, defined in the Grimm dictionary as a stone thrown as a projectile of war or sport.[40] The element of sport or game also seizes on the sense of the stone as a cast die (*Würfel* being a cognate of *Wurf*) and the uncertainty, even the risk involved in the poetic attempt at faithful expression of the experience of disaster in the name of adequate commemoration and anticipation of a better future. The poem is, as it were, submitted to the *Front*, and whether it "irgendwo und irgendwann an Land gespült werden [könnte]" is only a hopeful gambit, a message in a bottle cast into the sea (*GW* III, 186). It is only on the *Front*, in the moment-to-moment making of history, that change is possible, but it is also here that latency and tendency risk evading us altogether and culminating in nothing. Opportunity, writes Bloch in a fortuitous motivic parallel to Celan's poem, may be "sehr augenblicksgemäß mit einer Stirnlocke und sonst kahl dargestellt; wird die vorübergehende [Gelegenheit] nicht an der Locke ergriffen, dann überhaupt nicht" (*TE* 228). The foreheads will be saved suddenly, unexpectedly, by a flash of human agency and insight, or not at all.

By necessity speaking from the fleeting present, "Gehässige Monde" attends to that which is at best ambiguously present, namely the dead who are no longer there and possibility that has not yet been realised. Presence, far from being the one thing that can be relied on, is that which is most at stake. Celan speaks as one

[40] David's stone, incidentally, is both; the Bible tells that he picks "five smooth stones out of the brook" (1 Sam. 17:40), which might otherwise have been thrown back into the water and skipped in the most ancient *Wurfsteinspiel*.

> der die darin liegende Gefährdung des Gedichts in Kauf nahm… Gefährdet, ohne Sicherung im Gegebenen ist die Stellung der Dichtung nicht zuletzt, weil die Dinge, die sie »anspricht«, ambivalent sind, d.h.: offen — nicht das, was sie sein könnten und sollten, und doch zugleich über das, was sie sind, immer schon hinaus, auf dem Weg zu jenem (Schulz 277).

The risky path leads finally to the second-person pronoun in the final stanza, caught not in a static or finished snapshot but engaged in the continuous action of overcoming absence: the Utopia of finally fulfilled presence, life in the moment. The identity of this "du" is not settled but rather, as in all of its appearances in Celan's poetry, lends itself as a placeholder that cannot yet be filled by any fixed referent, only variously occupied by the poet's late mother, the dead in general, the addressed reader, the author himself, or any wandering Other gracious enough to step for a moment into the intimacy of Thou. That this "du" rolls "die Altäre / zeiteinwärts" places it initially outside of or beyond time, though statedly not inaccessible from an historical perspective; it is in this present, ongoing movement that the "du," despite the undeniable fact of absence, is recovered in living time. The absence to be overcome might be the finality of death, the insuperable distance between partners in dialogue, poet and reader, or the mystery of inexhaustible possibility that constitutes the *Novum* of the future. If the penultimate stanza asserts the necessity of redemption within the real world rather than a transcendent one (actual, physical foreheads are to be saved rather than immaterial souls), then the designation of the movement here as "zeiteinwärts" makes clear that redemption is desired within real history and not in remote eternity.

The venturing forth into the future enables an encounter with an Other whom the poet can intimately address as Thou, possibly marking success in his stated mission in the direction "auf ein ansprechbares Du vielleicht, auf eine ansprechbare Wirklichkeit" (*GW* III, 186). A similar stage is set in the poem "In den Flüssen" (*GW* II, 14):

> In den Flüssen nördlich der Zukunft
> werf ich das Netz aus, das du
> zögernd beschwerst

mit von Steinen geschriebenen
Schatten.

Like the "du" in "Gehässige Monde," the Other is met or perhaps anticipated outside of, but not inaccessible from ordinary time. This Thou exists at the extremities of the living, waking world and is only to be met by venturing out.[41] Celan takes up the ancient metaphor of time as a flowing river and complicates it by geographically removing the rivers from time and placing them in a remote, apparently polar region "nördlich der Zukunft." This uncharted territory (a closely related metaphor[42]) is in a state of danger, cold, and deprivation, the land of the dead who have been cast out of the habitual riverine flow of time. The "du" here can thus also address an Other, perhaps a loved one, separated from the speaker through death. The landscape's northern orientation, though ruled by a lasting winter, also carries the sense of Polaris, the North Star of sailors and orienteers; this region is navigable by ship and compass. Though perilous and uncharted, a journey into this wide-open region beyond the future, a time and space charged with Utopia, is possible. There is yet life to be discovered in the cold.

The speaker casts his net into these uncertain waters, which defines his poetic mission here: not the reclamation or colonisation of the extemporal topos, but the search for something to bring back with him. The terrain remains dark and uncharted, and indeed all the speaker achieves in gathering are "von Steinen geschriebenen / Schatten" in lieu of living and life-sustaining fish. These textual shadows are poems, and in this sense "In den Flüssen" is a self-referential description of Celan's poetic process. This process of writing appears then as an unlikely and attenuated

[41] Several of Celan's poems involve journeys by sea into the domain of death, or his brother sleep. To name a few: "Dein Haar überm Meer" (*GW* I, 18), "Nachtstrahl" (*GW* I, 31), "Das ganze Leben" (*GW* I, 34), "Der Reisekamerad" (*GW* I, 66), "Von Dunkel zu Dunkel" (*GW* I, 97), "Inselhin" (*GW* I, 141), "Matière de Bretagne" (*GW* I, 171), "Schuttkahn" (*GW* I, 173).

[42] See, for instance, J. J. C. Smart, "The River of Time," 483: "There are certain metaphors which we commonly feel constrained to use when talking about time. We say that we are advancing through time, through the past into the future, much as a ship advances through the sea into unknown waters."

("zögernd") exchange with an Other, the finished poem itself only a consolation for the incomplete encounter, which the poet willingly or dutifully accepts. The poet, casting his net out for nourishment, receives something in return that may initially appear to contradict his expectations, but finally somehow fulfills them. Switching from the active to the passive role in this exchange, the speaker allows the Other to equip him with the provisions and guidance he needs for a possible journey into a land that may not finally be all so uninhabitable. The products of this exchange are heavy and dark with the shared experience of catastrophe, yet the exchange itself does not attempt a return to the traumatic past but rather looks steadily forward into the future and beyond. It is here that the "du" can actively approach the speaker and reciprocate his advances, not merely as the object of memory but as an agent possessed of a force of its own, capable of bringing something new into existence. The topos of this poem north of the future is precisely the site of an encounter with the dead, if not yet a complete one, while the anticipation of a fully consummate encounter constitutes its Utopia. As in "Gehässige Monde," the hope is to see the dead loved one, so long consigned to the past, once again participate in and exist towards the future.

The projected encounter with the dead in the living future or in the Utopic post-future finds its philosophical parallel in Bloch's championing of the *Unabgegoltene* in the past:

> Die echte Tradition hingegen, die mit dem Vorwärts dauernd weiterhin tingierte, an Ort und Stelle anwesend dort, wo etwas gemacht wurde und noch gärte und abgebrochen wurde, nicht zu seiner vollen Reife, zur Vollendung kam, diese Tradition hat eine besondere Verwandtschaft und Affinität zu dem Werdenden, dem Heraufkommenden, dem Nichtvollendeten, dem Gestörten, dem durch äußere Umstände vor allem Mißratenen, dem Unabgegoltenen; in der Vergangenheit hat sie eine besondere Beziehung zu dem, was ich *mögliche Zukunft in der Vergangenheit* genannt habe ("Gibt es Zukunft in der Vergangenheit?" 293–94).

The past for Bloch is potentially filled with futurity where the concern is for things left incomplete, interrupted, or otherwise unfulfilled and which might still have their moment in the capacious *Novum*. The tradition that continues to speak to us does so because it has not yet been exhausted by

a perfect, irretrievable past configuration of society, perhaps a lost golden age, the existence of which Bloch rejects. Perfection has not yet been achieved anywhere in history, and the most idealised works handed down in music, art, mythology, and poetry are not such because of the unchanging sufficiency of their settled form, but rather because they contain the pre-appearance of a greater and lasting perfection to come. It is through expectancy and unsettledness that they speak to us. These works contain only hints of Utopian perfection, "welches relative *Gelungenheit*, vor allem in Meisterwerken, möglich macht: sonst gäbe es von der Vergangenheit überhaupt nur Vergessen und nicht auch das partial Gerettete und Rettbare, welches Geschichte und Nachreife heißt" (*PH* 361). The great works of the past are not the full realisations of ideals but momentary seizures of fleeting opportunity, which remain operative to this day as latency and tendency whenever we draw on tradition. These works are no more static now than at the time of their creation and in fact are "geladen mit Ungewordenem, mit Grenzüberschreitungen unserer Menschlichkeit, sind voll von konkreter Unruhe und Unrast des Menschen" ("Gibt es Zukunft in der Vergangenheit?" 299).

The transgression and restlessness of the vital past need not lose its force just because it is not strictly new in the sense of a complete break with the given; future-oriented action is always mediated by material historical conditions, and it is precisely by its implication in world history that tradition can continue to be revolutionary, as the terrain on which even the dead maintain a stake in the future:

> Die Tradition ist die Revolution der Abgeschiedenen, die Revolution ist die Tradition der Zukünftigen. Dieser Satz… vermag mindestens die im üblen Sinne strenge, weil nur abstrakte und formalistische Scheidung zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft aufzuheben oder wenigstens fragwürdig zu machen dergestalt, daß uns aus der Vergangenheit noch viel ungewordene Zukunft aufrufend entgegenkommt ("Gibt es Zukunft in der Vergangenheit?" 291).

The Utopian will is also a call for preservation in the face of annihilation and the suppression of thwarted possibility. The call of the future to be heard in the past, and the collapse of the strict

distinction between the two seems to be best realised for Celan in the poetry of commemoration. In order for the dead not to remain objectified and deprived of agency, the poet must hazard intimate encounters with them in sight of their "noch viel ungewordene Zukunft," listening for the dark and forlorn remnants of a voice like "von Steinen geschriebenen / Schatten." The ambivalent Utopia "nördlich der Zukunft" thus becomes a borderland between past and future. The poem "ruft und holt sich, um bestehen zu können, unausgesetzt aus seinem Schon-nicht-mehr in sein Immer-noch zurück" (*GW* III, 197) and thus fords this most foreign land. Implied here is less a shift in focus from that which has been lost to that which remains than a modified approach to the past, one which can only ever begin in loss and but which may for this reason permit a broader recognition. Even the dead, who most essentially embody the *Unabgegoltene* in Bloch's sense, are endangered in an unredeemed world threatened by injustice and oppression, where the victory of lethality over life remains uncontested.[43] Only the future can save the past, for whose sake salvation is imperative. It is still the absent victims of past catastrophe being sought, but the poem does not retreat into the mere fact of their disappearance to find them, instead staking out the Utopian, future-laden space in which they persist.

Futurity in Celan's poetry thus involves less a turn away from the past than from the stasis and finality habitually associated with it. The past, as the domain of the dead and reserve of *Unabgegoltenes*, is itself in need of redeeming from unfulfillment and oblivion, and we might do the past justice only by pulling it from timelessness back "zeiteinwärts," which means discovering what Bloch calls "*mögliche Zukunft in der Vergangenheit*" and, reciprocally, listening for the past that may yet imperceptibly speak to us from or beyond the future. By refusing to leave anything behind, Celan's approach to the past participates in the Utopian perspective of Walter Benjamin's chronicler of

[43] Compare Walter Benjamin, "Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen," 270.

gapless history, who draws the forgotten or finished past back into collective memory in light of its eventual fulfillment:

> Der Chronist, welcher die Ereignisse hererzählt, ohne große und kleine zu unterscheiden, trägt damit der Wahrheit Rechnung, daß nichts was sich jemals ereignet hat, für die Geschichte verloren zu geben ist. Freilich fällt erst der erlösten Menschheit ihre Vergangenheit vollauf zu. Das will sagen: erst der erlösten Menschheit ist ihre Vergangenheit in jedem ihrer Momente zitierbar geworden. Jeder ihrer gelebten Augenblicke wird zu einer citation à l'ordre du jour – welcher Tag eben der jüngste ist ("Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen" 269).

Utopia sees the strict distinction between past and future dissolved in that open space where all of history's broken promises and abandoned projects are potentially fulfilled. Celan's poetry returns to the past as unsettled terrain, open to renegotiation on the perhaps impossible condition that nothing be left out, neither the darkness nor the inexpressible. The success of an encounter is strictly possible though always attenuated and unguaranteed, while justice demands that the dead be heard despite their absence from the world of the living, and that their claim to the undecided future be honoured despite the appearance of stasis and finality. A better future is to be hoped for not only for the sake of the eventual liberation of generations to come, but also in the name of a world worthy of the interrupted lives and marginalised memory of past generations.[44]

Futurity is for Bloch ontologically prior to the given, either as history or the dark present moment, and the fact that it picks up on forgotten or abandoned *Unabgegoltenes* does not indicate a deterministically causal relation between the past and future, which would subordinate the latter to the former, but rather a kind of elective affinity between Utopia and tradition: the future refuses to give up on the past. The future is, as it were, wide and bright enough to make all things new, still open to us as that habitable space in which the dead may be meaningfully and reciprocally encountered and the loss of the human community restituted. Recourse to Bloch's "*mögliche Zukunft in*

[44] Compare Walter Benjamin, "Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen," 275.

der Vergangenheit" helps to explain the paradoxical interchangeability of past and future often found in Celan's poems, for example in "Anabasis" (*GW* I, 256):

> Dieses
> schmal zwischen Mauern geschriebne
> unwegsam-wahre
> Hinauf und Zurück
> in die herzhelle Zukunft.
>
> Dort.
>
> Silben-
> mole, meer-
> farben, weit
> ins Unbefahrne hinaus.
>
> Dann:
> Bojen-,
> Kummerbojen-Spalier
> mit den
> sekundenschön hupfenden
> Atemreflexen –: Leucht-
> glockentöne (dum-,
> dun-, un-,
> *unde suspirat*
> *cor*),
> aus-
> gelöst, ein-
> gelöst, unser.
>
> Sichtbares, Hörbares, das
> frei-
> werdende Zeltwort:
>
> Mitsammen.

The paradoxical "Hinauf und Zurück," which also functions as a translation of the Greek word that gives the poem and the ancient source material it refers to their title,[45] lead narrowly but truly "in die herzhelle Zukunft." This movement has in this sense a destination (towards the positive future) but is at the same time not strictly teleological ("weit / ins Unbefahrne hinaus").

[45] Xenophon's *Anabasis* narrates the expedition of the ten thousand Greek mercenaries left lost and leaderless in Anatolia following the death of the Persian prince who enlisted them.

The poem's orientation is as ambiguous as the word "anabasis" itself:

> In the trajectory it names, anabasis leaves undecided the parts respectively allotted to disciplined invention and uncertain wandering. In so doing, it constitutes a disjunctive of will and wandering. After all, the Greek word already attests to this undecidability, since the verb αναβανειν ('to anabase', as it were) means both 'to embark' and 'to return' (Badiou 83).

It is not that the poem hovers between embarkment and return, but rather enacts a journey that is both at once: into the incomplete past in the open future and into the open future in the incomplete past. The "Zurück" into the future should not be understood as a merely symbolic or abstract detour through practical or perfunctory remembrance (fit for a bromide, perhaps "To understand the future, one must know the past"), which would undermine the course of the poem as an actual return. The past is no more available as a fixed waystation *en route* to the future than as the destination at the end of a homecoming. The journey backwards is as open-ended and uncertain as any aimless wandering into the complete unknown, for the poem's reference point is not any stable concept of home, as in the Greek nostos narrative, but the sustained unease in the insufficiency of the present. The past is a dark blot that cannot be unproblematically recalled at will and the present is a state of existential exile.

Yet there is a "Dort" there, although it is still only vacant; this is the destination that can only become one once it has been reached. "Anabasis is thus the free invention of a wandering that *will have been* a return, a return that did not exist as a return-route prior to the wandering" (Badiou 82). The tension between the will to venture out in search of a place of belonging and the objective non-existence of such a place in the past, present, or future is an apparent contradiction, and Bloch shows that this aporia belongs to the nature of hope:

> [D]ie erste, die hoffende Hoffnung, wird daher wirklich auch geglaubt und hat so suo modo Zuversicht, die zweite, die gehoffte Hoffnung, wäre dagegen, wenn sie bereits volle Zuversicht für sich hätte, gerade keine Hoffnung. Das heißt, die in der noch so unbeugsamen, auch aktiv bis zum letzten anfeuernden, hoffenden Hoffnung bezeichnete Sache, die *objektive Hoffnungssache* in der Welt

> selber, ist ihrer durchaus nicht garantiert sicher und gewiß; sonst wäre die Zuversicht der hoffenden Hoffnung, statt mutig und, wie so oft, aufrecht-paradox zu sein, lediglich trivial (*PH* 1624).

If there is any certainty to the anabasis that Celan understands his practice of writing poetry to be, then it depends on the uncertainty of its destination as well as its point of departure. His poetry only stands a chance of succeeding because it consistently faces that vacant destination where the objective non-existence of the better world to come is not final and the chasm of silence between the living and the dead is surmountable. That the "Dort" is for now only a poetic topos (or rather a path) made out of text, words, and syllables[46] does not mean that it is unreal or merely literary, for it is just now coming into existence as a possible alternative to the darkness of the lived moment. As "hoffende Hoffnung," this goalless and goal-oriented path is certain. This positively charged forward movement out of present insufficiency, Bloch's "Nein zum Mangel," is the nature of the poem, which Celan explains in his "Meridian" speech to be, similarly paradoxically, "einsam und unterwegs" (*GW* III, 198).

The "sekundenschön hupfenden / Atemreflexen" are plausibly explained as units of time – the fleeting *Front* where *Vorsicht* is blind and reflex rules the roost, here rendered beautiful and triumphant as the site where our creaturely striving succeeds in carving out a space that resembles and prefigures a more hospitable world. The third chapter will more specifically develop upon Bloch's Utopia of *Heimat*, which epitomises the hospitable, but for now it will suffice to recognise the fragmentary homelike quality of the space carved out in "Anabasis." This is to be seen also in the poem's maritime imagery, which Alain Badiou connects to the famous episode of Xenophon's *Anabasis* "in which the Greeks climb a hill and, at last laying eyes on the sea, cry out: θάλασσα, θάλασσα! – 'The sea! The sea!' This goes to show that for a Greek the sea is already a legible fragment of the homeland. The sight of the sea is a sign that the invented wandering has probably

[46] Compare Peter Paul Schwarz, *Totengedächtnis und dialogische Polarität*, 60ff.

traced the curve of a return" (82). The call of the sea, which expresses the collective voice of Xenophon's epic, becomes in Celan's poem the lonely chiming of "Leucht- / glockentöne" from "Kummerbojen," the Messianic advent from the depths of suffering (indicated also by the Latin "*und suspirat / cor*" taken from a motet by Mozart) of a new kind of belonging.

The back-and-forth motion of "aus- / gelöst, ein- / gelöst," recapitulating that of "Hinauf und Zurück," culminates at last in a collectivity ("unser") which is at once fragile (the transience of the "Zeltwort") and hence uncertain, and concretely real ("Sichtbares, Hörbares") and hence certain. It is a new collectivity because it is not pre-given, like the traditional epic "we," but rather arises at the end of a hard-fought struggle, certain only in terms of "hoffende Hoffnung" but uncertain in terms of "gehoffte Hoffnung." The "Zeltwort" is also the sign of the temporary dwelling, our only shelter in the unfinished universe, recalling the booths inhabited by Israel during the forty years spent in the wilderness between the exodus from Egypt and arrival in the Promised Land. The poem's movement "ins Unbefahrne hinaus" and in anticipation of redemption exists in the same eschatological dimension of the biblical account of liberation out of bondage towards a right destination, a lasting home that is even in the moment being constituted as one. There is no finished past to inform this journey, only an incomplete past to be redeemed and made new again in the process of becoming in pursuit of ever greater openness and freedom ("frei- / werdende"). The Utopian "Mitsammen," far from abstract and detached from the past, embodies the commemoration of the dead and the resumption of their fatally interrupted community. The "herzhelle Zukunft" that Celan's poetry faces is the uncertain and hence inexhaustible focus of human striving and the hope that empowers it, anticipating from one moment to the next fulfillment and restitution of the traumatised and endangered, but still hopeful and unfinished world.

Chapter Two: Lethality

In Celan's poetry, the movement towards the future paradoxically begins at all times with a confrontation with death; the rejection of lethality and of its finality and stasis always takes as its central problematic the practical unavailability of the lost partner in dialogue, the *Du* whom the poet may address but only without response.[47] The particular loss with which Celan must continually struggle is that of his mother, whose violent death is only specifically referenced in several poems but can be detected almost everywhere. Within a body of poetic expression situated in the aftermath of uncontained lethality in the world, a reality whose felt intensity never diminishes over the course of the poet's life, the personal experience of loss remains centrally relevant, the subjective microcosm within which the world-historical disaster is suffered at its most immediate. Death is depersonalising and unknowable, yet the experience of loss on the personal level brings the sphere of intimacy and familiarity in disconcerting proximity to the void. It has a presence in the world, as well as in our memory, which survives the dead themselves as the space strangely occupied by their absence, to deny which means ignoring any effect the dead continue to exert among the living. The informal and intimate second-person pronoun in Celan's poetry is such a space that is vacant yet charged with possibility, uninhabited but left ever open to habitation. It waits in open anticipation, like the cup of wine poured for Elijah during the Jewish feast of Pesach, set on the seder table in case the prophet deigns to descend from Heaven and take his seat among the living; if he still does

[47] See Peter Paul Schwarz, *Totengedächtnis und dialogische Polarität*, on the tenuous and daring establishment of dialogue between speaker and the departed, for instance in the middle period of Celan's poetry: "Die Rede gilt einem in der Gegenwart stummen, erinnerten Gegenüber, dem Dichter verwandtschaftlich verbunden nur durch Herkunft (*Abgrund*) und *Heimat*. Aber auch die ‚Begegnungen' mit ihm, reale und die in der Dichtung wieder und wieder vollzogenen der mystischen Zwiesprache, bleiben hier der Vergangenheit zugehörig. Auch als Erinnerungen jedoch haben sie die Kraft, das *Du* zu beleben und es als ein im Vergangenen Gegenwärtiges aus sich heraustreten zu lassen" (49).

not join the celebration and announce the coming Messiah, it will not be because he was not expected with due grace. A poem too, as a message in a bottle, can be an invitation for the *Noch-Nicht* or *Nicht-Mehr* to come into being. Celan leaves a door open to the miraculous arrival of the dead as members of a community that has never before existed, an anticipation that at once fulfills and exceeds the original loss of the community destroyed in the Shoah.

Ernst Bloch's philosophy remarkably speaks to this same question of the finality of death and the loss it represents, as well as to the fact that the space of death itself can, and throughout human history often has become a space of singular hopefulness. His passages on *Hoffnungsbilder* against death in the final volume of *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* directly address this most central issue in Celan's own life and work. For, among other things, Bloch's philosophy attests that the past, in its usual sense, is not fully past, and that unfinished or interrupted hopes do not vanish but only ever retreat underground,[48] where they remain effective, at least *in potentia*, so long as the process of ongoing history maintains a stake in their fruition. No interruption is so personal or unacceptable as death, nor does any at the same time awaken such vivid affirmations of the continuation of life. "Der Tod macht… alles irreparable," concedes Bloch (*PH* 1300). Yet human hopefulness and the Utopian impulse still possess a power that "[bescheint] noch die fremdeste Nacht" (*PH* 1304), even the dark night of personal annihilation. Bloch's words perhaps assume another layer of significance in reference to Celan's work in the post-Shoatic context:

> Nichts steht so finalistisch wie er [der Tod] am Ende, und nichts zerschmettert zugleich den Subjekten der historischen Zwecksetztung ihre Arbeit so antifinalistisch zum Fragment… Desto heftiger aber auch die Notwendigkeit, *Wunsch-Evidenzen* gegen diese so wenig einleuchtende Gewißheit zu setzen, als gegen eine bloße Tatsachen-Wahrheit in der mit dem Menschen

[48] Compare the final remarks of Peter Szondi, *Celan-Studien*, on "Engführung" (*GW* I, 195): "Die *Grundwasserspuren* sprechen, sie wurden zum Gespräch, weil sie Wort sind, Wasser unter der Erde, Wasser in der Erde (im Stein), *Spur* des einen im anderen… Ein Unten, ein Grund (*Grund-wasserspuren*): die Bedingung der Möglichkeit… für das Weiterleben der Menschen heute… die Auschwitz überleben haben, man weiß nicht wie, und die es auch weiterhin überleben, man weiß nicht wie" (109f).

> unvermittelten Welt. Den Leitbildern des Lebens entsprechen derart Leitbilder des Fortlebens, den Leitfiguren der Unruhe Figurenbildungen gegen den Kirchhoffrieden (*PH* 1301).

The conceptions of an afterlife over the centuries of religious and mystical thought attest in various forms to the universal experience of death as a limitation to be overcome through the physical, spiritual, or symbolic extension of life. Although particular beliefs may represent flights from reality, the refusal to accept death as an upper boundary on hope and experience in the face of all odds is a triumph of human dignity and the principle of open futurity against any final closure. "In den mannigfachen Bildern des Fortlebens hat die Menschheit nicht nur ihren Egoismus und ihre Unwissenheit, sondern auch die unleugbare Würde and den Tag, in die Nacht gelegt, sich mit dem Kadaver nicht zufriedenzugeben" (*PH* 1301f).

Bloch considers the history of hopeful images against death, however fantastical, to be relevant to an understanding of humanity's actual relation to death, which is expressed through culturally, philosophically, and religiously mediated encounters with the individual's own approaching demise and the loss of others. Death does not impend as a hopeless and futureless condition beyond and inaccessible from within lived reality but is, and always has been, the surest incitement to projection into a future beyond the limits of organic existence. At least in this sense, life persists after and through death, regardless of whether there be any truth to the post-mortal promises trafficked across human history. The realm of the dead is that place where every person's destiny lies, where in the meantime all departed souls have sought refuge, and it is as such the space of the most intense affective charge and speculative anticipation, which makes it for Bloch a worthwhile site of meaning.

In *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* Bloch catalogues the chthonic beliefs and funerary rites of early man, ancient ancestor and Gnostic cults, Greek, Egyptian, and biblical mythologies, comparing the *Todeshoffnungen* of world religions across time in dialogue with the deistic, atheistic, and nihilistic

approaches to death that emerge especially during and after the Enlightenment. These various tendencies, from the oldest practice of entombment for fear of roaming spirits, through doctrines of Final Judgement, Messiahs, Heaven, and Hell, to the pagan or secularised will to achieve immortal fame through one's deeds, are all evidence of a struggle with death which, far from capitulating to the end of life, has spurred hopeful images of life's superlative continuation and perfection:

> Alles Einzelne, Fixe unter den todüberwindenden Wünschen und Prozeduren, den griechischen, den ägyptischen, den christlichen Todeshoffnungen ist Phantaserei, aber die Sphäre dieser spezifischen und im Nachfolgenden zur Erinnerung gebrachten Hoffnung selber ist mehr als erlaubt: denn kein Mensch weiß noch, ob der Lebensprozeß keine, wie immer unsichtige, Verwandlung enthält und duldet (*PH* 1303).

Reading them as texts, Bloch distills from these hopeful images their Utopian content, which manifests in the particular shape of the idealised perfection they project beyond the pale of death: dreams of immortality, lasting glory, virtue rewarded, iniquity punished, erotic desire satisfied, escape from suffering, communion with the Almighty, along with blissful rest, health, and happiness illuminate "das höchste aller Luftschlösser, das pure Lichtschloß Paradies" (*PH* 1333).

Truly death is the end of life, but it is also an equally inevitable recurrence within the life of every person and collectivity, intimately present as the accretion point of Utopian hope, endlessly fascinating despite its bleak certainty, precisely because it is the one great unknown:

> Die Angst wird durch ein seltsames Gefühl der Neugier verändert, durch die Lust zu wissen, was es mit dem Sterben auf sich habe. Dieser Affekt wird gereizt durch die große Veränderung, welche der Tod auf alle Fälle mit sich bringt. Die Neugier verwandelt den fallenden Vorhang in einen ebenso entzweireißenden; das Ende des Lebens ist ihr zugleich der Anfang eines völlig Unerhörten, sei es auch des Nichts (*PH* 1384).

Our self-motivated, but never entirely selfish interest in death holds it open as another possibly explorable future, if not the pre-eminently personal and fillable *Novum* where the hypostases of earthly and creaturely desires like justice, nature, sleep, and friendship finally take shape. Whatever

else dying may or may not be, it is at least a metamorphosis, likely the most traumatic of all, but not for that reason to be excluded from the order of changes. By contextualising the post-mortal dreams of religion and mythology within this order, Bloch returns death and the dead into closer, even intimate proximity to the unfinished course of history charted by the living. This movement of secularised hope into historical time is the philosophical equivalent to Celan's poetic act of retrieval in the final words of "Gehässige Monde" (*GW* III, 70): "du rollst die Altäre / zeiteinwärts."

Bloch's method of reading visions of death in light of their Utopian content provides a useful interpretive stance to help illuminate Celan's poems of personal mourning. Poems such as "So bist du denn geworden" (*GW* I, 59) are lamentations of irreparable loss, but to treat them only as such diminishes their elegiac urgency as addresses to the dead and refusals to accept loss as total. This early rhyming poem eulogises Celan's mother as well as their Bukovinian homeland without naming either explicitly, confronting the absence of the two most intimate connections of his youth that were destroyed by fascist violence:

> So bist du denn geworden
> wie ich dich nie gekannt:
> dein Herz schlägt allerorten
> in einem Brunnenland.
>
> wo kein Mund trinkt und keine
> Gestalt die Schatten säumt,
> wo Wasser quilt zum Scheine
> und Schein wie Wasser schäumt.
>
> Du steigst in alle Brunnen,
> du schwebst durch jeden Schein.
> Du hast ein Spiel ersonnen,
> das will vergessen sein.

The "du" here is, as always in Celan's poetry, ambiguously referential, rather an occupiable vacancy than a strictly denotative signifier. Such a word is perhaps necessarily a placeholder, but for Celan it

also marks the emergence of dialogue, or at least the individual's still only one-sided readiness to establish a relationship despite distance, which is only seemingly monologue.[49]

The pronominal reference in "So bist du denn geworden" is less a matter of likely candidates intended in the "du" than of the enacted performance of invitation, expectancy, and voluntary visitation, as in the case of Elijah's vacant place at the seder table. If the poem addresses Celan's mother, it is not because the imprecise pronoun is a substitute for her physical presence in the poet's life, for there is no attempt here at a description of a real or realistically imagined encounter with this person. The pronoun is not the result of an encounter but its precondition, for it opens an intimate space reserved for a friend, a lover, a family member, or, perhaps as a secularised prayer, a deity. The intimacy of the "du" and the familiar land of wellsprings, which counters the fact of death with the imagery of life sources and pure origins, merely make such an identification amenable to the mother's presence.[50] The addressed person joins with ("dein Herz schlägt allerorten / in einem Brunnenland") and vanishes into ("wo kein Mund trinkt und keine / Gestalt die Schatten säumt") the poetic landscape, which is the space prepared especially for her habitation. Subject and background merge into a single image of unreality, unsubstantiated appearance (the repeated "Schein"), and oblivion (the "Spiel … / das will vergessen sein").

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[49] Again, the rift between Celan's mode of expression and absolute poetry is unbridgeable. See Georg-Michael Schulz, *Negativität in der Dichtung Paul Celans*, 272: "Dichtung ist für Celan alles andere als die freie Veranstaltung einer autonomen Sprache, sie ist und bleibt vielmehr ständig rückgebunden an den sprachlich sich artikulierenden und das Gespräch mit einem Du suchenden einzelnen, an die individuellen Erfahrungen und Ziele eines Ich."

[50] See Paul Peters, "Brunnenland," for the biographical significance of the landscape and its connection to the mother. "For she has been removed from the realm of the living to that of the dead, therefore she has now become as he otherwise never knew her. Yet her heart beats in the 'Brunnenland,' the land of the wellsprings of being and identity, of home, of formative life experience, which now, however, has also been forever consigned to the realm of the lost, so that the loss of the mother and the loss of his homeland, his *Heimat*, were always to be for Celan in their conjunction and simultaneity so singularly and irrevocably linked. Yet that homeland with its wellsprings now still persists, the heart continues to beat, but in a realm of the unreal" (101).

Significantly, "So bist du denn geworden" remains a poem of activity and presence despite the negativity that dominates its account of the environment and the addressed "du." The heart is still beating. The chiastic exchange between "Wasser" and "Schein" affirms the unreality of the poetic landscape while conversely imbuing the insistent appearance of what has been lost with something of the vitality of water, even if there is no longer a mouth to drink it. The flow of water proposes an afterlife, if only a strange and inadequate one, common to mythical images of riverine landscapes bordering the realms of eternity and of the dead. This, together with the poem's reference to "Schatten" deprived of human form, recall the rivers Styx and Lethe of Greek mythology, the former drawing the final separation between the living world and Hades, while the latter appears as the well of oblivion from which the dead drink to forget their past life. Indeed, Celan's projection of his mother's presence into such a landscape, where she lies remote but perhaps still intimately addressable, contains the same Utopian content that Bloch reads in the mythological underworld of shades:

> Aber der Schatten selber hält sich, auch die Aufklärung lehrt hier selten Vernichtung oder nur in dem Sinn, daß das gewohnte Ich aufhört… Doch war der Mensch bei alledem keineswegs ausgelöscht oder in einen unvorstellbaren Zustand von ganzem Nichts geraten… Völlige Verlorenheit und Zwecklosigkeit erfüllt sie, so mächtig und zugleich hohl, daß der Hades der Griechen, obwohl er an diesen Zustand zuweilen angrenzt, unzweideutig mild erscheint, sozusagen gesund. Der Tod ist bei Homer immerhin der Bruder, sogar der Zwillingsbruder des Schlafs (*PH* 1306).

The dead loved one will not be extinguished entirely, for she maintains an active and effective presence in the life of the commemorator. Like one who is sleeping, her absence is not complete, for the great distance separating her from the living places her on the extreme edge of mortal existence, not entirely beyond it. She vanishes "nur in dem Sinn, daß das gewohnte Ich aufhört" but meanwhile persists "wie ich dich nie gekannt," that is, having undergone death as a transformation rather than a complete annihilation.

The mother abides among the living at the very least in direct address ("So bist du") and in the shadowy, yet at times almost tangible form of memory, which for Celan and Bloch is a potentially active site of hope. The inability to drink from the water of the well thus also signals a rejection of the realm of Stygian lethality and Lethean oblivion to which the dead have been consigned in defiance of the game "das will vergessen sein."[51] The lost loved one's transfigured presence as memory, shade, or fulcrum of Utopian hope does not make up for the fact of her absence, and commemoration is a pale and unsatisfactory substitute for the interrupted relationship with the living person, but the grounds for an encounter have nevertheless been established. The poet has sent his word and his hope out, perhaps not entirely beyond the reach of the loved one; the realm of the dead has in its turn been accorded a measure of historicity and futurity, bringing it that much nearer to the realm of the living. Enough space separating speaker from addressee has been overcome for there to be a farewell, if nothing more.

"Auge der Zeit" (*GW* I, 127) offers another example of a Celan poem that lends itself to Bloch's Utopian content analysis of *Todeshoffnungen*. It begins in a space exterior to ordinary time, above and outside mortal existence, but by its end the poem returns to the familiar world:

> Dies ist das Auge der Zeit:
> es blickt scheel
> unter siebenfarbener Braue.
> Sein Lid wird von Feuern gewaschen,
> seine Träne ist Dampf.
>
> Der blinde Stern fliegt es an
> und zerschmilzt an der heißeren Wimper:
> es wird warm in der Welt,

[51] To this, Bloch cites a counterpoint to the river of oblivion in the Orphic mysteries, where death is overcome through the transmigration and anamnesis of the departed soul: "Nach dem Glauben der Mysten ist leibliche Wohlfahrt der Gewinn, den die Mysterien für die Dauer des Lebens verleihen, den höheren Gewinn geben sie aber als Hoffnung einer schöneren Wiedergeburt in der Zeit nach dem Tod. Statt aus Lethe wird aus dem Quell der Erinnerung früherer Geburten getrunken, das soll den Weg in neue, verbesserte Geburt bahnen" (*PH* 1309).

und die Toten
knospen und blühen.

If the second stanza of this poem can be broadly categorized as narrative in the sense that it recounts activity, then the first participates rather in the descriptive-allegorical style of epithet. Epic qualities and further corporeal attributes are heaped onto the disembodied "Auge der Zeit," which is suspended in the centre of the poem's imagery like the star in a heliocentric planetary system. And indeed, the roundness of the eyeball, supplemented by the heat of "Feuer" and "Dampf," becomes a solar focus of orbit. Like the all-seeing eye of God, it looms proudly aloof from humanity until the invocation of "Welt" and "die Toten" in the final lines, while the anatomical precision of the image paradoxically keeps the eye within the space of the organic and mortal.

The landscape of the poem turns astronomical ("Der blinde Stern") as the eye expands through time and space from a body part into a heavenly body, a force of cosmic destruction. The "siebenfarbener Braue" then comes to reflect the seven planetary spheres that spin around the human observer in Ptolemaic cosmology, contrasting the otherwise heliocentric image. The tension between sun and earth as potential centres restates the ambiguous centrality of the eye: as the organ of visual sense perception and the window to the soul, it is a subjective human centre, while as a disembodied object in a suspicious and inhospitable universe, the eye is also an alienated and inhuman centre. As a metaphor for time, the eye is a dreadful sign for oppressive, inescapable fate. The poem takes place in a post-Copernican world in which the universe has been deprived of the living earth as its stable and habitable centre, in this case through the annihilatory negation of human life and dignity carried out in the Shoah, symbolised by the tear that evaporates into steam the moment it is shed. The centre, if anything like one remains, is now a matter of perspective, also symbolised by the organ visual sense perception. However, there remains no human being left to occupy the central position of the whole subject. The impersonal side of death of the destruction

of subjectivity is experienced first and most immediately as the loss of a beloved subject, yet both experiences constitute the poem's alienated and depopulated landscape.

The epithets of fragmented corporeality and fire convey a cosmic horror at odds with the reversal that comes in the final lines of the poem. This moment of redemption is unprecedented but not entirely unanticipated, as there are traces of hope even in the initial scenes of death despair. For instance, in the heavenly apparition of the "siebenfarbener Braue" can be detected one of Western spirituality's most meaning-laden numerological symbols, which appears already in the religious rites of the ancient Levant and Mesopotamia. Seven is the number of creation, eschaton, apocalypse, the transcendent order of angels and demons, the afterlife, and the kingdom of Heaven. All sevenths are universally beloved, as the midrash Vayikrah Rabbah has it. In the Gnostic tradition, seven is also a magical number, command over which bestows on the initiate influence in the cosmic and post-mortal realms. Bloch reads a Utopian content from this belief system that affirms the redemptive power of human agency in the face of an otherwise inhospitable cosmic order:

> [Die Gnosis] war der erste und letzte große Einbruch von Wunsch-Mythologie in den Kopf. Das erweist sich vor allem an einer ihrer seltsamsten, immerhin großartigsten Phantasmagorien: an der Lehre von der *Himmelsreise der Seele*… Näher hat es mit dieser Auffahrt oder Himmelsreise und mit der Notwendigkeit, für sie vorbereitet zu werden, folgende Bewandtnis: Zwischen Himmel und Erde liegen die sieben Planetenkreise, beherrscht von bösen Geistern, von den Herren dieser Welt (*PH* 1314f).

According to the Gnostic teaching, the individual would be able to enter through the narrow passage into Heaven by committing passwords to memory, solving riddles, and learning the secret names of guardian demons. By confronting death as an evil to be overcome through the difficult, though safely achievable acquisition of esoteric knowledge, Gnosticism harbours the hope that the human subject may be self-liberated in the struggle against the constraining, inhuman universe. Seven is the cipher through which the inscrutable universe becomes calculable and hence manipulable in the transcendent human mind. Our limited perspective is not without bearing on the mystery of the

universe, and there is perhaps still an ennobled place for a limited human subject in the post-Shoatic world. By lifting this eye with "siebenfarbener Braue" into the cosmos, Celan's poem is enacting a similarly hopeful *Himmelsreise*, ventured not by the immortal human soul but rather by the limited bodily human perspective.

Taking into consideration the context of "Auge der Zeit" within the volume of its publication, this movement follows the direction indicated in the final stanzas of the immediately preceding poem, "Nächtlich geschürzt" (*GW* I, 125):

> Ein Wort – du weißt:
> eine Leiche.
>
> Laß uns sie waschen,
> laß uns sie kämmen,
> laß uns ihr Aug
> himmelwärts wenden.[52]

The dead person is now only a body, but the memory is worth tending with loving care. By turning the eye heavenward, Celan returns a measure of subjective perspective to the dead as an absent person undergoing change or undertaking a journey upwards and forwards into the unknown. The motif of an upward journey to Heaven, as well as the seven heavenly spheres of classical astronomy and astrology, are also taken up in the literature and theology of the Abrahamic religions, perhaps most famously in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which Celan may have had in mind with "Auge der Zeit."[53]

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[52] "Nächtlich geschürzt" and "Auge der Zeit" are the first two poems in the third and final cycle, "Inselhin," of Celan's 1955 volume *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*. The recurrence of *waschen* in both poems gives the image of the eye a further redemptive sense, bringing the fires that wash its lid into the same Utopian space as the "wiedergebärenden, orphisch läuternden Feuer" that Bloch discusses in reference to the Dionysian cults of ancient Greece (*PH* 1310).

[53] For an example of the motivic influence of Celan's close reading of Dante on his poetry, see Marlies Janz, *Vom Engagement absoluter Poesie*, 82 and 223. The initial fiery imagery of "Auge der Zeit" also possibly refers to Dante's description of the flaming eyes of Charon, the mythical ferryman to the underworld, which Dante in turn inherits from Virgil. See also Bloch: "[D]er Styx trennt endgültig, Charon, mit grauen Haaren, schmutzigem Mantel, aber feurigen Augen, bringt hinüber" (*PH* 1307).

The ascension out of death and evil represents for Bloch a line of continuity between the dualistic tradition and the Christian doctrine of grace:

> Eine Erinnerung an die gnostische Himmelfahrt scheint noch bis in Dantes Läuterungsberg hereinzureichen – ohne Dämonen, wie sich versteht, doch mit graduiertem Aufstieg durch sieben Pforten… In der Gnosis sind es die bösen Planetensphären, bei Dante sind diese freilich längst entsühnt und eingemeindet, machen die leitende Topologie selbst… Und wie bei Mani[54] tritt eben eine schöne Jungfrau am Ende der Fegefeuerfahrt entgegen, das zum Himmel leitende Weib; Beatrice bei Dante, Gretchen bei Faust (*PH* 1318).

Bloch describes Dante's Beatrice as a "reine Menschengestalt und Himmelsführerin" (*PH* 1316), a lost loved person who remains present as a guide to the wanderer despite belonging to the post-mortal realm, perhaps comparable to Celan's mother in a poem such as "Der Reisekamerade" (*GW* I, 66). Both human and heavenly, like the flaming, celestial eye, it is for her and the dead that the eye of time weeps.

Redemption comes with the eye's destruction of the "blinde Stern," its astro-biological counterpart in optic imagery, along with the flourishing of the dead like blossoming flora. Inhospitable heat and desolation in the remote macrocosm translate to mild, life-giving warmth in the world below, as natural as the abundant outpour of energy from the sun that each day nurtures all terrestrial life. Mundane as well as numinous, this moment of redemption comes as a Messianic and eschatological reversal. The raising of the dead is here is not a transcendent phenomenon but an organic one, taking place "in der Welt" as opposed to in a world beyond it. This moment clearly also calls upon the Day of Judgement anticipated in Abrahamic religion, promising the resurrection of the material body together with the soul. The worldliness and corporeality of this ecstatic, biological resurrection resumes the original Utopian content of ancient Judaism's anticipation of immortality as Bloch describes it:

[54] Mani was the prophet and founder of Manichaeism, a dualistic religion of the Judeo-Christian Gnostic tradition originating in Iran during the pre-Nicene era of patristic Christianity.

> Durchbruch der Unsterblichkeit geschah im Judentum erst durch den *Propheten Daniel* (um 160 v. Chr.), und der Antrieb dahinter kam nicht aus dem alten Wunsch nach langem Leben, nach Wohlergehen auf Erden, nun transzendent verlängert. Er kam vielmehr aus Hiob und den Propheten, aus dem *Durst nach Gerechtigkeit*… Denn das Grundmotiv zur verlangten Auferstehung wird jetzt drohend, es heißt *Nachholung des fehlenden irdischen Gerichts* (*PH* 1324).

Resurrection is not desired as a source of comfort to the living against the fear of an end to life, but rather as the final triumph of justice on behalf of the dead. Our lost loved ones have been wronged, and the world remains desolate, inhospitable, inhuman, and fragmentary until the damage of lethality has been undone. Their lives have been interrupted and their world stolen from them, so that the idea of divine justice is unbelievable until their losses have been restituted here on earth. The resurrection in "Auge der Zeit" is not divine justice, but it does elevate the demand for restitution to existential prerogative. The dead do not return exactly as they were, but their plantlike "[K]nospen und [B]lühen" is a miracle of the post-mortal will to justice. What takes place in the poem is rather a transfigured resumption of the organic existence from which the victims of disaster have been excluded, like the engaged activity of the intimate "du" in the realm of water and memory in "So bist du denn geworden" and the strange river of "In den Flüssen." Turning to the dead with attention and commemoration, the limited, embodied, and still traumatised human perspective achieves a circumscribed victory over blind fate that is nevertheless significant because it holds its ground in the living world and historical time.

"Auge der Zeit," like "So bist du denn geworden," attempts to reconcile the subjective side of personal loss with the profound depersonalisation that death signifies for the self, the loved one, and the whole human community. Both poems contain a note of redemption, one that does not deny any of the reality or enormity of death, nor the trauma it has caused, but rather invests the post-mortal with the active, engaged hope of the living through dialogue and commemoration. It is because personal loss withstands and even overwhelms the impersonality of death that the life of the non-living can continue to have a stake for us, and hence to have futurity. Likewise, in "Es war

Erde in ihnen" (*GW* I, 211), the poetic voice passes through the impersonal fact of death as grave and silence to reestablish contact with an absent *Du*:

> Es war Erde in ihnen, und
> sie gruben.
>
> Sie gruben und gruben, so ging
> ihr Tag dahin, ihre Nacht. Und sie lobten nicht Gott,
> der, so hörten sie, alles dies wollte,
> der, so hörten sie, alles dies wußte.
>
> Sie gruben und hörten nichts mehr;
> sie wurden nicht weise, erfanden kein Lied,
> erdachten sich keinerlei Sprache.
> Sie gruben.
>
> Es kam eine Stille, es kam auch ein Sturm,
> es kamen die Meere alle.
> Ich grabe, du gräbst, und es gräbt auch der Wurm,
> und das Singende dort sagt: Sie graben.
>
> O einer, o keiner, o niemand, o du:
> Wohin gings, da's nirgendhin ging?
> O du gräbst und ich grab, und ich grab mich dir zu,
> und am Finger erwacht uns der Ring.

Insofar as this is a poem about language, it begins in the language of the earth. The text is conformally rich in pronouns, which account for one in every three or four words in any given stanza, but these are exclusively of the third person, be it plural or singular, until the appearance of "ich" and "du" in the fourth stanza, representing a broader moment of reversal where the present verb tense overcomes the otherwise dominant past. The third person pronouns also share impersonal reference: the expletive "es" occupying the initial position in many constructions ("Es war Erde," "Es kam eine Stille," "es gräbt auch der Wurm"), the missing and unbelievable God of

mere hearsay, and the anonymous collective who are not united by any common language, faith, or goal but merely burrow into the earth that at once fills them.[55]

Celan makes the connection elsewhere between impersonal third person pronouns and the language of the earth in his short prose story "Gespräch im Gebirg," written in 1959. Early into the conversation that takes place in the story between the Jews Groß and Klein, Groß says:

> »Weißt du. Weißt du und siehst: Es hat sich die Erde gefaltet hier oben, hat sich gefaltet einmal und zweimal und dreimal, und hat sich aufgetan in der Mitte, und in der Mitte steht ein Wasser, und das Wasser ist grün, und das Grüne ist weiß, und das Weiße kommt von noch weiter oben, kommt von den Gletschern, man könnte, aber man solls nicht, sagen, das ist die Sprache, die hier gilt, das Grüne mit dem Weißen drin, eine Sprache, nicht für dich und nicht für mich – denn, frag ich, für wen ist sie denn gedacht, die Erde, nicht für dich, sag ich, ist sie gedacht, und nicht für mich –, eine Sprache, je nun, ohne Ich und ohne Du, lauter Er, lauter Es, verstehst du, lauter Sie, und nichts als das.« (*GW* III, 170f)

After all the life that has been violently and lethally excluded, nature is no longer a home to humanity, and the language of an earth that is "nicht für dich… und nicht für mich" is accordingly impersonal. A language "ohne Ich und ohne Du" is one in which an interpersonal exchange is impossible, where the prior existence of two addressable and whole subjects has been put into question. What remains of the world for the survivors and all those marked by disaster is an alienated and traumatic existence limited to objective relations of "lauter Es" devoid of the person who can occupy the tender space of Thou.[56] The "sie" of "Es war Erde in ihnen" are deprived of individuality and communicative speech, alienated from each other, themselves, and their scarred natural environment. Lethality has dehumanised their relation to the earth and historical time ("so

[55] See Marlies Janz, *Vom Engagement absoluter Poesie*, who describes the loss of divinity, identity, and language in this poem, "[das] von einer Menschheit [handelt], die von der Sprachbegabung durch Gott ausgeschlossen ist und folglich, was ihre göttliche Herkunft betrifft, reduziert ist auf das Moment, aus Erde geschaffen zu sein" (135).
[56] Compare Martin Buber, *Ich und Du*, 5: "Aber nicht Erfahrungen allein bringen die Welt dem Menschen zu. Denn sie bringen ihm nur eine Welt zu, die aus Es und Es und Es, aus Er und Er und Sie und Sie und Es besteht." Buber's thesis that authentic existence only begins in the encounter with others helps to account for the aporia of living depopulated and depersonalised post-Shoatic world. "[O]hne Es kann der Mensch nicht leben. Aber wer mit ihm allein lebt, ist nicht der Mensch" (34).

ging / ihr Tag dahin, ihre Nacht"), much like the "wir" of the famous early poem "Todesfuge" (*GW* I, 39). There is only the material fact of the grave and an anonymous collectivity of disconnected individuals living in the nihilistic awareness of its immanence: "sie gruben." As with "Todesfuge," the incessant digging in "Es war Erde in ihnen" broaches the suffocating world of the concentration camp in which human life is stripped down to a recurrent stay of execution. The imprisoned victims of the Shoah, forced to participate in their own systematic liquidation through forced labour and the cruel, humiliating regimentation of their lives, were made to occupy an existence also dominated by presence of one's own grave, often without the solace of religion.

It is significant that the moment of reversal does not put an end to this earthward movement but presentifies its tense ("Sie graben") and distributes it between "Ich," "du," and even "der Wurm,"[57] a classical metonym for the corporeal reality of death.[58] This fits in with the other references to the Hebrew Bible in the fourth stanza. The momentous advent of a "Sturm" and "die Meere" recalls the unleashing of primordial waters to cover the surface of the earth in the deluge narrative of Genesis 6-9. The God who flooded his creation in order to renew it is the same benevolent, all-knowing "Gott, / der, so hörten sie, alles dies wollte, / der, so hörten sie, alles dies wußte." Such annihilation comes in "Es war Erde in ihnen" in the absence of a God to sacralise it, or even of a language to make sense of it. The Shoah, a disaster of apocalyptic proportions, has unleashed destruction in the world, unsettling all previously existing systems of meaning. Meanwhile the seemingly incongruous "Stille" among the forces of destruction comes from the prophet Elijah's

[57] On the significance of this conjugation, Marlies Janz, *Vom Engagement absoluter Poesie*, points out "daß lateinisch *coniugare* oder französisch *conjuguer* nicht nur ‚konjugieren', sondern auch ‚verknüpfen', ‚verehelichen' heißt" (137). A connection is established between speaker and addressee, whom Janz takes to be "dem die Menschheit verwerfenden Gott," though the "du" may perhaps more straightforwardly refer to any missing or departed person who has been emancipated from silence, stasis, and anonymity along with the "Ich."

[58] The appearance of this metonym for physical decay in the Bible is for Bloch a testament to early Judaism's lack of an afterlife concept apart from the "Unterwelt des Grabes… »Ob ich gleich lange harre, so ist doch die Unterwelt mein Haus, und in Finsternis ist mein Bett gemacht. Die Verwesung heiße ich meinen Vater und die Würmer meine Mutter und Schwester« (Hiob 17, 13f.)" (*PH* 1324).

encounter with God on Horeb, the holy mountain,[59] and in the poem it signifies the stillness of death and reversed creation. The deluge and the deity's self-disclosure to man, two highly salvific events in the biblical narrative, have been emptied of transcendence in the wake of the latest world-historical catastrophe and the unaccountability of the non-existent God. The desacralised apocalyptic forces of destruction blast the sense of these biblical allusions out of the alienated and anonymous past into the immediate realm of the creature, represented by the worm who usurps the role of God in the poem. The post-mortal realm has been retrieved from unbelievable transcendence and brought back to earth, where the physical and profane worm, not the immortal deity, is its custodian.

By way of the flood myth, which the Bible inherits from older religions of Western Asia, the symbols earth, water, and worm are turned back into natural elements, that is, the organic ingredients of life rather than its religiously mediated allegorical signifiers. The elemental forces of water and worm do not simply destroy here but also turn back into the dynamic conditions of all life. The equation of human being and earth is total, aided by the water that sprouts flora out of the earth and the decomposer that returns death into fertile soil. By transferring the present, living hope for renewal and salvation from the absent God to "Ich," "du," and "der Wurm," the poem taps into the Utopian content of the organic life cycle, which Bloch also detects among the ancient Greek worshippers of the Earth Goddess, in whom grave and womb are one:

> Und der Tote schien gerade, indem er begraben wurde, gut verpuppt zu sein. Das Grab behält nicht, es reift, der Schatten in der Höhle soll aus ihr wiedergeboren werden. In der eleusinischen Formel, als der uralt-mutterrechtlichen, hat sich das Hockergrab aus der Steinzeit erhalten, worin die Leiche, zum Embryo gekrümmt, ihre neue Geburt erwartet (*PH* 1309).

[59] Compare 1 Kings 19:11f: "Er sprach / Gehe er aus und trit auff den Berg fur dem HERRN / vnd sihe / Der HERR gieng fur vber / vnd ein grosser starcker Wind / der die Berge zureis vnd die felsen zubrach fur dem HERRN her / Der HERR aber war nicht im winde. Nach dem winde aber kam ein Erdbeben / Aber der HERR war nicht im erdbeben. Vnd nach dem Erdbeben kam ein fewr / Aber der HERR war nicht im fewr. Vnd nach dem fewr kam ein still sanfftes Sausen."

The emergence of the poetic I and its addressee under the sign of the creature in the final stanzas of the poem is nothing less than a secularised rebirth out of the earth. Language and song reemerge too with the conjugation of *graben* and the speech of "das Singende dort." This is no longer the language of alienated nature, but the authentic and even celebratory speech between human beings. Individuals, personified out of mere anonymity, emerge from the earth, united by their conjugation into the present, creating the necessary conditions for the first-person plural finally constituted in the last verse.

The fourfold apostrophe "O einer, o keiner, o niemand, o du" calls on the unidentifiable addressee as a muse entreated for poetic inspiration. This is the absent but unique individual, depersonalised in death but not for that reason stripped forever of all personhood. Where the early poem "So bist du denn geworden" begins in familiarity with a lost loved one, it takes until the final stanza of "Es war Erde in ihnen" to retrieve the "du" into the poem's intimacy (if not as the lost person in her or his entirety, then nevertheless as a vibrant presence) and to prepare the post-mortal realm as the site of an interpersonal encounter. Preserving the memory of the dead does not become easier with time, and it is interesting that Celan chooses as the medium for this preservation, as per the model of the re-birthing earth Bloch discusses, the very earth that receives the body and consumes it. The nearly universal practice of burying the dead puts the body out of sight and consigns it to decomposition, yet this always marks the beginning of commemoration rather than an impediment. Bloch attributes the Utopian image of corporeal dissolution as metaphysical preservation to the physicist Gustav Fechner, who maintains the hope that the entire human being, and not only the body, will be so comfortably received:

> Bei Feuerbach ist der Mensch, was er ißt, doch zum Schluß ißt ihn das Universum; bei Fechner wird er gleichfalls von diesem verzehrt, doch ebenso behalten und erinnert. Aus dem individuellen Leib wird er in den Erdleib aufgenommen, aus dem individuellen Bewußtsein in ein förmliches Erd-, ja Mechanik-Bewußtsein versetzt (*PH* 1358).

Descent into the earth is finally not the end of life for it contains new beginnings in terms of the organic life cycle as well as commemoration apart from any notion of religious transcendence. The meaning of *graben* shifts altogether from an alienated relation to the world, unchanging and timeless, to a directional and reciprocally participatory activity in the present ("du gräbst und ich grab, und ich grab mich dir zu"). That this active role is also a confrontation with death, the supposedly final cessation of all activity, is the paradox of the question the poem poses, momentarily taking up the impersonal third person pronoun and past tense once more: "Wohin gings, da's nirgendhin ging?" The open directionality of "Wohin" and even the closed yet equally unsure directionality of "nirgendhin" restore futurity to the poem.

After all, even the grave is a destination, one that remains unknown to the living and strangely accommodating to organic existence on the other side of the life cycle: "das Ende des Lebens ist… zugleich der Anfang eines völlig Unerhörten, sei es auch des Nichts" (*PH* 1384). Individuals as well as cultures, writes Bloch, may yet "dem Tod mit sonderbarer Gewißheit entgegensehen: *nicht nur als einer Reise äußerste Ordnung, sondern als einer Befreiung gerade des – Lebensüberschwangs*" (*PH* 1389). As the inevitable resting place where loved ones remain addressable and unforgotten, it can even be the Utopian site of a tender hopefulness:

> Immerhin ist die Erwartung, die an so finsterem Ort auftritt, allemal eine auffallende Gabe, besonders wenn sie, wie hier zumeist, sich unter dem Ende ein Unerhörtes vorstellt. Sich gar einen Schlüssel zu ihm hinzudenkt, der innere Türen aufschließt und Türen zu dem gleichen leichten, leuchtendem Zustand, worin geliebte Tote erinnert werden und worin eine Rückkehr zu ihnen möglich ist. Die Erwartung intendiert dann den Tod als eine Art Reise, sowohl in das eigene Subjekt wie in das übermächtige Daseinsgeheimnis (*PH* 1385).

"Es war Erde in ihnen" ends with such a "Rückkehr" and such a "Reise," culminating in a reunion between alienated individuals, even between the living and dead, in a pact of responsibility and mutuality: "und am Finger erwacht uns der Ring." The bond itself comes to life, resurrected like the dead in "Auge der Zeit." The chiasmic "du… ich… ich… dir…" in the penultimate verse of the

poem resolves into "uns," in which the speaker and addressee have joined once more into a collectivity, now no longer an impersonal one but a true community. It is also an awakening out of stasis and the eternal past, also akin to the Messianic raising of the dead in "Auge der Zeit." The ring, like a wedding band, signifies an elective commitment based in reciprocal understanding that carries forward into the future. The capacity for dialogue, which had been absent from the poem until the previous stanza, is now elevated into a secularised vow that holds between human beings in the absence of a divine guarantor. The authentic community of human beings, down to the interpersonal encounter, though once shattered by lethality, can be established anew, and not to the exclusion of the missing victims. Hope can in so many forms rekindle itself in the face of death so that the living may yet awaken to their potential for change, commitment, and commemoration; the absence of the dead, ever-present in the heart of the living, demands it. Thus, in this poem as in Bloch's reimagining of the earth from a site of the deceased's final deposition and disappearance to one of eventual reemergence, Celan makes of the grave a realm of kinesis rather than stasis, where lethality need not be merely accepted but perhaps miraculously reversed.

Chapter Three: Materiality

Throughout Celan's poetry we find a language permeated with silence and landscapes deprived of many of the familiar signs of life. Emblematic of each is the assertion of a deeper bedrock beneath communicative speech and everyday existence: the substratum of materiality and inorganic nature. As the poet "zur Sprache geht, wirklichkeitswund und Wirklichkeit suchend" (*GW* III, 186), yet in full possession of neither language nor reality, it is instead geology and meteorology which seem to lie unquestionably ready at hand, supplying Celan with a raw material for poetic expression in the absence of anything firmer. Snow, ice, mud, rubble, and above all the stone belong to the vocabulary of Celan's landscapes, oftentimes adopting and modifying the character of verbal, organic life. This fascination of materiality has already drawn much critical attention upon itself during the middle period of Celan's career. Theodor Adorno comments early on regarding this inorganic turn, reading it as a hermetic retreat from the trauma of the Shoah and the unbearable lifelessness of the emergent world:

> Celans Gedichte wollen das äußerste Entsetzen durch Verschweigen sagen. Ihr Wahrheitsgehalt selbst wird ein Negatives. Sie ahmen eine Sprache unterhalb der hilflosen der Menschen, ja aller organischen nach, die des Toten von Stein und Stern. Beseitigt werden die letzten Rudimente des Organischen… Die Sprache des Leblosen wird zum letzten Trost über den jeglichen Sinnes verlustigen Tod… Celan [transponiert] die Entgegenständlichung der Landschaft, die sie Anorganischem nähert, in sprachliche Vorgänge (477).

Celan's embrace of the inhuman landscape is for Adorno a protest against an inhuman reality; its negative truth content lies in the refusal to concretely depict human life where there is none, that is, in a world that has proven itself unamenable and hostile to that life. Adorno is describing a poetics that withdraws sympathetically into the dead and the inorganic world to which the human being has been consigned. This poetry, Adorno judges, has undergone a rarefaction and inward condensation at the loss of its traditional subjects, man and nature, no longer accessible to the poet in search of

reality. Lethality having usurped life, the inorganic substratum alone remains, the last available refuge to one wounded in the shared living world.

For instance, in "Du darfst" (*GW* II, 11) the poem's speaker acquiescingly accepts an offering of snow, a squalid and inorganic meal, in contrast with the anguished organic imagery of a mulberry tree's shrieking leaf.[60] Meanwhile the speaker of the earlier poem "Strähne" (*GW* I, 92) endeavours to speak a word "Firnen zulieb," "ein Wort das mich mied, / als die Lippen mir blutet' vor Sprache." This attempt is apparently given up, or else no longer needful, as "du, / ein flockiger Haarstern, / schneist hier herab / und rührst an den erdigen Mund." While the poet struggles to speak for the sake of firn (Germanic cognate of *vorjährig*, a technical term for the snow on mountains and glaciers that lingers past its season and recrystallises more densely in the summer), the earthen mouth successfully and wordlessly receives the "du," at once snowflake, hair, and star, in its emergent meteorological-biological-astral form, the metamorphosed shape of the dead (compare the astro-biological constructions in "Auge der Zeit"). Though far from life in its fullness, here are at least "Rudimente des Organischen," suggesting possibilities of contact with absent life. Celan searches for signs of the dead in elemental landscapes of undying mineral, weather, and heavenly bodies.[61]

The inorganic in Celan's poetry has also been treated by James K. Lyon, who wrote on the poet's nature imagery in his dissertation as early as 1962, later returning to the topic in an article on "Paul Celan's Language of Stone." In the latter work, Lyon develops an analogy between Celan's

[60] The pain of the ambulatory tree recalls human suffering, as trees are often metaphorically related to human beings in Celan's poetry. See Paul Peters, "Brunnenland," 107. For instance, "Landschaft" (*GW* I, 74) and "Ich hörte sagen" (*GW* I, 85) both take advantage of a pun on the German *Pappel* ("poplar") with the Latin *populus* ("people"). See John Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 65.

[61] Consider also in this light the poem "Espenbaum" (*GW* I, 19), in which the poetic gaze ascends from an apperception, not of inorganic but organic nature, through the meteorological to the celestial, while remaining fixed on the absent figure of the poet's murdered mother.

poetry and mining, altering Adorno's charge of escapism to contend that "rock is seldom barren; it often contains traces of ore… Indeed Celan's poems sometimes characterize the poetic *modus operandi* as a struggle against overwhelming odds to win the few minerals the earth is willing to yield" (301).[62] The poet's task then becomes one of excavation, retreat with the ultimate goal of retrieval, discovering within the seemingly inhospitable landscape ore, geodes, crystal, and anything that is still conducive to human existence. Lyon points to Celan's rich metaphorical use of mining and topographical terms, as well as the technical terminology of the various earth sciences, which present themselves to an unfamiliar reader as evocative, novel compounds, perhaps indistinguishable from the poet's idiosyncratic use of neologism.[63] The flexibility and activity of such language, together with the commonplace metaphorical associations of stone with hardness, impenetrability, and inertness, suit Celan's purpose of adequate expression capable of overcoming so much "Ungeschriebenes, zu / Sprache verhärtet."[64] Thus for Lyon, who urges against literal readings of the rocky landscape, Celan's accomplishment is always a mining expedition into the heart of language. The poet delves deep enough into the dead language of our latter days to access its creative core: "With certain latitude, one might say it is the poet's function to create out of those materials which are most rigid and resistant to shaping, and yet which contain locked within them a record of their primeval origins" (Lyon, "Paul Celan's Language of the Stone" 313–14). This positive result issuing from petrified, post-Shoatic existence by means of language alone affirms that language indeed remains "[e]rreichbar, nah und unverloren" (*GW* III, 185).

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[62] Lyon notes that the word *angereichert* in Celan's Bremen prize speech ("[Die Sprache] mußte nun hindurchgehen durch… die tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede… und durfte wieder zutage treten, »angereichert« von all dem," *GW* III, 186) is a technical mining term that "denotes a specific chemical process which takes place in bodies of ore such as copper or silver that lie buried in the earth. These ore bodies can become «enriched» when other materials enter and form chemical concentrations that raise their yield" ("Paul Celan's Language of the Stone" 298).

[63] See, for instance, Axel Gellhaus, "Paul Celan als Leser," 58f, who traces some of Celan's more obscure references to his readings of geological handbooks. See also David Wachter, "Meteopoetologie des Schnees in Celans Lyrik."

[64] From the poem "À la pointe acérée" (*GW* I, 251).

Rochelle Tobias also treats the landscape of the poem as a metaphor for language in her monograph, *The Discourse of Nature in the Poetry of Paul Celan*, the first part of which analyzes geologically determined poetic landscapes. She argues for the anthropomorphism of Celan's topologies, evidenced by an intertwinement of geological and corporeal description which imbues his landscapes not only with the mark of loss, but also with the mimetic semblance of the victims of the Shoah. Many other scholars over the past seventy years have considered the substratum of inorganic matter in Celan's poetry, which has in several cases been made into to the central object of study.[65] Whatever the approach, the attention directed at materiality in a Celan poem must contend with the (not always peaceful) coexistence of opposite paradigms of nature: it is both passive and active on the one hand, simultaneously barren and bountiful on the other. Snow and stone are unconducive to life yet subject to transformations akin to those human beings undergo in life and in death. The auto-accumulation of crystal and the erosion of rock formations approximate the growth, decay, and motion ordinarily reserved for organic life alone. Volcanic eruptions, tectonic shifts, meteorological chaos, deluges of water, and acts of geological creation potently animate and anthropomorphise the landscape of the poem even in the absence of concretely depicted human life. Materiality moves into the foreground not in order to displace the organic order and cover up all traces, but rather as its silent delegate, bearing despite everything the conditions for the preservation of life and its memory. More than a hospice for petrified life or a metaphor for infinitely exploitable language of the kind practiced by absolute poetry, Celan's inorganic landscape heralds the unconquerable substratum that both accommodates and resembles the human creature. The poet's return to the material world is no abdication of the source of life, nor a confession of its exhaustion, nor a timorous escape from the horror of annihilation that has become the burden of

[65] To name a few not yet mentioned above, see Aris Fioretos, "Nothing"; Uta Werner, *Textgräber*; Erika Schellenberger-Diederich, "Von Gletscherstuben und Meermühlen" and *Geopoetik*; Jason Groves, "Paul Celan's Other Terrain."

the living. Materiality is life's inexhaustible source, the undestroyed substratum by virtue of which a humane and truly human community can again emerge out of depleted post-Shoatic existence.

This sustained, undecided duality of matter in Celan's poetry has significant overlap with Ernst Bloch's materialism; indeed, Bloch's highly original views of the dynamic and, as it were, almost lifelike qualities of the inorganic can help open a window onto the unique role of this dimension of the natural in Celan's own poetry. This dualism is not Cartesian, because active potency has no prior reality over and against passive potentiality. The distinct capacities of matter, as both that which is possessed of form (and thus capable of changing in form) and that which bestows form, are separable only in analysis. Matter, for Bloch as well as Celan, is raw, primal stuff that is nevertheless surrounded by and filled with autochthonous power, given to spontaneous, autopoietic metamorphosis into the new. The materiality of Celan's poems is not, as Adorno takes it to be, mere *Klotz*, Bloch's chosen word for the inert matter that "nur von Druck und Stoß geschoben wird und sich immer gleich bleibt" (*TE* 230). The *Klotz* made up of Democritan atoms and subject to Newton's laws of motion cannot move or change on its own, but only rattle around the empty universe like marbles in a jar. Each transformation *Klotz* undergoes, according to the closed system of deterministic metaphysics, is only a single link within the all-encompassing chain of cause and effect in which the present is strictly determined by the past. Astral bodies, subatomic particles, and the human mind, though equally material in Bloch's estimation, each surpass matter's status as *Klotz* through their irreducible autonomy in a vast, interdependent system of estimable, but never guaranteed metamorphoses. Celan's rocks and stones, too, are possessed of an uncanny self-activation exceeding the power of the supposedly lifeless material substratum; the landscapes composed of such stuff are too vibrant to offer an escape into silence and stillness. It is of precisely such stuff, per Bloch, that the world we inhabit is composed.

While world as *Klotz* allows only for rule-governed outcomes, predetermined at the mythical start of the universal causal chain (be this God or some other *primum movens*), Bloch argues that matter itself supplies the present with the conditions for bringing the truly new into history. Matter is both potentiality (Aristotle's *dynamei on*) that assumes form (Spinoza's *natura naturata*) and potency (*kata to dynaton*) that bestows form (*natura naturans*). It is in this way that possibility inheres in the most basic ontological substratum of the world, which can no longer be described in Newtonian terms but first finds adequate expression in the twentieth-century physics of matter-as-energy:

> In einer kraftgeladenen, energieverdichteten Materie, einer unstatischen, die ihre Atome nicht mehr als feste »Bausteine« hat, ihre Struktur nicht mehr im starren euklidischen Raum. Statt dessen geht es bereits in den Atomen bildend zu, sie können als elektro-magnetische Felder dargestellt werden mit einem Kern als »Energieknoten«, ja als Erregungszentrum, von dem das Feld sich mit Lichtgeschwindigkeit ausbreitet. Und wie unmechanisch erst ging die »Ausbreitung« in den organischen, sozialen, kulturellen »Feldern« weiter; der so sich aktivierenden Möglichkeit sind keine Grenzen gesetzt. Immer neuen Gestalten kamen und kommen aus dem bildenden materiellen Schoß, aus der Materie als dem Substrat stets bedingter, doch noch nie begrenzter, erschöpfter Möglichkeiten (*TE* 232).

Bloch refines a materialism true to the discovery that matter is energy and energy matter; there exists an empirical substratum of elements, but the elemental world is in a constant state of flux.

Existence has no irreducible, unchanging building block, for it is equally composed of mutable quantum particles, latent possibility, structures, ideas, historical conditions, and real economic relations between human beings, which all have ontological reality in an unsettled cosmos. Matter, for Bloch, has "ihre systematischen Platz nicht nur unterhalb der menschlichen Geschichte… sondern auch rund um sie her, genau als kosmisch, immer noch kosmisch über ihr" (*TE* 235). His materialism is to be distinguished from the deterministic and mechanistic variety which attempts to fix all complex and non-physical systems in the law-like transaction of discrete, indivisible bodies, hence eliminating all degrees of freedom. But the mechanistic explanation fails for underestimation of the atom's transmutability. Against such downward reduction, Bloch traces

the source of all real possibility in the socio-cultural superstructure to the physical material base below. Matter is not the limiting factor or practical restriction imposed *a priori* upon human freedom, but rather the fundamental condition of its unbounded possibility.

Whether Celan exactly shares in Bloch's conception of materiality or not, they have in common the conviction that matter is not entirely dead, that it surges with autochthonous possibility and has no need of power outside of the physical world to set it in motion; nor is the course of this motion set in advance. The poet is not experimenting with prefabricated atoms and molding them according to his image. The self-activation of inorganic matter in Celan seems to be something other than an exercise in the release of long-since ossified expressive language, as well as something more than a metaphor for the unleashing of subterranean human creativity, as in Lyon's account; it attests to the possibility, perhaps of a better, a perfect existence for human beings, latent in the non-human world.

To explore the Blochian angle to Celan's treatment of the inorganic world, we will first look at the poem "Was geschah?" (*GW* I, 269) and its deployment of the stone.

> Was geschah? Der Stein trat aus dem Berge.
> Wer erwachte? Du und ich.
> Sprache, Sprache. Mit-Stern. Neben-Erde.
> Ärmer. Offen. Heimatlich.
>
> Wohin gings? Gen Unverklungen.
> Mit dem Stein gings, mit uns zwein.
> Herz und Herz. Zu schwer befunden.
> Schwerer werden. Leichter sein.

A poem such as this demonstrates the breakdown of the mining metaphor. It begins with a stone that moves on its own, accomplishing the miner's work for him and, by the logic of the metaphor, the poet's work too. That the movement of the stone is personified only adds to the perplexity. The miraculous extraction accomplished with "Der Stein trat aus dem Berge" comes as the brief,

unhesitating response to the opening question: what happened? Question and answer follow one another so closely in blank verse that their connection could hardly be presented as any more natural.[66] Noticing this, the reader may also remark the rhyme scheme, although this is neither obvious nor expected in a Celan poem of his middle period, at which point he had largely abandoned the beautifying conventions of lyric poetry. Within each four-verse stanza, the even verses rhyme in their masculine endings while the odd assonate in feminine near-rhyme. The poem's meter is subtly, though consistently iambic, excepting onset and final syllables, and as with the rhyme scheme, its asymmetric regularity serves at first to disguise it. The first stanza alternates between verses of five and four iambs, while each verse in the latter more balladic stanza contains four. Even distribution of punctuation, stressed onsets, and the caesura in the middle of each verse lend the whole a staccato, incantatory rhythm.

The question "Was geschah?" can hardly be more open-ended, and perhaps hence deserving of so unprecedented an answer, but it also recalls Celan's words in the award speech given in Bremen, where he speaks euphemistically of "was geschah" to avoid naming the Shoah (*GW* III, 186). This meaning, which darkens even the most indeterminate usage of the past tense, threatens to foreclose the openness of the question: it can mean anything, but it can also only mean the one thing, that most unavoidable fact. This is not to say that the stone, as the answer to the loaded question, must then take on the symbolic load of Nazi lethality, though a suspicious reading of the stone under the influence of Adorno may indeed argue that its paradoxical motility represents the triumph of the stony realm of silence, rigidity and death over the organic world, reflecting the poet's inability to reconcile the continuation of human life with the total annihilation of the Shoah. This,

[66] Contrast the poem "Keine Sandkunst mehr" (*GW* II, 39), where it is not question and answer, but the words "Deine Frage—Deine Antwort" themselves which are juxtaposed, appearing as mutually contradicting thesis and antithesis rather than respective moments in a dialogue. Their opposition however resolves into a third term not contained in its antecedents, the synthesis "Dein Gesang, was weiß er?"

however, sidesteps the mystery as to why the stone is walking out of the mountain rather retreating into it.

The image of the motile stone does not resolve the tension between the openness and closure of the initial question but reiterates it. All the more so if the reader hears *Trittstein* in "Der Stein trat," importing a step in a semi-natural path offering human beings passage across difficult terrain. The tensions of openness/closure and motility/lifelessness resonate and accumulate between question and answer. The same bipartite form is repeated in the second verse, and as a consequence the newly evoked "Du und ich" are in some way aligned with the motile stone. The stone is again brought in parallel with the poetic Thou and I in the sixth verse, at which point the first- and second-person singular pronouns coalesce into "uns zwein," a union as significant as that achieved in the final verse of "Es war Erde in ihnen" (*GW* I, 211). In the first conjunction of the stone and personal pronouns, they are in consecutive verses on the same side of the caesura (represented in this case by question marks), while the second time they appear on opposite sides of the caesura within a single verse. Marked by a comma rather than a more halting punctuation, this latter caesura is the most permeable in the poem, but this seems to indicate something other than an equation of the counterpoised terms. The incompleteness of the fusion between "Stein" and "uns," as well as between I and Thou, is corroborated by the discrete individuation of "Herz und Herz": two contiguous, but non-equivalent hearts.

Equivalence is expressed in this poem not between the two terms on opposite sides of the caesura but between all terms that align vertically on the same side. A vertical line may be drawn through the printed poem connecting each caesura and dividing each verse into complementary hemistiches, revealing a relation of metaphorical equation joining all hemistiches on either side of the line. The questions on the left side of their respective caesuras, "Was geschah," "Wer erwachte,"

and "Wohin gings," are associated with one another by an internal similarity, as are their answers on the right: "Der Stein trat aus dem Berge," "Du und ich," and "Gen Unverklungen." "Stein" corresponds with "Erde," which corresponds with "Heimatlich," while "Ärmer. Offen" recalls the open/closed tension of the opening question already discussed. Meanwhile, the relation between terms across the caesura is sequential or metonymic rather than associative or metaphorical: the latter hemistich issues from or responds to the former. Thus, in first, second, and fifth verses, is question followed by answer. At the same time, "Zu schwer befunden" is an evaluation of "Herz und Herz," referencing an ancient Egyptian chthonic belief, according to which the god Osiris judged the deceased upon entry into the afterlife by weighing their heart against the feather of truth. In other words, terms vary within the paradigm along the vertical axis of the poem and, respectively, within the syntagm along its horizontal axis, corresponding perfectly to the axial analogy of metaphor and metonymy developed by Jacques Lacan based on Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist linguistics and Roman Jakobson's poetics.[67]

Applying this axial principle to the first stanza, the latter hemistiches of each verse together form a coherent, meaningful unity. Descending vertically from the first to the fourth verse, these hemistiches begin in a geological lexicon (*Stein* and *Berg*) that metamorphoses into an interpersonal (*Du* and *Ich*) and then a celestial one (*Stern* and *Erde*) before settling on the "Heimatlich." Though diverse, these four elements can indeed be seen to belong to a single paradigm, which may be termed cosmic in Bloch's sense. As Bloch stresses, the cosmos we inhabit is not made up of atoms in the strong sense of being reducible to such discrete units; our experience of relations precedes all possible experience of things, and following Marx, most elementary to Bloch are the socioeconomic relations that adhere between human beings and towards nature (*TE* 231; *PH* 333). The objects of

[67] See Chapter 11 of Russell Grigg, *Lacan, Language, and Philosophy*.

physics, both quantum and astronomical, are only reached through abstraction from our interpersonal lived reality, which is not, however, to say that these are any less real. The relational and the celestial are in fact united in this fundamental cosmic reality, and it is in this sense that "Mit-Stern" and "Neben-Erde," though paired with "Sprache, Sprache," are not themselves linguistic derivations as Lyon claims: "Elsewhere *Stern* and *Erden* are apparently used synonymously with language," presenting the poem "Was geschah?" as an example ("Paul Celan's Language of the Stone" 309).

Furthermore, the third verse is composed of two hemistiches which each, in their own way, juxtapose two terms, and that a parallelism is being established within rather than between hemistiches is indicated by the asymmetry in punctuation (the comma in the former hemistich turns into a period in the latter), which the axial principle supports. That is, the union of star and earth is introduced by the interaction between "Sprache" and "Sprache." This can, on the one hand, be given the sense of the immediately preceding hemistich "Du und ich" and read as "[Deine] Sprache, [meine] Sprache," namely as a dialogue between the remote realm of the dead, represented by the star, and the poetic speaker's earthly existence. On the other hand, the first instance of "Sprache" can be the inorganic language that answers the question "Was geschah?" with the movement of the stone, the second instance being the organic language that furnishes the personal pronominal answer to "Wer erwachte?"[68] "Sprache, Sprache" then intervenes as a translation between two seemingly irreconcilable languages; the inanimateness of the mineral sphere is transposed into the animate and becomes the proper language of those who can no longer speak, carrying their voice back over into

[68] As the unexpected motility of the stone engages the inorganic and the organic, the awakening of "Du und ich" engages the dead and the living. Compare the lines "Wer / sagt, daß uns alles erstarb, da uns das Aug brach? / Alles erwachte, alles hob an" in "Mit allen Gedanken" (*GW* I, 221). See Björn Hayer, *Utopielyrik*, 194: "Das Du befindet sich im Jenseits. Obgleich »das Aug brach«, der Blickkontakt verschwand… Das Sterben steht dem Erwachen gegenüber."

the organic sphere.[69] The success of this translation is the mutual appearance of the star and the earth, remote celestial bodies united by the neologistic prefixation of locative prepositions ("Mit-" and "Neben-"), and this is the accomplishment of language. Language inaugurates star and earth without becoming them.[70] Such is the language equal to Celan's self-styled project of "mir Wirklichkeit zu entwerfen" (*GW* III, 186); crucially, this language belongs neither to the world of the living nor to the world of the dead alone, and the reality in question is a relational one (*mit* and *neben*). In dialogue and in translation, generative language exceeds limits and bridges gaps, while the generated reality, represented by the bipolarity of "Mit-Stern" and "Neben-Erde," *Stein* and *Berg*, "Du und ich," exists in the relation between such disparate elements as the commodious cosmos capable even of encompassing antipodes. Poetry, which for Celan moves ever toward "ein ansprechbares Du… eine ansprechbare Wirklichkeit" (*GW* III, 186), is perhaps impossible under a complete separation of the geological, interpersonal, and celestial realms.

The dialogic and translational rapprochement between "Mit-Stern" and "Neben-Erde" drafts a cosmos comprising a terrestrial star, where the dead are still somehow near, and the Utopian image of an astral earth. This earth is a finally habitable one, "Heimatlich," part of a living Blochian cosmos that omits nothing, least of all the individual subject, whose existence had been questioned and whose restitution anticipated in "Auge der Zeit" (*GW* I, 127). It is a similar earth that rises, perhaps like a star, in the poem "Hinausgekrönt" (*GW* I, 271), as "es stieg eine Erde hinauf, die unsre, / diese," anticipating in this world ("diese") rather than in a world beyond the advent of a

[69] I thank Paul Peters for this insight, communicated to me in personal conversation.
[70] See also Marlies Janz, *Vom Engagement absoluter Poesie*, where language is not wholly autonomous but unleashes real Utopian possibility: "Sprache als ‚Mit-Stern' und ‚Neben-Erde' ist für sich und kann doch nicht für sich sein. Sie ist gleichsam ein Satellit der empirischen Realität und bleibt als solcher von ihr abhängig und auf sie bezogen. Mit dem Wort ‚offen' ist sie… charakterisiert als Sphäre der Utopie; sie ist ‚ärmer' als die Erde, weil die utopischen Gegenstände noch ohne materielle Realität sind, und sie ist zugleich ‚heimatlich', weil sie eine Welt antizipiert, in der ein humanes Leben möglich wäre" (155f).

future that is finally worthy of the human collectivity ("unsre").[71] This emergent planet of "Hinausgekrönt" is also inaugurated by the collective's singing of the Warszawianka, an expression of dialogic, translational language. In consonance with Celan's invocation, this revolutionary anthem proclaims the reemergence of the collective under the socialist banner of liberation, solidarity, and justice, even figuring this development in terms of a resurrection:

> O!... bo to sztandar całej ludzkości,
> To hasło święte, pieśń zmartwychwstania,
> To tryumf pracy — sprawiedliwości,
> To zorza wszystkich ludów zbratania.[72]

The movement in "Hinausgekrönt" culminates in the statement, "Und wir schicken / keinen der Unseren hinunter / zu dir, / Babel," a promise of solidarity to not let this Utopian hope devolve into empty or divisive speech.

The hope for a life that is fully ours, for a space that is properly home to human life, can only be universal. This means not only solidarity within a human collectivity, but also being at home in the material world which, for Bloch, is not limited to the anthropological sphere, for both are encompassed by a possibility-laden cosmos:

> Hauptsache: nur bei dauernd betroffener Einbeziehung der anorganischen Natur trifft der historische Grund-Zug zum Sein wie Heimat nicht den Anschein von kalter Schulter, sondern den möglichen Vor-Schein von Heimat auch hier. Vor allem hier, im riesigen Um-uns Materie, im schlechthinnigen Boden wie Hochgebirge dieses Substrats der objektiven Möglichkeit (*TE* 236).

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[71] See also Georg-Michael Schulz, *Negativität in der Dichting Paul Celans*, 196: "die Utopie in Celans Dichtung [gewinnt] inhaltliche Konturen in mannigfaltigen Richtungen, am eindrücklichsten vielleicht in dem Bild der Erde als menschlicher Wohnstatt." For example, "magnetisch / ziehts, mit Herzfingern, an / dir, Erde: du kommst, du kommst, / wohnen werden wir" in "Hüttenfenster" (*GW* I, 278); "dies wieder / ins Leben empor- / gelittene Stück / bewohnbarer Erde" in "Denk dir" (*GW* II, 227).

[72] I thank PhD candidate at the Université du Québec à Montréal Mikołaj Wyrzykowski for his translation:

> Oh! For it's the flag of all of humanity,
> A sacred motto, a resurrection song,
> A triumph of work — and of justice,
> Dawn of all the folks' brotherhood.

This call to attend to all things great and small in the pursuit of true "Heimat" in inorganic nature recalls the "den Dingen und der Kreatur gewidmeten Aufmerksamkeit" which, as Celan says in the "Meridian," can bring about proximity to Utopia and take one along "kreatürliche Wege… auf der Such nach sich selbst… Eine Art Heimkehr" (*GW* III, 200f).

That *Heimat* and the hope for a just future are associated in both Bloch's and Celan's thought with the material world of stuff and things is itself a significant meridian connecting them. Evidently the *Heimat* invoked in the "Meridian" as well as in "Was geschah?" cannot be exactly equated to the poet's destroyed Bukovinian homeland, though as finally habitable space it retains the affective quality of a place of belonging and of lost loved ones. The word *Heimat*, as the site of universal Utopian fulfillment for the human community, is charged with forward-facing anticipation rather than nostalgia in the strictly regressive sense.[73] Returning to the poem, the *Heimat* on the horizon is both "Ärmer," for as an event within rather than before or beyond human history it had to undergo the annihilatory nadir of the Shoah,[74] and "Offen," that is, not comparatively *offener* but absolutely, superlatively open with unrestricted futurity. This openness, as a corelate to and inversion upon the relative historical *Armut* of *Heimat*, must be understood in Bloch's sense in which "jede Dimension der Geschichte geöffnet und offen gehalten [wird], worin allererst die tätige Hoffnung ihr Feld hat" (*TE* 230), open in terms of yet unsettled possibility and of freedom to come. Possibility-laden materiality and a "geöffnet und offen gehalten" history ensure that the world may still become the consummately habitable space which it has never yet been and all past attempts to bring which about have failed.

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[73] Contrast "einst, ach, daheim," in Celan's early poem "Nähe der Gräber" (*GW* III, 20), another elegy to his mother that casts doubt on the possibility of regaining home, nature, and language.

[74] The same can be said of the language still capable of bringing about *Heimat*. See Wiebke Amthor, "Schneepart," 119: "Die Welt kann ins Reine und Wahre daher nur durch eine solche Sprache gehoben werden, die ihre eigene Unreinheit mit bedenkt."

Celan's placement of *Heimat* in the future, as the realm of freedom at the eventual end of a prolonged and committed labour, which is what his poetry is, corresponds to Bloch's final and culminating statement on the subject in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, which is also the book's last word:

> Der Mensch lebt noch überall in der Vorgeschichte, ja alles und jedes steht noch vor Erschaffung der Welt, als einer rechten. *Die wirkliche Genesis ist nicht am Anfang, sondern am Ende*… Hat [der Mensch] sich erfaßt und das Seine ohne Entäußerung und Entfremdung in realer Demokratie begründet, so entsteht in der Welt etwas, das allen in die Kindheit scheint und worin noch niemand war: Heimat (*PH* 1628).

The metaphysical originality of pure beginnings is translated, along with *Heimat*, from the sentimentality of the irretrievable past to the awaited end of history. This reversal is possible for Bloch because the material world, far from an unchanging heap of *Klotz*, is itself unfinished. "Zuverlässig ist zwar alles und vor allem das menschliche Leben eine Art Transcendere, eine Überschreitung des Gegebenen" (*PH* 1625), but this is no transcendence in the religious sense; "Überschreitung" takes place within historical time, for which the surmountable material world permits infinite allowance.

Freedom, belonging, authentic community have so far existed in limited and temporal form, unfulfilled because only partially developed or eventually elapsed, interrupted by the outbreak of lethality in history. If these and other *heimatliche* tendencies, such as true democracy and the tenderness of childhood, have any lasting reality at all that survives their partial or complete disparition from history, it is the reality of *Noch-Nicht*. These more or less present tendencies are not the imperfect reflections of an eternal realm of Platonic forms, for they issue from the open future and not "Urvergangenes oder geschichtslos Ewiges" (*PH* 7). Perfected democracy exists nowhere but in the future, and its current forms of inadequacy are not the degraded remnant of original perfection but the still unripe traces of a fuller realisation to come. We experience it here and now variously as tendency and latency, signs which foreshadow fulfillment but in no way determine it, for

if it were determined then it would not really be the future, only temporally deferred past. The hope for *Heimat* as a truly habitable and not merely circumscribed and determined space is the desire to pursue each tendency and fulfill each latency. The truth of matter is that it is "Materie nach vorwärts" (*PH* 1627), and thus the world in which the conditions for a truly human existence have so far lived a subterranean life is also the space of their eventual, though still unformed and as yet unguaranteed realisation. The advent of *Heimat* is a Messianic event, finalising the known and revealing the unknowable. It is both numinous and secular, for *Heimat* completes creation, which is an event of cosmic proportions, but it takes place entirely within the material world and human history, even if not until its end.

Moving to the second stanza of "Was geschah?", the "Wohin" movement of the fifth verse, which may ambiguously refer to something "Ärmer. Offen. Heimatlich," follows the stone, making it the precondition and model for openness and *Heimat*. Joined also by similar sounding open vowels and common cadence, "Ärmer" and "Offen" expose the vacancy of the annihilatory cleft in history first articulated in the question "Was geschah?" but under opposite aspects. If "Ärmer" is a traumatic reflection on lethality, which unsettles any "fertig gemachten Ontologie," then "Offen" miraculously recognises futurity even in the vacancy left over by catastrophe. Futurity inheres in the geological past of the stone as well as in the human past, which is not completely gone. Derived from the verb *verklingen*, which in musicology describes fading out, though it may be overliterally translated as "to cease sounding," the unusual neologism "Unverklungen" has the sense of something from the past that is not wholly past, within which there is still futurity to discover. It recalls Celan's statement of the "starke Neigung zum Verstummen" in the poem, which yet "ruft und holt sich, um bestehen zu können, unausgesetzt aus seinem Schon-nicht-mehr in sein Immer-noch zurück" (*GW* III, 197). By its paradigmatic association with the hemistich "mit uns zwein," this "Unverklungen" becomes the lasting reverberation of a destroyed interpersonal community which

continues to survive, in some small measure, by its effectiveness among the living. The past, be it that of the inorganic stone or of the no longer living, remains open and unfinished, full of life and amenable to life.

The sixth verse places the geological and interpersonal realms in dialogue once more. It is a visual metaphor in anticipation of the reference to the ancient Egyptian afterlife belief in the seventh verse, whereby the internal rhymes (unique within the poem) of "dem Stein" and "uns zwein" balance perfectly across the caesura like the fulcrum on a set of scales. The stone and the pronominal human figures have successfully entered into a syntagmatic relation that has modified, but not suspended the paradigmatic relation established between the two in the first stanza. Metaphorical similarity is not transformed into equation but supplemented through sequentiality: the poetic Thou and I are not only like the stone but now also follow it, and this can be explained in two ways. First, the stone as an instance of inorganic matter contains possibility and motion within itself even prior to any human appearance. Bloch writes,

> Die reale Möglichkeit wohnt derart in keiner fertig gemachten Ontologie des Seins des bisher Seienden, sondern in der stets neu zu begründenden Ontologie des Seins des Noch-Nicht-Seienden, wie sie Zukunft selbst noch in der Vergangenheit entdeckt und in der ganzen Natur… Wie anders sonst die zukunfttragenden Eigenschaften der Materie? (*PH* 274)

Far from dead *Klotz*, the stone in Celan's poem is mutable, motile, and carries the possibility of new futures independent of prevailing Being. Potent, energised matter is for Bloch the *prius* of all Being, supplying it from below with ever new forms.

The second sense of personal pronouns following the stone in "Mit dem Stein gings, mit uns zwein" is shared with Celan's other poem "Blume" (*GW* I, 164), where he writes of "Der Stein

in der Luft, dem ich folgte."[75] The organism is geotropic, whereas the stone departs from its geological terrain.[76] In "Was geschah?" the stone steps out of the mountain; similarly, stones fly in "Die hellen Steine" (*GW* I, 255) and migrate as if "im Äther" in "Erratisch" (*GW* I, 235).[77] Stone is unexpectedly light, meanwhile it is human life that has been "Zu schwer gefunden."[78] These words dispute the claims of idealism, which sees (human) mind or spirit as apart from and above matter. The immateriality of "Herz und Herz" is rejected in the seventh verse and then mysteriously, aphoristically re-asserted in the eighth ("Schwerer warden. Leichter sein").

Insofar as "Herz," as a possible seat of the spirit, has the initial connotation of lightness against the heaviness of the stone, the final two verses are chiastic in form: opposite terms are reflected across the caesura in both verses, only their order is re-versed. The matrix of openness/closure, motility/lifelessness is inverted, and the paradigmatic relation between lightness and heaviness coincides with their syntagmatic relation. The binaries maintaining both mechanistic and idealistic conceptions of materiality collapse as matter and mind permeate one another. It is precisely this relation of which Bloch writes: "Und der Geist ist darin kein Trumpf gegen [die Materie], worin sie verdampft, die dann immer als unverbesserlicher Klotz gedachte, sondern ihre

[75] This poem too begins in the realm of the stone and the presence of an I and Thou, which here unite in the first-person plural under the organic, abundant sign of "Blume." The appearance of water, a bridge between the organic and the inorganic, between the living and the dead, accompanies this transformation/translation. As in "In den Flüssen" (*GW* II, 14), "So bist du denn geworden" (*GW* I, 59), and "Es war Erde in ihnen" (*GW* I, 211), water is the natural element of generation and regeneration that for Celan defines the borderlands of the life, death, and inorganic matter.

[76] For a deeper discussion of airborne rock in Celan's lyric touching on the anti-geotropism of sky-facing roots in "In der Luft" (*GW* I, 290) and "Das aufwärtsstehende Land" (*GW* II, 70), see Jason Groves, "Paul Celan's Other Terrain."

[77] Numerous critics have noted that Celan has in mind a technical meaning of *erratisch* (from the Latin for "wandering"), a geological term describing rocks deposited by glacial movement and erosion in locations sometimes thousands of kilometers away from their native source.

[78] The line also inverts Daniel 5:27, which Martin Luther translates: "Tekel / das ist / Man hat dich in einer wage gewogen / vnd zu leicht gefunden." "Tekel" is one of the cryptic words of reproach that a spectral hand writes on the palace wall during a feast of the Babylonian king Belshazzar. The prophet Daniel is tasked to read the Hebrew words and interpret their meaning, which he reveals to be an indictment of the king's pride and blasphemy. Being found too light, which in the Egyptian account is proof of purity worthy of Heaven, has the opposite valence in the biblical legend. Celan's inversion appropriates the moral "weightiness" which Daniel implicitly prescribes as a characteristic of both hearts and stones.

eigene Blüte, aus dem Substrat keineswegs herausfallend oder auch herausstiegend" (*TE* 234). Mind and spirit belong firmly to the material world, but as its crowning achievement. The lightness of stone does not make human agency superfluous, nor does the heaviness of the heart reduce it to *Klotz*. Rather the human being, as a part of the world, promises to elevate the world by making good on the Utopian promise latent within "Materie, die sich durch den Menschen als ihrer höchsten Blüte zusammenfaßt und zu Ende bildet" (*PH* 285). Bloch's repeated characterisation of human spirit as nature's "Blüte" is fitting in the context of Celan's metaphoric. The poems "Blume," "Die hellen Steine," "Erratisch," and "Corona" (*GW* I, 37) also liken stones to flowers, allowing the former to open up or bloom into the latter. This image of the fruitful organisation of the inorganic signals the realisation of unlikely but ever latent possibility, whether this be of an interpersonal connection, creative expression, or the commemoration of the dead. These are distinctly and celebratorily anthropomorphic moments in which the human being and human concerns flower forth out of nature, building upon the autochthonous power of matter.

The Messianic and humanistic hope in the image of the blooming flower of mankind reaches its epitome where it absorbs the image of resurrection, as in "Auge der Zeit": "die Toten / knospen und blühen."[79] Even the reference to the ancient Egyptian afterlife belief in "Was geschah?" and the possibility of redemption contained therein is a *Hoffnungsbild* against death not unlike the resurrection discussed in the previous chapter.[80] The interpenetration of the organic with

[79] Also consider the association of the flower with resurrection in the poem "Spät und Tief" (*GW* I, 35), ending with the jussive invocation "Es komme ein Mensch aus dem Grabe," which, in the earlier version of the poem published under the title "Deukalion und Pyrrha" (*GW* III, 58) in the early collection *Der Sand aus den Urnen*, appears as "Es komme der Mensch mit der Nelke." See Paul Celan, *Der Sand aus den Urnen. Mohn und Gedächtnis*, Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe, 192-94. The hope for a socialist revolution, symbolised by the red carnation, also anticipates a return of the lost fullness of human experience and dignity destroyed by capitalist and fascist violence. See Peter Goßens, "Das Frühwerk bis zu *Der Sand aus den Urnen* (1938-1950)," 51f.

[80] Interestingly, Bloch discusses this same ancient myth in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* as history's first "Wunschgedanke… daß das Geschick der Toten nicht bloß Fortsetzung ihres irdischen Wohlergehens sei, sondern vom sittlichen Wandel abhänge" (*PH* 1319). He also sees it as a source for the Jewish "Buch des Lebens… in welches das Gewicht

the inorganic is therefore an assertion of the latent, now "[ä]rmer" and subterranean, continuation of human life and dignity, the anticipation of their eventual fruition. Celan's poetic cosmos admits all these things and promises to become a *Heimat* to them, if only they might come soon into full bloom. Utopia, even considered secularly, is nothing less than such a cosmic fulfillment of latent, inanimate possibility described by the young humanist Marx: "Also die *Gesellschaft* ist die vollendete Wesenseinheit des Menschen mit der Natur, die wahre Resurrektion der Natur, der durchgeführte Naturalismus des Menschen und der durchgeführte Humanismus der Natur" ("Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte" 538).[81] Indeed, this at once Blochian and Marxian principle of a resurrection of nature in the name of a renewed fusion of the human with the natural takes on a particularly daring post-Shoatic form in Celan's work in the union of the anthropomorphic with the inorganic. For it is equally a matter of human society and the natural world fully returning to life after the nadir of history, of re-articulating the perspective of a renewed *Heimat* in the context of a genuine interpersonal community.

Celan's poetic achievement does not therefore lie in taking a raw material from nature and imposing upon it the form of external creation. In its broadest cosmic sense, nature is to be reconstituted as *Heimat* through anthropomorphisms and vivifications that take advantage of the vital, dynamic qualities already latent in inorganic matter. The stone is, as it were, predisposed to bloom, and Celan's poems discover this latency in its lower phases across the unliving landscape. The poem "Le Menhir" (*GW* I, 260), for instance, takes its title from the name given to megalithic monuments discovered in Bretagne, which likely served a role in the death rites of ancestor cults during the Bronze Age (Lyon, "Paul Celan's Language of the Stone" 314):

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der menschlichen Taten eingeschrieben wird" (*PH* 1325), opened annually on Rosh Hashanah and sealed on Yom Kippur, at once the most solemn period of atonement and most joyous day of absolution.

[81] Quoted by Bloch in *PH* 327.

Wachsendes
Steingrau.

Graugestalt, augen-
loser du, Steinblick, mit dem uns
die Erde hervortrat, menschlich,
auf Dunkel-, auf Weißheidewegen,
abends, vor
dir, Himmelsschlucht.

Verkebstes, hierhergekarrt, sank
über den Herzrücken weg. Meer-
mühle mahlte.

Hellflüglig hingst du, früh,
zwischen Ginster und Stein, kleine Phaläne.

Schwarz, phylakterien-
farben, so wart ihr,
ihr mit-
betenden Schoten.

The enormous stone undergoes movement ("hierhergekarrt"), growth ("Wachsendes"), and reduction under the force of a "Meer- / mühle," a geological term which Celan also uses in "Weiß und leicht" (*GW* I, 165), "designating a spot on the edge of the ocean where fresh water and salt water come together and interact with erosive force" (Lyon, "Paul Celan's Language of the Stone" 310).

Brought back into the play of organic metamorphosis, the menhir becomes recognisable once more as a memorial rather than simply the fossilised remnant of a long-extinct civilisation, the static conclusion with which every attempt at memorialisation is threatened. Commemoration for Celan is always sensitive of change, and as an ongoing practice in the present rather than the mere cognitive awareness of the past, it must effect change too. According to Bloch, "Weltveränderung… geschieht sinngemäß einzig in einer Welt der *qualitativen Umschlagbarkeit, Veränderlichkeit selber*, nicht in der des mechanischen Immer-Wieder, der puren Quantität, des historischen Umsonst" (*PH* 333). Likewise, what impresses about the menhir in this poem is not its permanent, self-sufficient

plenitude, that is, the sheer quantity of time it has persisted unchanged, matched by the awe-inspiring quantity of *Klotz* it comprises. The poem lightens and hollows out the stone into "Schwarz[en], phylakterien- / farben[en]… mit- / betenden Schoten," usable aids to prayer and memory whose power manifests in commemorative practice.[82] Here again "die Erde hervortrat, menschlich," recalling the emergent human-worthy earths in "Was geschah?" and "Hinausgekrönt" inaugurating a habitable, home-like space discovered in stone that strangely resembles us.

"Weggebeizt" (*GW* II, 31) also dramatises the tension between an accumulation "der puren Quantität, des historischen Umsonst" and the latent possibility of qualitative change, hidden in a barren landscape made habitable. The poem begins with a scene of erosion, here beneath the force of wind rather than of water, as we have witnessed elsewhere:

> Weggebeizt vom
> Strahlenwind deiner Sprache
> das bunte Gerede des An-
> erlebten – das hundert-
> züngige Mein-
> gedicht, das Genicht.
>
> Aus-
> gewirbelt,
> frei
> der Weg durch den menschen-
> gestaltigen Schee,
> den Büßerschnee, zu
> den gastlichen Gletscherstuben und -tischen.
>
> Tief
> in der Zeitenschrunde,
> beim
> Wabeneis
> wartet, ein Atemkristall,

[82] The reference here is to the ritual phylacteries, or tefillin, worn during Jewish weekday morning prayers, which consist of black leather straps bound about the left arm and head attached to small boxes containing parchment scrolls inscribed with passages from the Torah, among them the injunction to remember from Exodus 13:9: "And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt."

dein unumstößliches
Zeugnis.

The first stanza's "hundert- /züngige" speech evokes a plurality of arbitrary, equivocating talk that fails to bear true witness and as such is no better than perjury ("Mein- / gedicht" puns on *Meineid*), but the phrase also describes a mode of expression constructed from quantitative accumulation. This ironic sense of accumulation is contained in "An- / erlebten" as well, signalling experience that has been added on rather than authentically lived, recalling the euphemistic "angereichert" in Celan's Bremen prize speech.

"An- / erlebten" and "hundert- /züngige" are both internally enjambed, both composed of a prefix indicating additivity separated by a line break from the possibility of authentic testimony. It is such quantifying, nullifying testimony ("Genicht") that becomes "[w]eggebeizt vom / Strahlenwind deiner Sprache," revealing human shapes hidden in the frozen landscape in the second stanza. As in "Strähne" (*GW* I, 92), where the non-linguistic, rather elemental response of the "erdigen Mund" accomplishes what the poetic voice alone cannot, the dialogic response of the "Strahlenwind deiner Sprache" reveals a human-like, hospitable space in the snow which merely monologic "Mein- / gedicht" can hardly help but cover up. "Gerede," "Mein- / gedicht," and "Genicht" are opposed to the authentic language of the Other. The inorganic world of snow opens itself up of its own accord to the poetic voice, which takes comfort there as the last refuge in these dark, life-denying times, similar to the welcome offering of snow in "Du darfst" (*GW* II, 11). But what is comforting to Celan about the landscape is not its remoteness from the realms of life and death alike, its changeless resistance to the vicissitudes of the organic world. The space is rather "gastlichen" precisely because it is not eternal and beyond human history; it is a habitable space to the dead, not exactly as they were during life, but having undergone the transformation of death.

The silent, latent permutability of the frozen landscape accommodates the changed existence of the dead and continues to bear their form.

Celan takes "Büßerschnee," an obscure geological term he would have learned from an old textbook,[83] and utilises its metaphorical anthropomorphism of the mineral realm for his own purpose of addressing life in the inorganic realm. The mundane glacial furnishings ("Gletscherstuben und -tischen") also suggest the persistence of life, and *büßen* opens the possibility of redemption and freedom ("frei" occupying a verse of its own) from the finality of death and oblivion. Neither the dead nor their inorganic abode will be marginalised to a finished and changeless past, for ongoing human history remains open to the uncircumscribed influence of each. Celan, like Bloch, knows of "überhaupt keine Vergangenheit außer der noch lebendigen, noch nicht abgegoltenen" (*PH* 8). The most barren, lifeless space can yet be humanised, rescued from oblivion, and returned to the course of human history, thus redeeming it into a dwelling of human-like activity in such moments of attentiveness to the unextinguishable capacity for matter and people to transform, of "den Dingen und der Kreatur gewidmeten Aufmerksamkeit."

As the third stanza delves "Tief / in der Zeitenschrunde," into the frozen landscape and into the timelessness that is the common lot of inorganic matter and the dead alike, the solid inertness of this eternity becomes more strongly charged with expectancy than ever before. The fragile, ephemeral organic-inorganic compounds "Wabeneis" and "Atemkristall" are traces of hibernating life, latent possibility, the reference to honeycomb suggestive of a Utopic and fertile "land / darinnen milch vnd honig fleusst" (Exod. 3:8). The crystal is an example of a mineral formation that undergoes life-like growth, albeit across an extended geological timescale. This geological near-eternity becomes compressed in the symbol of the "Atemkristall" down to the

[83] See Axel Gellhaus, "Paul Celan als Leser," 58f.

duration of a single fleeting breath, which itself expands to the scale of universal time. "Urvergangenes oder geschichtslos Ewiges," issuing ever the same from the beginning of existence, ceases to be a suitable frame for the unfolding of history, which may suddenly erupt into new and unexpected forms even in the given moment. The solitary, creaturely moment alone endures, which knows as its point of reference no infinitely remote past but only the immediately impending future: "Jeder gelebte Augenblick wäre mithin, wenn er Augen hätte, Zeuge des Weltanfangs, der in ihm immer wieder geschieht; *jeder Augenblick ist, als unhervorgetreten, im Jahr Null des Weltanfangs*" (*PH* 359). The "Akut des Heutigen" of Celan's "Meridian" speech is here clearly chosen over the "Zirkumflex… des Ewigen" (*GW* III, 190). Each moment has in this sense equal status, each is equally charged with novel, generative potential, an eyewitness of genesis lying in wait of creation's fulfilling renewal. The timelessness of both the geological aeon and the eternity of the dead dissolves into the latent expectancy of the "Atemkristall," the suspended momentary time, which offers Messianic realisation of the hope for "dein unumstössliches / Zeugnis," the remedy to the insufficient testimony laid out in the first stanza. "Zeugnis" has the additional connotation of biological procreation, the creation and continuation of life rehabilitated of its lost dignity. The redemption of the living and dead alike depend on a seizure of the potential for radical change that inheres in each moment as in the material substratum.

Another poem that places generative, Messianic potential in the perhaps not-so-distant realm of the dead is "Radix Matrix" (*GW* I, 239), beginning with an attenuated dialogue between living and dead mediated by inorganic nature, exemplified once more by the stone:

> Wie man zum Stein spricht, wie
> du,
> mir vom Abgrund her, von
> einer Heimat her Ver-
> schwisterte, Zu-
> geschleuderte, du,

du mir vorzeiten,
du mir im Nichts einer Nacht,
du in der Aber-Nacht Be-
gegnete, du
Aber-Du –:

Damals, da ich nicht da war,
damals, da du
den Acker abschrittst, allein:

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

(Wurzel.
Wurzel Abrahams. Wurzel Jesse. Niemandes
Wurzel – o
unser.)

Ja, wie man zum Stein spricht, wie
du
mit meinen Händen dorthin
und ins Nichts greifst, so
ist, was hier ist:

auch dieser
Fruchtboden klafft,
dieses
Hinab
ist die eine der wild-
blühenden Kronen.

Also as in "Weggebeizt," this poem begins with attenuated dialogue threatened by the failure of language and nullification ("im Nichts einer Nacht"). The constructions "Aber-Nacht" and "Aber-Du" incorporate this negation, but the prefix *aber-* seems also to have the same multiplicative effect as in such numerical expressions as *Aberhunderte* and *Abertausende*, again conveying the quantitative heaping up perfunctory, inauthentic modes of experience and speech.

The tension inhering in a material world that is at once *Heimat* and realm of the dead is deepened through central symbol of "Radix Matrix," an organic one, namely that of the root (*radix*

in Latin), which already in the poem's title is rhymed and aligned with the mother (*matrix*). The "Ver- / schwisterte" maternal *Du* and the singularity of her violent death in the Shoah, mourned personally by the son ("Damals, da ich nicht da war, / damals, da du / den Acker abschrittst, allein"), is addressed in the context of the lethality suffered collectively by European Jewry ("jenes / Geschlecht, jenes gemordete").[84] The matrilineal and genealogical root of life has been destroyed, figuratively uprooted out of ground that has been hollowed into "Abgrund," where no new life can take hold. The realm of the dead, the material world, is thus linked with barrenness, also in the genealogical sense implied in the secondary meaning of "Geschlecht" as sex or genitalia, as well as in the botanically derived phallic image of "Rute und Hode."

Yet in the face of such lethality, which threatens all generations past and future, the "Wurzel Jesse" is invoked, alluding to Isaiah's Messianic prophecy heralding a saviour born among human beings. Like the recipient of a prayer, the root is apostrophised, "o / unser," as a collective destiny that remains yet unclaimed. "Niemandes / Wurzel" carries the same ambivalent vacancy as "Ärmer. Offen" in "Was geschah?" for it conveys both the destruction of the heirs of the root and the openness for a Messianic greatness to come. This destiny has both specific meaning for the Jewish tradition as well as the broader sense of a human hope for redemption, implied by the ecumenism of "Wurzel Abrahams"; this meaning would have been occluded if the poet had instead apostrophised Isaac or Jacob as the more narrowly Jewish archetype and not the universally acknowledged father of monotheism.

"Rute" comes from Luther's German translation of Isaiah's prophecy while *radix*, which appears in the same verse of the Latin Vulgate,[85] cannot help but bring the political meaning of

[84] See also Peter Paul Schwarz, *Totengedächtnis und dialogische Polarität*, 48ff.

[85] Compare Luther's "Vnd es wird eine Rute auffgehen von dem stam Jsai / vnd ein Zweig aus seiner wurtzel Frucht bringen" and the Latin "et egredietur virga de radice Iesse et flos de radice eius ascendet" (Isa. 11:1). The Latin

"radical" to mind. It is radical to look to the past, not in the passive acknowledgement of what has come and gone, but to nurture hopes for a transfigured future. Paraphrasing the young Marx, Bloch also seizes on this etymology at the end of *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*:

> *Die wirkliche Genesis ist nicht am Anfang, sondern am Ende*, und sie beginnt erst anzufangen, wenn Gesellschaft und Dasein radikal werden, das heißt sich an der Wurzel fassen. Der Wurzel der Geschichte aber ist der arbeitende, schaffende, die Gegebenheiten umbildende und überholende Mensch (*PH* 1628).[86]

For Bloch as well as Celan, looking to the root does not mean retreating into the past, but only ever gaining inspiration and understanding from *Unabgegoltenes* in order to look ahead to a consummately human future. The projects of adequate commemoration of the missing generations and militancy for a better future are more than inseparable, but in fact one and the same.

Descending into the "Abgrund" of death and oblivion, entering the realm of stone and somehow speaking to it, the poet discovers "Fruchtboden," which brings the same miraculous discovery of fertile Utopia as "Wabeneis" in "Weggebeizt." "Fruchtboden" echoes the "Frucht" in Luther's translation, while the "wild- / blühenden Kronen," both a secular image of Messianic kingliness and an unlikely blooming of the inorganic world, corresponds to *flos* in the Latin verse. Fertility also takes on the genealogical reference introduced earlier in the poem with "Rute und Hode," asserting that the commemoration of past generations and the (re)generation, (pro)creation of new futures is still possible. Even the abyss is not so inert and inhuman that it cannot harbour the dead as a place of repose and expectancy.[87] The material world is not dead; it is the root and matrix

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word rendered in Luther as "Rute" is "virga" (a green twig or rod), whose orthographic likeness to *virgo* (Latin for virgin) supports the standard Christian interpretation of the verse as a prefiguration of Christ's coming. See bibliographic entry for the Vulgate Bible in works cited.

[86] Compare Karl Marx, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie. Einleitung," 385: "Radikal sein ist die Sache an der Wurzel fassen. Die Wurzel für den Menschen ist aber der Mensch selbst."

[87] While the abyss in Christianity is irreconcilable with redemption, in the oldest Jewish tradition it is the undifferentiated, inevitable abode of the dead and not for that reason hidden from the light of God. "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth? Hear O Lord,

of new life, like the "bildenden materiellen Schoß" of which Bloch writes (*TE* 232), giving way to ever new forms and possibilities.

Celan's search for the missing generations, both the untimely dead who have been consigned to the past and the future community of a better world whose advent is still uncertain, continually leads him to nature, and in the first place to inorganic matter. The seemingly inert world of nature becomes for Celan the realm of those who do not appear on the surface to have any form of Being in his historical moment. Constructed out of that material whose uncanny activity reflects the continued existence of the non-living, Celan's poems offer themselves as habitable spaces where the absent may enjoy some form of presence. In the absence of religious transcendence, the only means of accessing the dead and restoring any measure of life to them lies in mediating the fact of their loss with all that can still be retrieved. This imperative of commemoration indeed amounts to a resurrection of nature, the task of keeping that which has been pushed outside of history not only in mind but also effective in the present. Bloch's understanding of matter as the substratum of real possibility lies especially close to this commemorative mission of reawakening the inorganic world and reinvesting it with (pro)creativity.

Thus in "Radix Matrix" the root of the destroyed Jewish community is discovered to still contain living possibility and becomes sustained in memory as the shared hope in a Utopia still to be crafted by human hands. As in "Les Globes" (*GW* I, 274), where the poet is able to speak of "[d]ie Tode und alles / aus ihnen Geborene" among "die Sonnen-, die Herzbahnen" of an endlessly generative cosmos, there is and is yet to be new life emerging from extinguished life. Seizing on the possibility surging throughout each microcosm, from the geological to the celestial, constitutes a step towards restoring the lost humanity of the dead, who continue to reside quietly, imperceptibly

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and have mercy upon me: Lord, be thou my helper" (Psa. 30:9-10). Celan's recollection of a Jewish origin (the root of Abraham) allows for a desacralised, humanistic intervention of commemoration and hope in this realm.

in the material world. The further Utopian step of fully realising the interpenetration of the inorganic in the organic, "der durchgeführte Naturalismus des Menschen und der durchgeführte Humanismus der Natur," epitomises the radical hope that emerges at the farthest horizon in the direction indicated by Celan's commemorative project. "Auch die anorganische Natur," writes Bloch, "nicht nur die menschliche Geschichte, hat ihre Utopie, und diese sogenannte Natur ist kein Leichnam, sondern ein Strahlungs- und Figurenraum, dessen Substanz sich erst bildet" (*TE* 236).

Conclusion

The insufficiency of the given and the indeterminacy of what is to come, which have been treated throughout the pages of this thesis, are both categories defined in negative terms, though only provisionally in the case of the *Noch-Nicht*. The blank plenitude of anticipated fulfillment and sheer privation in the unfinished world are central to the projects undertaken by Ernst Bloch and Paul Celan, and strong correspondences hold between their individual approaches to these categories. Negativity surfaces for Bloch in his basic concepts: in the vacant *Novum*; the timeless and nearly spaceless *Front*; the darkness of the lived moment; unknowable and indominable possibility; the unfinished past; curious imaginings in the face of death; and the incompleteness of material creation. For Celan, negativity inheres in creaturely speech and memory, filling his expression with often fertile, habitable vacancies and underdetermining his crafting of landscapes and addresses to a *Du*, itself a placeholder surrounded by indeterminacy. The most convincing evidence of a meridian between Celan and Bloch, as well as one of their most significant respective merits, is that they each take the still insufficient "Hier und Jetzt" (*GW* III, 198; *PH* 11) as their point of departure, in all its traumatic disillusionment, and anticipate an unfashioned Utopia that can arise only out of and against such insufficiency.[88]

The world remains open to the "Durchbruch eines historisch Neuen" (*PH* 359), to unprecedented successes of liberatory tendencies in the foreseeable future. We are pursued by a

[88] See Georg-Michael Schulz, *Negativität in der Dichtung Paul Celans*, 275: "Utopie ist ja inhaltlich nur faßbar im Bild, das Bild ist immer Gegenbild gegen das Faktische und Gegebene, es bleibt diesem verpflichtet; im Utopischen ist der Hinweis auf die Unversöhntheit, Ungelöstheit des Hier und Heute enthalten, und dafür setzen, wie hervorgehoben wurde, Celans Gedichte jeweils ein deutliches Zeichen… Dem Ausgriff auf utopische Bilder liegt indessen… eine »Gegenperspektive« zugrunde, eine Denk- und Anschauungsform, die das Gegebene und Faktische im Lichte des Möglichen zu sehen, das Gegenständliche auf das ihm selbst jeweils zugehörige Nicht-Gegenständliche hin zu denken versucht."

history of failure and inadequacy in human action, but in all its half-victories are to be discerned the latent traces of a fuller, more lasting victory to come, the Messianic fulfillment of an existence worthy of human dignity. The book is not closed on business left unfinished in the past, nor even on death, for the future is so clear and wide as to redeem even that which most completely appears done and gone. The living have a stake in the dead, and it is the duty of commemoration to acknowledge the stake the dead have in the future. A shared stake in the unknowable, whether past or future, becomes the negatively constructed, positively awaited ground for an encounter that can momentarily overcome the finality and stasis of death. Hope is after all the *überschreitende* disposition towards the *Noch-Nicht* which makes the future productively thinkable in the first place.

All hope arises out of such negativity, and even the most starry-eyed daydream begins with an emphatic "Nein zum Mangel" (*PH* 3), however trivial. Hope of this sort is not always outwardly Utopian, though the possibility of universal fulfillment exists in its latency even in fantasy, as short-sighted and limited as it may be. Existence as a whole and the human condition in particular remain unfinished in a state of prehistory, awaiting the "Erschaffung der Welt, als einer rechten" (*PH* 1628), but this negative existential fact still only sporadically excites consciousness to concrete and actionable dreams of radical transformation. Paul Celan, on the other hand, is explicitly Utopian, readily welcoming such transformation, calling for redemption, expanding the definition of life beyond the organic, and anticipating the reestablishment or resurrection of a consummately human community. And yet the hope expressed in his poetry responds not only to existential lack, which is the common lot of the whole unfinished world, but even to the superlative nothingness of an order of disaster that came close to ending the world-process and leaving it unfinished forever.

A chasm that cannot be expressed in merely quantitative terms separates the commonplace existential negativity that spurs nature and humanity alike into the future, welcoming the

transformations and novel acts of creation called forth in Celan's poetry, from true nothingness, *das Nichts*. Bloch distinguishes the former as *das Nicht*:

> Weil das Nicht Anfang zu jeder Bewegung nach etwas ist, so ist es eben darum keineswegs ein Nichts. Vielmehr: Nicht und Nichts müssen zunächst so weit voneinander gehalten werden wie möglich; das ganze Abenteuer der Bestimmung liegt zwischen ihnen. Das Nicht liegt im Ursprung als das noch Leere, Unbestimmte, Unentschiedene, als Start zum Anfang; das Nichts dagegen ist ein Bestimmtes. Es setzt Bemühungen voraus, lang ausgebrochenen Prozeß, der schließlich vereitelt wird; und der Akt des Nichts ist nicht wie der des Nicht ein Treiben, sondern eine Vernichtung (*PH* 356f).

The incomplete past, the fleeting present, and the open future all belong to the existential order of negativity, while the absolute order represented by the *Nichts* is diametrically opposed to all lack which, however pressing, already carries the germs of its own fulfillment and therefore takes part in a possible rapprochement of Utopia:

> [D]as Nicht äußert sich ebenso als die Unzufriedenheit mit dem ihm Gewordenen, daher ist es, wie das Treibende unterhalb alles Werdens, so das Weitertreibende in der Geschichte… So eben macht sich das Nicht im Prozeß als aktiv-utopisches Noch-Nicht kenntlich, als utopisch-dialektisch weitertreibende Negation (*PH* 360).

The *Nicht*, as the open beginning to all process and progress, is only the near side of the *Noch-Nicht*. Not the *Nicht*, but the *Nichts* is the apocalyptic antipole of Utopian fruition, which Bloch in this context figures as the *Alles*. The unfinished and thoroughly imperfect world is strewn with tendencies towards emancipated futures that remain effective even when hidden beneath the surface. The world exists, as Bloch writes, "als solche im Laboratorium ihrer Noch-Nicht-Lösung" (*TE* 226), and the condition of incompleteness is the natural, perhaps inevitable spur behind all hope and hopeful intention towards change.

Fundamentally, Celan does not speak from such a condition, for the nothingness at the core of his experience is fallow. Catastrophe tends towards nothing and is latent with nothing, except perhaps greater and final annihilation, the all-encompassing *Nichts*:

> Von der *dezidierten Mächtigkeit*, dezidierten Vor-Erscheinung eines solchen Nichts gibt es keine Dialektik, das heißt, keine fortschreitende Negation der Negation: Vernichtungen wie der Peloponnesische Krieg, der Dreißigjährige Krieg sind bloß Unglück, nicht dialektische Wendungen; die Mortifikationen Neros, Hitlers, alle diese satanisch wirkenden Ausbrüche gehören zum Drachen des letzten Abgrunds, nicht zu den Beförderungen der Geschichte (*PH* 361f).

The Shoah and other such "satanisch wirkende Ausbrüche" teach no lesson, advance no progress, and promise no redemption. They only foreclose possibility and prefigure the final exasperation of all hope. There is no reason to expect anything other than cynicism, madness, and desperation to emerge out of such utter hopelessness, so say nothing of Utopia. And yet Celan begins in the "Hier und Jetzt," darkened not only by existential insufficiency but also the total nothingness of disaster, still somehow situated on a plane of secularised Messianic expectancy.

The hope he draws from the *unabgegoltene* and future-laden past, from the rejection of lethality, and from inorganic materiality, as elaborated in the three chapters of this thesis, is not of a particular and circumscribed kind. This hope calls not on gradual amelioration, for there is no conceivable path leading back towards normalcy from the "Drachen des letzten Abgrunds," but explicitly anticipates total redemption, even in the face of total destruction. As this thesis has endeavoured to show, any interpretation of Celan's poetry that diminishes the intractability of this tension between the two totalities, be it by reading him as a writer of absolute poetry detached from the world or as a pessimistic fatalist trying to articulate an unspeakable anguish, fails to grasp the radically anticipatory and liberatory drive in the poet's expression. Such borderline solipsistic readings neglect the interpersonal extension of Celan's commemorative project as Utopian practice, which Bloch's philosophical concepts are especially fit to explain. This commemoration is indeed the expression of an individual, but only insofar as it is directed outwards and forwards, addressed to someone who is not there and towards a destination that does not yet exist. For such notions of "not there" and "not yet" to meaningfully and actively anticipate the best of all futures, the *Nichts* of

the poet's depleted reality must not only be made into a generative, potent *Nicht*, but imbued with all the redemptive promise of its opposite, the Utopian *Alles*.

To conclude, one last poem will be examined at the shifting border between the despair of all-encompassing nothingness and most daring Utopian expectancy along which Celan's lyric operates. "Mandorla" (*GW* I, 244) directly confronts the nothingness that has consumed the world and delves into it in search of the lost nobility of humanity:

In der Mandel – was steht in der Mandel?
Das Nichts.
Es steht das Nichts in der Mandel.
Da steht es und steht.

Im Nichts – wer steht da? Der König.
Da steht der König, der König.
Da steht er und steht.

Judenlocke, wirst nicht grau.

Und dein Aug – wohin steht dein Aug?
Dein Aug steht der Mandel entgegen.
Dein Aug, dem Nichts stehts entgegen.
Es steht zum König.
So steht es und steht.

Menschenlocke, wirst nicht grau.
Leere Mandel, königsblau.

The poem is economical, circulating by way of anaphora and epistrophe through a reduced but symbolically charged vocabulary within the confines of a nutshell. The narrow microcosm of the almond, however, expands into a universal void with the apparition of the nothingness within, the same world-historical "Nichts" invoked in "Gehässige Monde" (*GW* III, 70). The empty almond is at once laden with the desolate, limitless emptiness of disaster. Our destroyed world has been shrunken, shrivelled, and hollowed out into an empty nutshell even as it has been filled beyond capacity with that which cannot be spoken, remembered, or forgiven.

The almond, associated for Celan with the memory of his mother, the eyes of the Jewish victims of the Shoah, and the poet's watchfulness,[89] also appears in the literal translation of the poem's title. *Mandorla* is an Italian cognate of "Mandel" and in Christian iconography refers to the oval aureole encircling the figure of a holy person, the fully-body equivalent of a halo that encircles the head. The interior of the almond in this poem is thus a sacral space, one that is traditionally reserved for the Virgin Mary or Christ in Majesty, here left painfully vacant. The sacral absence of divinity, recalling the unbelievable God of "Es war Erde in ihnen" (*GW* I, 211) and the blessed "Niemand" of "Psalm" (*GW* I, 225),[90] is compounded by the almond's ambiguity as reduced, insignificant speck on the one hand, and all-encompassing universe of nothingness on the other. The almond is at once devoid of any positive presence ("Leere Mandel") and occupied by a universe of self-sustaining nothingness ("Es steht das Nichts in der Mandel. / Da steht es und steht."). This enclosure of macrocosm within microcosm is a striking image of the post-Shoatic world: human life and all of nature have been reduced, atomised, and petrified into a spaceless point, which is both empty and overfilled with nothingness. The vertigo of "Mandorla" comes from its simultaneous collapse of existence into inert diminution and explosion of nothingness out of every particle.

"Mandorla" begins by positing a hermetically closed system that is and contains only undifferentiated lack. Yet the untenability of this eternal sameness is hinted at already in the poem's title, whose religious meaning entertains nothingness as the possible site of creation *ex nihilo*. The concept of a bounded nothingness, which is the reality of the post-Shoatic world and its inhabitants who carry the experience of annihilation within themselves, is itself paradoxical. The lack that

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[89] John Felstiner sees the mother addressed in "Zähle die Mandeln" (*GW* I, 78), as well as the "mandeläugiger Schatten" of "Vor einer Kerze" (*GW* I, 110) and the "Mandelauge des Toten" of "Andenken" (*GW* I, 121). See John Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 63f. Also consider the poems "Schaufäden, Sinnfäden" (*GW* II, 88) and "Mandelnde" (*GW* III, 95).

[90] Compare John Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 180f and Marlies Janz, *Vom Engagement absoluter Poesie*, 131ff.

inheres within each delimited microcosm threatens the whole universe with the macrocosmic subsumption of unbounded nothingness (Bloch's "Drachen des letzten Abgrunds"), but it at the same time prefigures the slight, though still weak possibility that the microcosmic emptiness be somehow fulfilled. In other words, it is only in being filled with nothingness that Celan's almond is first constituted as a fillable space, albeit a superlatively insufficient one, yet precisely for that reason forward-facing. The question "Im Nichts – wer steht da?" dares to seek not only something from nothing, already a logical contradiction in the strictest sense, but *someone*. The poem undermines every assumption of despair and confronts the empty space itself with hopeful expectancy.

That the poem's opening question "In der Mandel – was steht in der Mandel?" is very nearly repeated in "Im Nichts – wer steht da?" attests to the internal logic of hopeful outward-seeking within the seemingly closed system. The almond, which is not a true nut but technically a seed, becomes "ein gärend Nicht" (*PH* 356) that cannot assimilate into "das Nichts"; despite its emptiness, the almond is a fertile, habitable space that had first to be cleared out through emptiness:

> Das Nicht ist freilich Leere, aber zugleich der Trieb, aus ihr herauszubrechen; im Hunger, in der Entbehrung vermittelt sich die Leere gerade als horror vacui, gerade also als *Abscheu des Nicht vor dem Nichts*… Dieser horror vacui ist… der intensive Verwirklichungsfaktor, der die Welt in Gang bringt und in Gang hält (*PH* 357f).

Even emptiness, as want of potential fullness, and even negativity, as negation of self-sustaining lack, are processual and redemptive. The principle of destruction becomes graspable as that in the face of which (no less than in the face of the anticipated *Alles* of absolute fulfillment) the rapprochement of Utopia can take place. When harnessed within the narrow, sacrally charged microcosm of the almond, the nothingness whose finality is to be avoided at all costs is no longer an enduring state but itself comes to participate in the process through which nothing up until now has ever been final. As an eschatological eventuality, nothingness is the consummately closed, uninhabitable, and anti-Utopian space, the last disappointment of hope. Yet disappointment,

destruction, and interruption, in their particular or delimited appearances, are incapable of leaving vacuums that nature does not fill, necessarily becoming dialectical steps in a process towards something rather than nothing, eventually even Utopia. Perhaps the superlatively empty space opened through the threat of anti-Utopia is alone wide enough for the realisation of *Heimat*, a prospect so high and wild that nothing short of the endless void could contain it.

The latent promise of the *Alles* emerging from the *Nichts* takes the form of a redeemer, at once Christ-like and reminiscent of the kingly figure of the Messiah in Judaism. The missing saviour of religious iconography, supplanted by nothingness within the mandorla, reappears in the second stanza as "der König" within the space made available through his own non-transcendence. He is thus temporal and human, subtly transforming "Da steht es und steht" in the first stanza from a statement of mere, passive subsistence into "Da steht er und steht," declaring the promise of mankind standing upright and enduring in restored dignity.[91] This Messianic figure notably does not eliminate or lessen the nothingness that surrounds him, nor does he exit the space apportioned to him. The nothingness remains, but suddenly under the sign of a Messianic expectancy that has mobilised it in the dialectical rapprochement of the *Alles*. As Bloch writes, Utopia

> erfaßt nun gänzlich das Noch-Nicht wie die Dialektisierung des Nichts in der Welt; sie unterschlägt im Real-Möglichen *aber ebensowenig die offene Alternative zwischen absolutem Nichts und absolutem Alles*. Utopie ist in ihrer konkreten Gestalt der geprüfte Wille zum Sein des Alles; in ihr also wirkt nun das Seinspathos, das… wirkt als eines des Noch-Nicht-Seins und der Hoffnung aufs Summum bonum darin (*PH* 363f).

The narrowly enclosed interior of the almond is at once suspended in still undecided uncertainty and bursting with "*die offene Alternative zwischen absolutem Nichts und absolutem Alles*." The decision

[91] As Bloch writes: "Es ist nicht zu erwarten, daß Menschen jemals arm an Ich auftreten. Keiner hört auf, ein Einzelner in diesem seinem Rahmen zu sein, sei das auch noch so schwach oder nebenbei. Der Wunsch, auf eigenen Füßen zu stehen, ist mit dem nach aufrechtem Gang nahe verwandt. Es gibt in jedem Menschen einen wie immer durchkreuzten Willen, der unabhängig zu sein wünscht und nicht untertan. Dieser Wille lebt in einem eigenen Zimmer oder sehnt sich nach ihm, desto mehr, je weniger es da ist" (*PH* 1134). Also compare Celan's poem "Für Eric" (*GW* II, 376).

between Utopia and the conclusive defeat thereof is being decided as it never was before, namely within a single, fleeting moment of historical time, in the "Hier und Jetzt." Time has at once stopped and resumed in a different register; it has been captured in an almond-sized moment, "ein gärend Nicht," but this smallest microcosm is ripe with the possibility of unprecedented fulfillment.[92]

The nadir of history has removed the most immediate present from its moment-to-moment flow and brought it into the vicinity of destruction. In the face of absolute nothingness, the lived moment, which for Bloch is itself devoid of content and "fast überhaupt noch nicht da" (*PH* 2), is removed from its ordinary state of existential negativity and brought near completion, whether this be annihilation in the *Nichts* or fulfillment in the *Alles*. As Bloch writes, "auch das Nicht ist eine utopische Kategorie, wenn auch eine extrem gegen-utopische… beide: Nichts wie Alles – sind als utopische Charaktere, als drohende oder erfüllende Resultatsbestimmungen in der Welt noch keineswegs entschieden" (*PH* 11). The alternative between the *Nichts* and the *Alles* is a monstrous one, but salvation is never so near as when catastrophe impends.[93] Utopia encompasses this duality.

The hope that percolates in the Messianically charged moment that is finally becoming present to itself finds expression in the ambivalence of "Judenlocke, wirst nicht grau."[94] The verse at once recalls the poet's murdered mother, whose "Haar ward nimmer weiß," as he elegises in

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[92] The almond takes on the same charged expectancy that Benjamin attributes to each moment in history for the Jewish community living in anxious anticipation of redemption: "Denn in ihr [der Zeit] war jede Sekunde die kleine Pforte, durch die der Messias treten konnte." Walter Benjamin, "Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen," 279.
The possible reading of the almond as the lived moment filled with momentously ambivalent Messianic time

[93] Compare Bloch on the hope for religious salvation in the face of death: "Diese Erhellungsträume haben sich mit einem Schicksal, in seiner finstersten Gestalt, nicht abgefunden; das macht ihre Ehre aus, das fundiert diese Ehre. Und sie haben, mit überwältigender Paradoxie des Nicht-Entsagens, gerade an die äußerste Vernichtung, neben schrecklichem Fortleben, das Glücksbild eines Erwachens, einer himmlischen Identität angeschlossen; so im Islam, so im Christentum" (*PH* 1304).

[94] Regarding "die Judenlocke, die getragen wird als Zeichen der orthodoxen Hoffnung auf einen messianischen König," see Marlies Janz, *Vom Engagement absoluter Poesie*, 132.

"Espenbaum" (*GW* I, 19), and the innumerable other Jewish victims of the Shoah. This memory from the depths of the *Nichts* resurfaces and coexists with a new and opposite metaphor of hair that never loses its colour, now infused with the Utopian image of everlasting youth and irreducible hopefulness. That this lock of hair is addressed in the intimate second person (without yet invoking the pronoun "du") makes the connection with the mother unavoidable, while also anticipating "dein Aug" in the next stanza, which breathes new life into the landscape constructed thus far.

The eye, which is for Celan already associated with the almond, is both a part of this picture and beyond it. The exceptional moment charged with the *Alles* or/in the *Nichts* becomes the object of an addressed subject's gaze. In the face of this open alternative, the zero-dimensional point in time and space within the almond expands into something graspable and perhaps eventually habitable, for now a suspended moment that is not yet slipping away into the irretrievable past but is held open with the dual possibilities of annihilation and salvation. While the present moment within the process of historical time is no object at all, "fast überhaupt noch nicht da," the threat or promise of an annihilatory or salvific eschaton at the end of time has seized the moment and made it a site of observation, albeit an as yet empty one. Only in this halted moment, shocked out of ordinary time, is experience of such possible end states accessible:

> Und nun: die offene Adäquatheit macht sich nicht in Erfahrungen des *weiterlaufenden Weltprozesses* kenntlich, mit experimentierter Mündung, sondern in kurzer, seltsamer Erfahrung eines *antizipierten Stillehaltens*. Erfahren wurden in diesem Stillehalten allemal knappste Symbolintentionen eines Überhaupt, subjektiv zunächst, ja lyristisch scheinend und doch erzphilosophisch in der Sache selbst fundiert, nämlich in einem Aufblitzen von utopischem Endzustand. Solche Erfahrungen eines utopischen Endzustandes fixieren ihn gewiß nicht, sonst wären sie keine Erfahrungen bloßer *Symbolintention* und keine utopischen, gar zentralutopischen. Aber sie betreffen in der Tat den *Kern der Latenz*, und zwar als letzte Frage, in sich selbst widerhallend. Diese Frage ist auf keine bereits vorhandene Antwort hin konstruierbar, auf kein irgendwo in der vorhandenen Welt bereits geschlichtetes Material beziehbar (*PH* 336f).

The finally perceivable emptiness of the lived moment in the "kurzer, seltsamer Erfahrung eines *antizipierten Stillehaltens*" opens onto the "Aufblitzen von utopischem Endzustand" and the latter's

superlative openness. As the onset of time transposed into a Messianic register, such experience can is only possible within the process of history, ultimately only within a single moment and as its interruption. Accordingly, the eye in "Mandorla" observes this event both as a directed process ("wohin steht dein Aug?") and an enduring, suspended state ("So steht es und steht").

The eye stands in relation to the "Mandel," the "Nichts," and the "König," specifically standing in opposition to the first two in rejection of deprivation, insufficiency, and closure, while standing upright in loyal commitment to the Messianic redeemer of human nobility and liberation who himself stands in waiting nowhere if not within the nothingness of deprivation. The Messianic spark within the almond reveals nothing of the still undetermined "utopischem Endzustand," for this would diminish it; this "Endzustand" is graspable only as the "knappste Symbolintention[] eines Überhaupt," an affirmation of the merest possibility. "So steht es und steht" becomes a statement of enduring commitment, both to the hope for Utopian fulfillment and the still uninhabitable present moment which, even through its own negativity, bares the latency of redemption. The transformation of "Judenlocke" into "Menschenlocke" meanwhile affirms the universality of this redemption, recalling the ecumenism of the apostrophe to "Abrahams Wurzel" in "Radix Matrix" (*GW* I, 239). This transformation particularly affirms the reclamation of human dignity among the Jewish victims and survivors of the dehumanising lethality of the Shoah.

It is precisely through its proximity to the static, final state of nothingness that the "Hier und Jetzt" comes to a halt, if a foreboding one, for this too prefigures the blissful and habitable stillness of Utopia. After all, the Utopian will is not the continual condition of striving after a state of perfection that can be asymptotically approached but never achieved, but rather the hopeful commitment to bringing such a state into actual existence, which may even be achievable at this very moment. Utopia is not only the fulfillment of the *Novum* stored undiminished in the future, nor the

completion of partial perfection abandoned to the past; it is the finally present "Hier und Jetzt," the enduring moment that can comfortably exist in and for itself:

> Der letzte Wille ist der, wahrhaft gegenwärtig zu sein. So daß der gelebte Augenblick uns und wir ihm gehören und »Verweile doch« zu ihm gesagt werden könnte. Der Mensch will endlich als er selber in das Jetzt und Hier, will ohne Aufschub und Ferne in sein volles Leben. Der echte utopische Wille ist durchaus kein unendliches Streben, vielmehr: er will das bloß Unmittelbare und derart so Unbesessene des Sich-Befindens und Da-Seins als endlich vermittelt, erhellt und erfüllt, als glücklick-adäquat erfüllt (*PH* 15).

The momentary microcosm, still devoid of any positive content, encloses the macrocosmic "Endzustand," which is yet equally undetermined, by becoming a sudden and unexpected refuge from the ordinary, still unredeemed flow of time and capaciously, comfortably harbouring the possibility of something entirely new and good. The reminder that nothing lasts forever, which is the dialectical force of the nothingness that permeates each almond-sized speck in the world-process, is itself Utopian, insofar as it admits that the lasting moment, whatever it may bring, is still only somewhere over the horizon. An instant may suddenly and momentously collapse the great distance of the Messianic kingdom into the most immediate nearness, into the smallest aftertaste of *Nicht-Mehr* or pre-appearance of *Noch-Nicht*.

The real and secular process of world history, down to the minutest instant, teems with the possibility of total redemption. Such possibility is to find its final fulfillment nowhere if not in one of these fleeting moments, on the condition that it be seen for what it is, in all its suppressed and dormant latency. The Utopian potential in every second and every atom, or for that matter in every almond, stone, or memory, has only to be awakened and opened into "die kleine Pforte, durch die der Messias treten [kann]" (Benjamin, "Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen" 279). It is towards ever greater openness and freedom that "Mandorla" resolves into "königsblau," the radiant blue of royal garments and the clear, bright sky, swelling over the close of the poem as the welcoming horizon of pure expectancy and the Messianic kingdom of Heaven, where even the most ethereal hope is well-

placed.[95] Blue is a kingly colour in the Bible, made salient by the poem's religious references, appearing almost exclusively in the sections of the Torah dealing with the sacred regalia God commands Moses and Aaron to commission. The holy ark, tabernacle, altar, and sanctuary are adorned with blue purpure, as are the ceremonial habiliments of the high priest, whose office was tied to Israel's collective redemption. The nearest, slightest moments present themselves as sanctuaries of redemptive promise in the depleted and otherwise uninhabitable reality where, in the absence of any eternal, macrocosmic principle, the *Noch-Nicht* is still operative:

> Es zeigt sich ein Ort des in sich selbst einschlagenden Existierens, ein Ort der nüchternen, gleichsam alltäglichen Mystik, das heißt jener, die kein »höchstes Objekt« braucht, um ins Ende zu sehen, sondern im Gegenteil ein nächstes, ein besonders nahes. Das Nächste eben ist sich der Kern des Existierens selbst, als Keim des Noch-Nicht-Gelungenen; dieser füllt den menschlichen Augenblick, den unbekannten, sich zuweilen nur annähernden Augenblick des Menschen (*PH* 1388).

Even the nothingness of the end can become immediate and familiar in the "menschlichen Augenblick," where the "Keim of Noch-Nicht-Gelungenen" can be transposed into the plane of secularised Messianic expectancy. The negativity that reigns in the world is, for Bloch as well as Celan, of the kind that precedes new creation. "Der Mensch lebt noch überall in der Vorgeschichte, ja alles und jedes steht noch vor Erschaffung der Welt, als einer rechten. *Die wirkliche Genesis ist nicht am Anfang, sondern am Ende*" (*PH* 1628). There indeed exists a right, human world, even if it is still almost everywhere only a world to come, as yet detectable only *in nuce*. The hope for a radically improved world in the writings of Celan and Bloch does not retreat in the face of deprivation, when it is most urgently needed, but finds here its truest and most constant vindication.

[95] Compare "Blaulicht jetzt, Blaulicht" in "Gehässige Monde" (Celan, *GW* III, 70). For Bloch on the anticipatory valence of the colour blue, see also *PH* 21; *PH* 96; *PH* 98; *PH* 754; *TE* 98.

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Appendix

The following table presents the results of a search in the web catalogue of the German Literary Archive (DLA) in Marbach yielded by the search terms "Person = Bloch, Ernst; Signatur = BPC*".[96] These results correspond to a list of items authored by Ernst Bloch found in Paul Celan's personal library (Bibliothek Paul Celan, "BPC"), including those stored in Marbach as well as any known items not in possession of the DLA.[97] Additional information specifies that items 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 contain underlines, written place names, dates, and other marginalia in Celan's handwriting.

	Art	Titel / Verfasserangabe	Jahr
1	Band	Thomas Münzer, théologien de la révolution / Ernst Bloch. Trad. de l'allemand par Maurice de Gandillac. - Julliard	1964
2	Band	Traces / Ernst Bloch. Trad. de l'allemand par Pierre Quillet .... - Gallimard	1968
3	Band	Auswahl aus seinen Schriften / von Ernst Bloch. Zsgest. und eingel. von Hans Heinz Holz. - Lizenzausg.. - Fischer-Bücherei	1967
4	Mikrofiche	Geist der Utopie / Ernst Bloch. - Cassirer	1923
5	Band	Spuren / Ernst Bloch. - Neue, erw. Ausg., [2. Aufl.], 1. - 4. Tsd.. - Suhrkamp	1959
6	Buch	Geist der Utopie / Ernst Bloch. - Paul Cassirer	1923
7	Buch	Erbschaft dieser Zeit / Ernst Bloch. - Verlag Oprecht & Helbling	1935
8	Band	Christian Thomasius, ein deutscher Gelehrter ohne Misere / Ernst Bloch. - 1. - 8. Tsd.. - Suhrkamp	1967
9	Band	Avicenna und die aristotelische Linke / Ernst Bloch. - 1. - 15. Tsd.. - Suhrkamp	1963

[96] Catalogue search is available at https://www.dla-marbach.de/katalog/bibliothek/

[97] Information and search instructions described at https://www.dla-marbach.de/fileadmin/redaktion/Bibliothek/Spezialsammlungen/Celan_Katalogsuche_2015-09.pdf