

**LYRIC PETROLOGIES:
LANGUAGES OF STONE IN RILKE, TRAKL, MANDELSTAM, CELAN, AND SACHS**

by

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“The names of minerals and the minerals themselves do not differ from each other, because at the bottom of both the material and the print is the beginning of an abysmal number of fissures. Words and rocks contain a language that follows a syntax of splits and ruptures. Look at any *word* long enough and you will see it open up into a series of faults, into a terrain of particles each containing its own void. This discomforting language of fragmentation offers no easy gestalt solution; the certainties of didactic discourse are hurled into the erosion of the poetic principle. Poetry being forever lost must submit to its own vacuity; it is somehow a product of exhaustion rather than creation. Poetry is always a dying language but never a dead language.”

– Robert Smithson, “A Sedimentation of the Mind” (1968)

“Oh, I’d love that / I’d be a mineral deposit, a ball of mica inside a rock / then there’d be no whistles, no radios, no screens”

– Mission of Burma, “Mica” (*Vs.*, 1982)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

I have used the following editions throughout, identified by abbreviation and volume (where applicable) and page number, unless otherwise noted.

CC

Mandelstam, Osip. *Собрание сочинений в четырех томах*. Moscow: Art-Biznes-Tsentr, 1994. Print.

CPL

Mandelstam, Osip. *The Collected Critical Prose and Letters*. Trans. Jane Gary Harris and Constance Link. Ed. Jane Gary Harris. London: Collins Harvill, 1991. Print.

DB

Trakl, Georg. *Dichtungen und Briefe*. Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1969. Print.

GS

Benjamin, Walter. *Gesammelte Schriften*. Ed. Rolf Tiedermann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977. Print.

GW

Celan, Paul. *Gesammelte Werke in fünf Bänden*. Ed. Beda Allemann and Stefan Reichert. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983. Print.

LE

Ruskin, John. *The Works of John Ruskin*. [Library Edition]. Ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn. London: George Allen, 1904. Print.

NSW

Sachs, Nelly. *Werke. Kommentierte Ausgabe in vier Bänden*. Ed. Aris Fioretos. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010-2011. Print.

WDB

Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Werke in drei Bänden*. Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1966. Print.

Citations from Nietzsche's works are drawn from the full-text, searchable *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Werke und Briefe* (eKGWB), identified by volume title and section number or title:

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Werke und Briefe* (eKGWB). Ed. Paolo D'Iorio. (Based on the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* of Nietzsche's works, ed. Giorgio Colli andazzino Montinari. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967-. Print.) Nietzsche Source. Web.

For personal and place names, titles, etc. from Russian, I utilize the Library of Congress system of transliteration (without diacritics), except in cases of commonly known persons and places where deviation from this system is the norm.

I have used various poetic translations; all unattributed translations are my own.

ABSTRACT

Lyric Petrologies: Languages of Stone in Rilke, Trakl, Mandelstam, Celan, and Sachs

examines the poetics of stone in twentieth-century German and Russian lyric. I illuminate a diverse line of development whereby stone—traditionally a signal of silence, immutability, insignificance, even a crushing heaviness—emerges as the conceptual and figurative ground of reconfigured lyric languages and subjectivities. My close, comparative readings demonstrate that for authors like Celan, Mandelstam, and Sachs, who could hardly have lived through darker times, stone offers alternative but affirmative models for lyric subjectivity.

My project defines a set of rhetorical devices that characterize the varying lyrics of stone. Lyrics by Rilke, Trakl, and Mandelstam from the first decades of the century demonstrate what I call invocations of stone, by addressing crafted works (i.e., architecture and sculpture) as signs of human history and affect. Later texts from Celan's collections of the 1950s and 1960s gravitate toward "found" stone, and import geological discourse into lyric—a project foreshadowed in the later texts of Mandelstam, a poet whom Celan translated and declared a formative influence. Their texts think *in terms of* stone, aligning lyric with notions of stone's alternative, natural history. Celan's texts, along with those of his contemporary Sachs, also seek to write *as* stone, by emulating stone's varying legibilities—as a scientific or mystical record of the readable earth, or as a *tabula rasa* for more idiosyncratic, phenomenological readings. In the light of debates about the

legitimacy and efficacy of post-Holocaust lyric, Celan's and Sachs' texts demonstrate stone's potentiality to model reconceptualized lyric languages and subjectivities.

My readings are buttressed by considerations of the “language of things” in texts by Benjamin and others, as well as ideas about lyric subjectivity drawn from Nietzsche, Susman, Adorno, and Anglo-American literary theory. Challenging the suppositions that lyric represents an individual subjectivity, expression, and voice, *Lyric Petrologies* introduces the poetics of nonhuman, recalcitrant, and mute stone within the context of contemporary revisions of the idea of lyric. My readings in *Lyric Petrologies* also add to contemporary critical conversations on object theories and new materialisms, by acknowledging and investigating varying ways in which poetic language mediates matter.

CHAPTER ONE

INTO THE QUARRY (AN INTRODUCTION)

“For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field...” (Job 5:23)

“Sein Bund wird sein mit den Steinen auf dem Felde...” (Hiob 5:23)

“Ты будешь в союзе с камнями на поле...” (Иов 5:23)

LYRIC PETROLOGIES

*

Near the end of Martin Buber’s book-length series of dialogues *Daniel* (1913),

Daniel recounts a curious anecdote to his interlocutor Lukas:

I walked on the road one dim morning, saw a piece of mica lying there, picked it up, and looked at it for a long time. The day was no longer dim: so much light was caught by the stone. And suddenly, as I looked away, I realized that while looking at it I had known nothing of “object” and “subject”; as I looked, the piece of mica and “I” had been one; as I looked, I had tasted unity. I looked at it again, but unity did not return. Then something flamed up inside me as if I were about to create. I closed my eyes, I concentrated my strength, I entered into an association with my object. I raised the piece of mica into the realm of that which has being. (*I and Thou*, 146)¹

There is something unexpected in the idea that an insignificant chip of mica (*Glimmerstein*) could be the occasion for anyone’s profound revelation. If the human is vibrant, then stone is inert. Stone is the very antithesis of action: that which does not move, which does

¹ “Ich ging an einem trüben Morgen auf der Landstraße, sah ein Stück Glimmer liegen, hob es auf und sah es lange an; der Tag war nicht mehr trüb, so viel Licht fing sich im Stein. Und plötzlich, als ich die Augen weghob, merkte ich es: ich hatte im Anschauen nichts gewußt von ‘Objekt’ und ‘Subjekt’; in meiner Anschauung waren der Glimmer und ‘ich’ eins gewesen; ich hatte in meiner Anschauung die Einheit gekostet. Ich sah ihn wieder an, die Einheit kehrte nicht zurück. Aber da brannte es in mir auf wie zum Schaffen; ich schloß die Augen, ich raffte mein Kraft ein, ich verband mich mit meinem Gegenstand, ich hob den Glimmer in das Reich des Seienden” (*Daniel*, 146).

not speak, which does not think. Stone is the “paradigm of thingishness” (Langen, 66). In Martin Heidegger’s ontology, for instance, stone is the go-to for illustrating notions of *the* thing, and is what he deems “worldless” (*weltlos*), arguing that in the bareness of its lifeless existence, the world is inaccessible to it.² Yet for Buber’s Daniel, stone is raised “into the realm of that which has being.” A found stone might indeed catch one’s eye while out for a walk, but what about it would reward protracted attention, let alone spur one to reconsider the distinction between subject and object? Perhaps our language lacks the means to describe what happened to Daniel; stone does not *call* to him, for it cannot speak, yet it arrests attention and communicates with a mute language all its own.

*

No less strange a story of stone is told in Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s lyrical prose piece “A Letter” (“Ein Brief,” 1902). The text is an eloquent missive from the fictionalized Lord Chandos to Sir Francis Bacon, nevertheless professing the former’s crippling doubts about language, his inability to find faith in the expressive powers of language.³ He declares that the only option for writing or thinking

Is not Latin or English, or Italian, or Spanish, but a language of which I know not one word, a language in which mute things speak to me and in which I will perhaps have something to say for myself someday when I am dead and standing before an unknown judge (*LC* 127-28).⁴

² In the text of his 1929-1930 lecture course *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (*Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt – Endlichkeit – Einsamkeit*), Heidegger initiates three theses as a basis for investigating the question “What is the world?”: “The stone is worldless [*weltlos*], the animal is poor in the world [*weltarm*], man is world-forming [*weltbildend*]” (176). Heidegger reiterates this point in his later essay “The Origin of the Work of Art” (“Ursprung des Kunstwerkes”). Sallis’ *Stone* (1994) takes Heidegger’s work as a starting point for thinking about various forms of stone (architecture, fences, fossils, gravestones, etc.) from a range of historical periods, and critiques the assertion that stone is worldless (109-112).

³ Critics have stressed the biographical backdrop of the text; Hofmannsthal had gained early popularity for his lyric poetry in the 1890s, yet after the period in which he wrote “A Letter,” he turned away from poetry to concentrate on writing successful libretti (including several for operas by Richard Strauss) and other dramatic pieces. See: Janik and Toulmin (114-117).

⁴ “[D]ie Sprache, in welcher nicht nur zu schreiben, sondern auch zu denken mir vielleicht gegeben wäre, weder die lateinische noch die englische noch die italienische und spanische ist, sondern eine Sprache, von deren Worten mir auch nicht eines bekannt ist, eine Sprache, in welcher die stummen Dinge zu mir

Somehow, for Chandos, it is the mute material world that offers an alternative mode of communication, a means of egress from the prison-house of language as such. As with Daniel and his chip of mica, there is no doubting the astonishing strangeness of such an idea; Chandos affirms that *he* will not be fluent in the language of things until his death, the point at which his body returns to its constitutive materiality and becomes itself a thing, no longer human. Paradoxically, he perceives nonhuman and even nonliving things as vibrant, writing that “mute and sometimes inanimate beings rise up before me with such a plenitude, such a presence of love that my joyful eye finds nothing dead anywhere.”⁵

Within his letter to Bacon, Chandos provides specific examples of such communicative, mute materiality. He exclaims that at certain times, “an insignificant creature, a dog, a rat, a beetle, a stunted apple tree, a cart path winding over the hill, a moss-covered stone” can provide solace, meaning more to him “than the most beautiful, most abandoned lover ever did on the happiest night” (*LC* 125).⁶ This list is quite revealing, and anything but random. Not only does it encompass the traditional categories of animal, vegetable, and mineral, it also follows a progression away from the human down the orders of the chain of being: domestic animal (dog), wild animal (rat), an insect, a tree, a landscape, and finally the stone. Rhetorically, Chandos’ catalogue of things marks the stone as the farthest removed from the human, as a particular kind of

sprechen, und in welcher ich vielleicht einst im Grabe vor einem unbekanntem Richter mich verantworten werde” (*SW XXI*, 54).

⁵ “Diese stummen und manchmal unbelebten Kreaturen heben sich mir mit einer solchen Fülle, einer solchen Gegenwart der Liebe entgegen, daß mein beglücktes Auge auch ringsum auf keinen toten Fleck zu fallen vermag” (*SW XXI*, 52).

⁶ “In diesen Augenblicken wird eine nichtige Kreatur, ein Hund, eine Ratte, ein Käfer, ein verkümmerter Apfelbaum, ein sich über den Hügel schlängelnder Karrenweg, ein moosbewachsener Stein mir mehr, als die schönste, hingebendste Geliebte der glücklichsten Nacht mir je gewesen ist.” (*SW XXI*, 52).

limit. If the linguistic potential that Chandos finds in nonhuman things derives from their muteness, then the paradigmatically mutest of all, stone, holds the greatest potential.

*

This dissertation argues that the writings of Rainer Maria Rilke, Georg Trakl, Osip Mandelstam, Paul Celan, and Nelly Sachs epitomize a poetics that explores the astonishing capacity of stone to shift how we think about language and subjectivity, much as these passages from Buber and Hofmannsthal suggest.

Their petrological lyrics, as I characterize them, destabilize entrenched notions of subjectivity in lyric, and exemplify how the most nonhuman of things ultimately leaves traces in human language. Such lyrics estrange the genre, shifting it away from the forms of feeling, expression, and voice that rely on persona-based models, and instead prompting us to consider how stone can be meaningfully addressed, or read, or silently signify time and space. In the works of Rilke, Trakl, Mandelstam, Celan, and Sachs, such alternative modes of language are variously emulated, translated, and responded to, suggesting unprecedented ways for us to read, understand, and imagine lyric.

I find the passages from Buber and Hofmannsthal to be an enlightening entry point; while they are not lyric poems, they model phenomenologies of stone, demonstrating the potential of mute minerality to convey something to us, or for us. Buber's revelation of the mica chip suggests stone's surprising power to move very *closely* into our sphere of experience, even to our sense of subjectivity. Chandos' moss-covered stone, on the other hand, highlights stone's *distance* from us, its extreme alterity vis-à-vis the human. Yet in this case, too, the strangeness of stone is what has it enter Chandos' world; because of its distance, it communicates something altogether apart from everyday

experience. In its potential to model a language that is somehow outside of common discourse, and to move directly into inner experience, then, stone may epitomize lyric after all.

The writings of Rilke, Trakl, Mandelstam, Celan, and Sachs, like no others', characterize a profound poetics of stone that develops across much of the twentieth century, and across a great deal of the geographic space of Europe, from Paris to Stockholm to St. Petersburg. My close readings of their texts outline precisely how they evidence a *poetics* of stone: a range of approaches to understanding stone as communicative, and to imparting this understanding in verse. Taken as a comparative whole, the chapters that follow define what I deem *lyric petrologies*, or a set of rhetorical approaches to writing stone that in turn reveals shifting constructions of lyric subjectivity. Lyrics by Rilke, Trakl and Mandelstam demonstrate what I call invocations of stone—ways in which it may be written *about*, by addressing crafted works (i.e., architecture and sculpture) as signs of human history and affect. Later texts by Celan gravitate toward “found” stone, and import geological discourse into lyric—a project foreshadowed, I establish, in the late texts of Mandelstam, a poet whom Celan translated and declared a formative influence. Their texts think *in terms of* stone, drawing on this discourse to align lyric with notions of stone’s alternative, natural history. Celan’s texts, along with those of his contemporary Sachs, also seek to write *as* stone, by emulating stone’s varying legibilities—as a scientific or mystical record of the readable earth, or as a *tabula rasa* for more idiosyncratic, phenomenological readings.

As I discuss later in this introduction, German and Russian literatures are not the only contexts in which one might find something like a petrological lyric, yet in juxtaposing texts from these languages, I can most clearly define the extraordinary

potential of this lyric mode. Although the scope of this dissertation is fairly broad, spanning three quarters of the last century, it is not a work of historical poetics attempting to ground the particular notion of “lyric” evidenced by these texts within a defined cultural context of reading. Nevertheless, scanning this time period, one comes to understand how the lyrics of stone were written against seismic shifts in German and Russian cultures, and the fault lines that link them. The structures of cultural thought that allow the early lyrics of Mandelstam, Rilke, and Trakl to read stone in terms of anthropomorphism, human history, and affect were cast into doubt as time proceeded. This is especially marked in the works of Mandelstam, as they shifted from the architectural poetics of *Stone* (1913) to geological discourse and figures of “found” stone in his texts of the 1920s and 1930s, written in the context of the Russian Revolution, the formation of the Soviet Union, the impact of Stalinism, and Mandelstam’s own resistance to these cultural upheavals. Celan, an avid reader and translator of Mandelstam, picked up where the latter’s work left off, pursuing an even more abstracted, nonhuman lyric of stone in his texts of the 1950s and 1960s. Celan’s texts, and those of his contemporary, Sachs, demonstrate stone’s potentiality to demonstrate reconceptualized lyric languages and subjectivities, particularly in the light of debates about the legitimacy and efficacy of post-Holocaust lyric. Thoroughly sobering as these texts are, they nevertheless insist upon the potential of lyric language, even if that language must reach toward the most mute and nonhuman of things for its emergence.

In studying the works of these authors, I focus on critiquing a commonplace of lyric: the pervasive view that takes it to be the most concentrated expression of an individualized subjectivity, one often encapsulated by the “persona” or “lyric I.” The varying ways texts by Rilke, Trakl, Mandelstam, Celan, and Sachs conceive of stone as

legible, addressable, or otherwise instantiating a nonhuman language to be confronted or coopted in lyric, imply a poetic mode in which human language is to a greater or lesser extent amalgamated with nonhuman, petrological ones. Silent stone holds that lyric need not be regarded as the voice of a real or imagined persona, but can instead develop in response myriad other forms of signification.

I take a comparative approach to thinking about these texts, bringing insights and questions from Anglo-American lyric theory to bear on German and Russian lyrics, in addition to considering critical and theoretical questions from the linguistic contexts from which these texts emerged. I find it crucial to respond to Anglo-American lyric theory not only because it informs my own critical and pedagogical perspectives and those of many of my fellow scholar-teachers, but also because the rich investigations of recent work in the field provides potent ideas to think with, particularly in its articulation of an “inhuman lyric” and related concepts.

In this introduction, I will establish theoretical concepts, questions, and vocabulary that inform my readings of lyric poetry in subsequent chapters. I begin with an overt example of my comparative approach, by thinking about models of lyric that rest upon a hypostatized individualized persona (as well alternatives to these models), drawing upon classic and recent Anglo-American lyric theory, as well as the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, Margarete Susman, Lidiya Ginzburg, Theodor Adorno, and others. I follow by discussing ideas of nonhuman lyric that offer further alternatives to lyric humanism and its emphases on voice, feeling, and persona, making reference to the work of theorists and poets including Drew Milne, Walter Benjamin, Mandelstam, and Celan. Lyrics of stone, I argue, push the notions of nonhuman lyric to new and astounding ends. After reviewing some existing works that have considered lyric and stone from various

perspectives, I discuss further how my comparative approach most productively illuminates the insights on lyric subjectivity and concepts of alternative lyric languages that emerge within the lyrics of stone. Finally, I present brief overviews of this dissertation's chapters.

THINKING LYRIC BEYOND THE PERSONAL

In looking to the materiality of stone as a repository of nonhuman and mute languages to be emulated and translated in lyric, the texts of Rilke, Trakl, Mandelstam, Celan, and Sachs anticipate trends in contemporary poetics and criticism. As Reena Sastri remarks, current writing demonstrates a drive to oppose “plain language, first-person speech, psychology, and emotion,” while “scholars working in a critical climate that favors thick description of literary works’ cultural histories resolve to demystify the lyric poem as an illusion of unmediated, unsituated personal speech” (188). As a result,

Poetic practices that disrupt, interrupt, or refuse the fiction of voice and critical approaches that expose voice as a fiction can seem the only alternatives to indulging a naïve belief in the author’s speaking presence in the poem. Such a stark choice obscures the varied possibilities for contemporary poetic practice and makes rich and flexible theorizations of lyric the exception. (188)

While Sastri makes this comment in regard to recent American lyric and lyric studies, I contend that it speaks to contemporary critical work on lyric from wide array of contexts, and that the poems gathered in this dissertation provide illuminating case studies for thinking through its implications. While silent and nonhuman stone in its many lyric configurations certainly resists voice as *the* model for reading it, I contend that these poems do offer a capacious understanding of lyric in return.

Other critics, including Virginia Jackson (*Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading*, 2005) and Yopie Prins (*Victorian Sappho*, 1999), look specifically to the historicization that Sastri mentions as a means of enriching lyric theory. In this sense, their work develops in response to notions of lyric reading versus reading lyric first articulated by Paul de Man and Jonathan Culler: "If 'reading lyric' implies that lyric is already defined as an object to be read, 'lyric reading' implies an act of lyrical reading, or reading lyrically, that poses the possibility of lyric without presuming its objective existence or assuming it to be a form of subjective expression" (Prins, 19).⁷ According to this point of view, what we call lyric is actually a fairly recent invention, the product of a historical process of normalization whereby texts are made "lyric" when we read them as such. Jackson likewise understands notions of individuality and voice to be deeply implicated in this process, and is critical of the fact that "[a]s the lyric has been taken to represent individual expression, it has also become representative of *our* individual expression—whoever we are" (204).

However, the questioning of voice, and particularly the individualized voice, as a constitutive aspect of lyric is not just a recent reaction to the conventions of mid- to late twentieth-century criticism. Instead, it has its own history and theoretical goals. An earlier intervention is provided by the lyric theory of Friedrich Nietzsche which itself evolved out of a critique of the traditional genre schematic of epic-lyric-drama evident in aesthetics as

⁷ On reading lyric versus reading lyric, see also: de Man, "Anthropomorphism and Trope in Lyric"; Culler, "Reading Lyric"; Culler, "Changes in the Study of Lyric." In *The Lyric Theory Reader*, Jackson and Prins present a wide selection of essays (drawn primarily from Anglo-American, German and French contexts) on lyric as well as critical introductions that discuss the competing and often contradictory ideas of "lyric." My own approach to lyric posits that instability and variation is key to the endurance of the term, rather than any stable definition. Nevertheless, my readings of poetry in this dissertation is not an exercise in hermeneutics, and certainly not the defensive hermeneutics de Man charges lyric with in the essay on anthropomorphism: "Lyric is not a genre, but one name among several to designate the defensive motion of understanding, the possibility of a future hermeneutics" (261).

far back as Aristotle's *Poetics* and down to Nietzsche's forerunner, Hegel.⁸ Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (*Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*, 1872) contains major sections on lyric (primarily the fifth and sixth chapters). Although historically overshadowed by the book's argument about tragedy, these passages have nevertheless had an indirect influence on twentieth-century lyric theory, by contributing to formative critical conversations on the notion of the "lyric I" embedded within more widely-acknowledged texts on lyric theory, particularly Adorno's widely read essay "On Lyric Poetry and Society."⁹

As the title of Nietzsche's book suggests, the text's argument posits that Ancient Greek tragedy arose out of music and celebration connected to rites for Dionysus. Lyric poetry, according to this point of view, is intimately connected to music (as texts sung to the accompaniment of the lyre) and so, developmentally speaking, it preceded tragedy. The idea that lyric arose as a musical genre, and the extent to which it can continue to claim associations with music (or ever could) are contested points in contemporary criticism.¹⁰ Moreover, the association of lyric with music, voice, and sound is often explicitly challenged in the petrological lyrics, as I will demonstrate, through allusions to

⁸ Although Hegel is neither mentioned by name nor cited in *The Birth of Tragedy*, his thought is everywhere within the text, as Nietzsche himself admits in his later work *Ecce Homo* (1888). Reflecting back with dissatisfaction upon *The Birth of Tragedy*, he writes that it "smells terribly Hegelian" ("sie riecht anstössig Hegelisch") (eKGWB, *Ecce Homo*: "Die Geburt der Tragödie").

⁹ For a sampling of works that do turn some attention to Nietzsche's lyric theory, see: Cellbrot (36-52), Blasing (chapter three, "The Scripted 'I'"), Babich on music and meter in the light of Nietzsche's lyric theory (37-53), and the commentary on chapters five and six of *The Birth of Tragedy* in Reibnitz (154-178). On Nietzsche's own lyric poetry, see: Williams, "Nietzsche and lyric poetry"; Heller on Nietzsche's concept of the lyric I ("Das lyrische Ich bei Schopenhauer und Nietzsche und nachher"). Although my goal in discussing Nietzsche's lyric theory is not to chart direct influences on the formation of German and Russian lyric, the legacy of his work is certainly detectable in these contexts. As I show, Nietzsche's theory informs Susman's, Adorno's, and others'. For an overview of Nietzsche's influence in Russian letters, see the essays in the collection *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture* (ed. Rosenthal).

¹⁰ Musicality as a generic identifier of lyric is contested by many theorists, and supported by others. For an overview of questions surrounding music's relation to ancient Greek and modern lyric, see Johnson's *The Idea of Lyric*.

stone's intrinsic qualities of silence and immobility.

While it holds on to lyric's association with music, Nietzsche's theory is thoroughly critical of the deeply entrenched view of lyric as *the* genre of individualized subjectivity. As far as Nietzsche is concerned, there is an inherent contradiction in thinking about a *personal* lyric as a mode of art. He declares that aesthetics must

[S]olve the problem of how the 'lyric poet' can possibly be an artist at all, since he is someone who, so the experience of the ages tells us, always says "I" [given that] the prime demand we make of every kind and level of art is the conquest of subjectivity, release and redemption from the "I," and the falling-silent of all individual willing and desiring; indeed without objectivity, without pure, disinterested contemplation we are unable to believe that any creation, however slight, is genuinely artistic. (29)¹¹

Nietzsche responds to this Kantian requirement of aesthetic disinterest by arguing that lyric poetry *is* subjective, it *is* the genre of the "I", but what its subjectivity represents is not individual will, but something more collective and universal—an *Ur-Ein* or "primordial unity" (30). Any "I" invoked in lyric, Nietzsche argues, is not to be equated with an author, nor with any empirical person. Rather, he declares that "the 'I' of the lyric poet sounds out from the deepest abyss of being; his 'subjectivity', as this concept is used by modern aestheticians, is imaginary" (30).¹² Lyric, *The Birth of Tragedy* proposes, exemplifies the Dionysian mode of self-forgetting (*Selbstvergessenheit*).¹³ In reflecting

¹¹ "[D]ie neuere Aesthetik wusste nur deutend hinzuzufügen, dass hier dem 'objectiven' Künstler der erste 'subjective' entgegen gestellt sei. Uns ist mit dieser Deutung wenig gedient, weil wir den subjectiven Künstler nur als schlechten Künstler kennen und in jeder Art und Höhe der Kunst vor allem und zuerst Besiegung des Subjectiven, Erlösung vom 'Ich' und Stillschweigen jedes individuellen Willens und Gelüstens fordern, ja ohne Objectivität, ohne reines interesseloses Anschauen nie an die geringste wahrhaft künstlerische Erzeugung glauben können. Darum muss unsre Aesthetik erst jenes Problem lösen, wie der 'Lyriker' als Künstler möglich ist: er, der, nach der Erfahrung aller Zeiten, immer 'ich' sagt" (eKGWB, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, 5).

¹² "Das 'Ich' des Lyrikers tönt also aus dem Abgrunde des Seins: seine 'Subjectivität' im Sinne der neueren Aesthetiker ist eine Einbildung" (eKGWB, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, 5).

¹³ Furthermore, in arguing for lyric's rootedness in music, Nietzsche paints a picture of wild, orgiastic, intoxicated celebrations of Dionysus. A major characteristic of these ancient raves is that the individual, in taking part in mass revelry, is dissolved into the collective honoring of the deity—aided, importantly, by anything mind-altering, mood-enhancing, and consciousness-raising: "Entweder durch den Einfluss des

collective passions and experience, lyric still articulates a subjectivity, just not a personal one.

In its adamant assertion that any “I” invoked in lyric is non-empirical and non-individual, *The Birth of Tragedy* presages the foundational work on the “lyric I” presented in Margarete Susman’s *The Essence of Modern German Lyric (Das Wesen der modernen deutschen Lyrik, 1910)*.¹⁴ Although Susman and her work on lyric theory have been largely overlooked in Anglo-American scholarship on lyric, *The Essence* is more extensive than *The Birth of Tragedy* in theorizing a non-personal lyric subjectivity, and in articulating its philosophical and literary-historical foundations. Moreover, where Nietzsche’s purview is essentially limited to ancient Greek poetry, Susman focuses on lyric as a modern, post-Enlightenment phenomenon, with considerations of German-language poets including Stefan George and Rilke, and even Nietzsche himself, who she calls “the one great lyric poet of recent times” (“der einzige große Lyriker der voraufgegangenen Zeit” 101).

Like Nietzsche, Susman describes the lyric I as “general” (*allgemein*, 17), and argues that it represents no empirical subject, but rather the concept (*Ausdruck*) and form (*Form*) of a symbolic “I” (18). In some German-language scholarship and pedagogical texts, Susman is invoked as being responsible for turning the concept of the “lyric I” into a critical tool, because the book so extensively and thoroughly theorizes it.¹⁵ However, it is

narkotischen Getränkes, von dem alle ursprünglichen Menschen und Völker in Hymnen sprechen, oder bei dem gewaltigen, die ganze Natur lustvoll durchdringenden Nahen des Frühlings erwachen jene dionysischen Regungen, in deren Steigerung das Subjective zu völliger Selbstvergessenheit hinschwindet” (eKGWB, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, 1).

¹⁴ For an overview of Susman and her long, wide-ranging career (encompassing, in addition to her own lyric poetry, studies of Kafka, women of German Romanticism, Biblical figures, and the first study to address the cultural aftermath of the Holocaust, *Das Buch Hiob und das Schicksal des jüdischen Volkes*), see: Gilieir and Hahn, *Grenzgänge zwischen Dichtung, Philosophie und Kulturkritik. Über Margarete Susman*; Hahn, *Die Jüdin Pallas Athena: auch eine Theorie der Moderne* (translated by McFarland as *The Jewish Pallas Athena*).

¹⁵ Dotzler’s anthology of literary theory reprints a section from Susman’s book (“Ichform und Symbol”). Pestalozzi credits Susman with coining the term “lyrisches ich” (342-356), as does Martinez (376) and Brehm (94-101). Spinner gives a passing mention of Nietzsche and of Susman’s work, before suggesting that

important to distinguish Susman's expansive understanding of the lyric I and lyric subjectivity from the dramatic or persona-based models which would come to dominate later in the twentieth century—among New Criticism and German scholarship influenced by New Criticism, for example, and particularly in the continuing pedagogical importance of such models.¹⁶ For Susman, the lyric I is not simply the encapsulation of a poet's or persona's expressive feeling, but rather stages the drama of post-Enlightenment subjectivity. *The Essence* argues that, prior to the Enlightenment, myth and religion provided a structure of general experience within which the individual's own experience would be thoroughly registered. The Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment subjectivity (particularly as influenced by Kantian philosophy), however, emphasized the individual's involvement in constructing its own worldview, thereby stressing an interior, personal subjectivity (Brehm, 97-98).

Susman posits that modern lyric holds the potential to counter this trend, however. Lyric cannot be read as the discourse of an empirical or specific persona, she argues, because the form of lyric itself exceeds the boundaries of the individual; the "I" of lyric "can never be the personal I, only the I living in the general, eternal circumstances of being" (16).¹⁷ *The Essence* discusses at length how modern lyric has the option of

Gottfried Benn's comments on lyric subjectivity are more important for the discourse of the lyric I because they focus on the idea of the author, much like Käthe Hamburger's theory (8-9). Lamping and Gnüg, though they do not discuss Nietzsche's or Susman's theories of lyric subjectivity, do provide overviews of the variety of modes that lyric subjectivity might take, from perspectives in *Germanistik*, which enrich discussions like Wellek's overview of Staiger and Hamburger in "Genre Theory, the Lyric, and *Erlebnis*." Müller (93-95) does not discuss Susman or Nietzsche, either, yet finds models of lyric based on persona, individualized subjectivity, and voice that arise from studies of Romantic lyric to be inadequate and misleading for the study of post-Romantic lyric and its modes including the *Dinggedicht* and poetry of place.

¹⁶ Commenting upon the admitted utility of concepts like the lyric speaker, persona, etc. for teaching lyric, Terada writes that in studying lyric in the classroom, "one can find it convenient to omit the part about how the concept [of lyric] doesn't correspond to anything, since it could require the rest of the conversation to explain why, in that case, people have been so determined to believe that it does." ("After the Critique of Lyric," 198).

¹⁷ "Und darum kann es nie das personale, sondern nur das in den allgemeinen ewigen Zusammenhängen

replacing the generalized structures of experience that are provided by myth and religion in other contexts. In German poetry of at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Susman finds examples of lyric that work more closely to this general subjectivity (see Hahn, 174; also part two of *The Essence*, “The New Lyric”). She considers Rilke a particularly potent example of this possibility, the poet who in his work “is on the way toward a new name of God, a name that not so much obliterates or devalues as reawakens the same reverence and expresses the same enormity.”¹⁸ The “internalization” (*Verinnerlichung*) of lyric that Susman describes as having begun in the work of Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock and that reached an apex in Romantic poetry is countered by the transcendent language of fin-de-siècle works by authors like Rilke, George, Hofmannsthal, and Nietzsche.

Although Susman’s book responds to her contemporary poets, its theoretical account of lyric is speculative and forward-thinking. In works from near the end of her long life—her memoirs *I Have Lived Many Lives* (*Ich habe viel leben gelebt*, 1964) and her correspondence with a poet half her age, Celan—Susman reflects back on *The Essence*. Having read Celan’s “Death Fugue” in an anthology, Susman wrote to him in appreciation of his poetry and his poetological speech “The Meridian,” writing that “[i]n a very early little book of mine there is even a presentiment of the muteness—except I could not imagine it clearly. Now through your prose as well as your poetry it has been clarified for me in a wonderful way.”¹⁹ Taking Susman’s comments about Celan’s work

des Seins lebende Ich sein, das in ihr Raum hat” (16).

¹⁸ “Rilke ist auf dem Wege nach einem neuen Namen Gottes, einem Namen, der nicht so verwischt, nicht so entwertet die gleiche Ehrfurch erweckt, die gleiche Umfänglichkeit ausdrückt” (127).

¹⁹ Translation in Hahn (*The Jewish Pallas Athena*, 173, slightly altered). “Es gibt sogar in einem ganz frühen kleinen Buch von mir einen ahnenden Hinweis auf das Verstummen—nur, daß ich es mir nicht klar vorstellen konnte. Nun ist es mir durch Ihre Rede wie durch Ihre Dichtung in so wunderbarer Weise geklärt” (Koelle, “Paul Celan/Margarete Susman,” 34). For more on the correspondence between Susman

as an invitation to view *The Essence* in hindsight, one can imagine “the muteness” (*das Verstummen*) to signify a subjectivity beyond the persona, one eradicating voice as a requisite. In *I Have Lived Many Lives*, Susman offers more commentary on Celan’s poetry, insisting that:

His poetry is in no way abstract art, though it is one fully changed compared to what came before, that comes out of a reality that has been totally altered. Not in the sense of Hemingway’s claim that after the horror of the First World War only proper nouns and street names could be spoken with truth, but rather in the still more uncanny sense that precisely those decisive words, like life and death, stone, eye, and tear acquire new meaning in his work.²⁰

Susman’s highlighting of “stone” among these keywords is not only a nod to its prevalence in Celan’s verse, nor only to its figurative power to exemplify the “muteness” embedded within the theory of *The Essence of Modern German Lyric*, but to the *poetics* of stone in twentieth-century lyric: in Celan’s work—and, I would add, that of the other poets studied in this dissertation—stone acquires new meaning, the potentiality to stand in the lyric as a nonhuman communicator, even when human language seemed to falter most irrevocably.

Rather than turn attention to articulating the significance of nonhuman lyricism, however, lyric theory that follows upon the work of Nietzsche and Susman has focused much more on how understanding lyric subjectivity beyond the poet-persona or expressive individual opens possibilities for reading it in terms of collective and social questions. For the twentieth century, this includes vital questions of reading and writing

and Celan, see Koelle (“Aufrechte Worte” and “Hoffnungsfunken erjagen”) and the last chapter of Hahn’s book.

²⁰ “Abstrakte Kunst ist seine Dichtung keineswegs, wohl aber eine gegenüber der früheren völlig gewandelte, die einer total veränderten Wirklichkeit entstammt. Nicht in dem Sinne der Forderung Hemingways, der nach dem Grauen des ersten Weltkriegs sagte, daß nur noch Eigennamen und Straßennamen mit Wahrheit ausgesprochen werden dürfen, sondern in dem noch unheimlicheren Sinne, daß gerade die entscheidenden Worte, wie Leben und Tod, *Stein*, Auge und Träne, bei ihm eine neue Bedeutung gewonnen haben” (*Ich habe viele Leben gelebt*, 174-175).

lyric after the Holocaust, alluded to in Susman's comments on Celan, and discussed in Adorno's work. While Adorno's much-debated comments on the possibility of writing poetry after Auschwitz continue to wield influence (and garner derision), it is not his only work to turn attention to questions about reading lyric against collective culture. His widely read essay "On Lyric Poetry and Society" ("Rede über Lyrik und Gesellschaft," 1957) expands upon the idea, already presented in Nietzsche and Susman, that what is perceived as individuality in lyric actually functions as the reverberation of a more universal experience that must be registered as such: "The lyric work hopes to attain universality through unrestrained individuation. [...] The universality of the lyric's substance, however, is social in nature. Only one who hears the voice of humankind in the poem's solitude can understand what the poem is saying" (38).²¹ Adorno's readings of poetry by George and Eduard Mörike in the same essay, for instance, attempt to show how this understanding of lyric opens up "outside" questions of the social world through an attentive reading of poetry's "inside" form.

Like contemporary Anglo-American work in lyric studies, the theories of Nietzsche and Susman prompt us to rethink lyric, and to search for perspectives for comprehending it that look beyond the persona and individual expression. All of these critical perspectives, though they greatly expand the possibilities for conceptualizing lyric and lyric subjectivity, still work very much within the idea of lyric as *human*. The same can

²¹ "Von rückhaltloser Individuation erhofft sich das lyrische Gebilde das Allgemeine. [...] Jene Allgemeinheit des lyrischen Gehalts jedoch ist wesentlich gesellschaftlich. Nur der versteht, was das Gedicht sagt, wer in dessen Einsamkeit der Menschheit Stimme vernimmt" (75). Robert Kaufman's writing on Adorno's "On Lyric Poetry and Society" works to critique other interpretations of the essay, which he argues see the essay as suggesting that the real goal of lyric is to illuminate socio-ideological foundations. Kaufman proposes that Adorno's overt interests to lyric form as such are equally vital to understanding the dialectic potential that lyric opens up between the individual and the general, between the subjective and the objective, and between the poetic and the social. In Gianni Vattimo's *Dialogue with Nietzsche*, Nietzsche's influence on Adorno's theory of lyric is acknowledged, and the two are distinguished from one another (123). Aviram's "Lyric Poetry and Subjectivity" also notes the connection of Nietzsche and Adorno, and discusses the "materialist lyric."

be said of Adorno's work, which considers how lyric reflects the social "voice of humankind" (*der Menschheit Stimme*). The lyrics of stone considered in this dissertation, however, are situated in varying proximity to what I call *nonhuman* lyric. In my readings of these texts, I hold on to the category of subjectivity, as Nietzsche and Susman do, but ask how our idea of lyric's scope might be expanded to include not only a human collectivity, but a language forged with nonhuman stone. Doing so exposes, as Sastri characterizes them, "rich and flexible theorizations of lyric," and truly astonishing ones at that.

THE MEDUSA'S HEAD: ON NONHUMAN LYRIC

The petrological lyrics of Rilke, Trakl, Mandelstam, Celan, and Sachs exemplify the complex possibilities of nonhuman lyricism. Although there is little work theorizing it *per se*, writers like Virginia Jackson, Drew Milne, and Walter Benjamin have variously conceptualized the *inhuman*.²² Regarding the lyrics gathered in this dissertation, however, I gravitate toward the terminology of "nonhuman" rather than "inhuman." The former, as I understand it, is closer to being value-neutral, while the latter has more clearly negative connotations. This is because even though poets like Mandelstam, Celan, and Sachs could hardly have written in darker times, their work is constructive, albeit in a thoroughly sobering sense, one conscious of the extreme destruction and annihilation—

²² In their discussions of inhuman lyric, Milne and Jackson do not specify whether or not they draw its terminology from a prior source. The work of American poet Robinson Jeffers, however, offers a potential point of convergence. Jeffers described his work as expressing a philosophy of "Inhumanism," defined as "a shifting of emphasis and significance from man to not-man; the rejection of human solipsism and recognition of the transhuman magnificence. [...] This manner of thought and feeling is neither misanthropic nor pessimist" (vii). Jeffers' Inhumanist philosophy articulates an aesthetic and ethical stance rejecting egocentric humanism; stone is certainly *the* exemplary figure of this stance within the *lyric* inhumanism his texts convey, although they are less concerned with possibilities of nonhuman language, a central aspect of the petrological lyrics I analyze in this dissertation. Celan was familiar with at least some of Jeffers' work, and translated one of his essays, "Poetry and Survival" ("Dichtung und Dauer"). In its ethical concerns, ecocritical *avant la lettre*, Jeffers' work has clear ties to American Transcendentalism (most importantly, that of Henry David Thoreau, see Brasher). In this sense, his work also shares something with the Geopoetics of Kenneth White and others (see below), which in turn may help articulate certain ecocritical concerns latent in the petrological lyrics studied in this dissertation.

on an inhuman scale—of human life in the twentieth century.

Drew Milne's essay "In Memory of the Pterodactyl: The Limits of Lyric Humanism" (2001) takes the humanist perspective of Adorno's essay as a provocation, writing that

"On Lyric Poetry and Society" argues that "the lyric work is always the subjective expression of a social antagonism", but what of lyric's constitutive inhumanity, its relation to non-human nature?" [...] As Adorno points out, the assumption that immediacy and subjectivity are essential to lyric expression is modern. Greek lyricism in the works of Sappho, Pindar and the choral odes of the tragedians positions the muses closer to the gods and the mythic forces of nature. This brief essay seeks to suggest, against the grain of Adorno's conception of lyric, that the limits of lyric humanism remain closer to this ancient conception of lyric and the speculative experience of nature. (361-362)

History, Milne suggests, has acted to humanize nature in language; consequently, nonhuman nature as presented in lyric has increasingly been read in terms of the subjective framework that structures the experience of that nature for the human individual, rather than in terms of the "speculative," even mythic. Though Adorno is Milne's starting point, this thought is not incongruous with Suman's critique of how lyric subjectivity has been read increasingly myopically. Milne's argument that lyric continues to be closer to a mythic notion of nature echoes Susman's insistence that modern lyric—at least in its fulfilled cases like Rilke's work—is a kind of substitute for the language of myth and religion.

In introducing the notion of "inhuman lyric," Milne provides a thought-provoking (if not rigorously theorized) category for considering what is unique about something like a petrological lyric, and what distinguishes it from the kind of lyric centered on an individualized, expressive subject-persona. The examples discussed in his essay, however, remain relatively close to the idea of lyric as voice, song, and music—the Sirens' song

from Homer's *Odyssey*, the song of the sea and other voices of nature, like birdsong.²³ The same can be said of Jackson's *Dickinson's Misery*, which acknowledges a debt to Milne in its own studies of Emily Dickinson's tropes of birdsong:

In the condensed phrase 'inhuman lyricism' I mean to recall the nineteenth century's association of birdsong with a pure expressive capacity the human poet cannot own, and also to point out that it would follow that the nineteenth-century reading of this figure would not be as a synonym for poetic voice but as a song the poet cannot voice. (27; see also 16-31, 223-228, 256).

There is, however, a measure of correspondence between birdsong and other voices of nature which lie beyond the human on one hand, and the voice of human language on the other—particularly as it is encapsulated in lyric which in so many iterations and contexts (like the nineteenth century American one Jackson analyzes, or in Nietzsche's theory) is figured as the genre of song. If the "song the poet cannot voice" is felt as a *desideratum*, then it is because it readily brings to mind the poet's own song, even as it sounds beyond it. But what is to be said of silent stone? If there is no voice in the stone to long for, then what potential does it hold for lyric?

First of all, stone models a way of conceptualizing lyric that moves it much closer to writing than song. Milne gestures toward the potentiality of lyric as a *written* text to gain a measure of independence from strictly persona-based models: "As writing, lyric is freed from the human clumsiness of speech, and in this freedom it is possible to imagine the voices of nature beyond the human" (362). While here, too, the concept of "voice" continues to dominate even the space of silent writing, Milne's thought invites an extension. Lyric texts that write stone are able to imagine a lyric beyond both the human

²³ An extensive account of what we can call the lyric humanism which Milne's essay aims to describe the limits of is found in Susan Stewart's brilliant tour de force *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (2002), which contains chapters discussing voice, feeling, and related modes of lyric comprehensibility.

and the voice of nature, because as writing, they can stage the paradox of verbalizing stone, which has no voice—even a nonhuman one to be emulated, like birdsong.

Indications of this possibility of stone’s voicelessness as the end of a poetics are evident early in the twentieth century, such as in Mandelstam’s essay-manifesto “The Morning of Acmeism” (“Утро акмеизма,” 1913). For Mandelstam and his fellow poets of the St. Petersburg-based Acmeist group, stone represents tangibility, concreteness, and silence, as an antidote to the more ethereal and musical poetics of the fin-de-siècle. In the essay, Mandelstam characterizes stone in paradoxical term like “mute eloquence” (*немое красноречие*) and cites a “voice of matter” that “sounds like articulate speech” (“Голос материи [...] звучит как членораздельная речь”) (*CPL* 62; *CC* 1:178).²⁴ These phrases encapsulates the thought that stone might be communicative, and solicit language, even in its silence. They are paradoxical in suggesting that stone could resemble speech (stone can *cause* a sound, as in a falling stone, or an echo, but sound does not originate *from* it).

What is most remarkable is that stone is here figured not merely as something to be

²⁴ Mandelstam makes these comments in “The Morning of Acmeism” in response to poetry by Vladimir Solovyev and Fyodor Tyutchev, as well as the architectural poetics that are central to his version of Acmeism. Tyutchev’s “Problème” (1833/1857) is particularly important in its evocation of “found” stone (as opposed to anthropomorphic architectural forms—see chapter two), one flung from the heights of a mountain; it is the fall of this stone which is said to have a “voice of matter” that “sounds like articulate speech.” Ronen suggests that the image of the stone thrown by an unseen hand has a subtext in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, described in the book of Daniel, of a great statue being destroyed by a flung stone (Daniel 2: 34-35), and corroborates N. Ia. Berkovskij’s suggestion that an addition source is Spinoza’s letter to G.H. Schuller (“Камень веры,” 120, 192). In the letter, Spinoza asks Schuller to consider a stone that has been loosened from the hill or mount where it formerly resided, motionless and inert: “this stone, since it is conscious only of its endeavor and is not at all indifferent, will think it is completely free, and that it continues in motion for no other reason than that it so wishes. This, then, is that human freedom which all men boast of possessing, and which consists solely in this, that men are conscious of their desire and unaware of the causes by which they are determined” (286). Spinoza’s thought experiment disrupts notions of personhood and subjectivity, for the stone enters not as the epitome of muteness and recalcitrance, but as a matter of potentiality and inertia. Spinoza’s thought experiment displaces the problem of will and action, in other words, onto the stone—the very thing that seems most remote from questions of the kind. This experiment functions precisely because it takes place in the imaginative space of language. In chapter seven of *Impersonality* (“Lines of Stones”: The Unpersonified Impersonal in Melville’s *Billy Budd*), Cameron traces this thought experiment of the flying stone from Spinoza and through a response to it by Schopenhauer (whose own writings on will and subjectivity are in the background of Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy*).

written *about*, but as an active element that could influence language, one with “dynamic potential” (*CPL* 62) arriving with its own force of significance, entirely different yet prominent.²⁵ Later in the century, notions of stone as even paradoxically vocal would give way to thinking about stone’s muteness as an end in itself, particularly in the lyrics of Celan, saturated as they are with the vocabulary of silence. The opening lines of his poem “A la pointe acérée” are instructive in this respect: “The ores are laid bare, the crystals, / the geodes. / Unwritten things, hardened / into language” (*Poems of Paul Celan*, 171; “Es liegen die Erze bloß, die Kristalle, / die Drusen. Ungeschriebenes, zu / Sprache verhärtet,” *GW* I: 251). The stones here are figured as outside language; they are “unwritten,” silent, and nonlinguistic. Only in the space of the text are they “hardened / into language.” This is a curious thought, for one would suspect that it is the mineral which “hardens” language, and not the other way around. What Celan’s lyric implies, however, is that the radical thingness and insignificance of stone, rich in the possibilities that come with being outside voice, outside expressiveness, and outside the individual, are only fixed when set down in human language. If the pun may be forgiven, it is in language that the stone is set in stone, as *stone*, *Stein*, or *камень*. A lyric language of stone is one in which the mineral collaborates with the human via writing.

Stone as a lyric emblem suggests not only a nonspeaking or nonvocal subjectivity, but a non-feeling one as well. In Heidegger’s characterization of inanimate stone as worldless because of its inability to establish relations with the world around it, one finds a philosophical articulation of stone’s detachment and recalcitrance. More colloquially, language in general reflects an understanding of stone as the antithesis not just of a categorial humanity, but of the affects which are characterized adjectivally as human—as

²⁵ “[...] в нем потенциально способность динамики” (*CC* 1:178).

when an unemotional person is “cold as stone,” or is said to have a “a heart of stone.” This poses a major challenge to Romantic and post-Romantic ideas of lyric focusing on it as the genre, or form, or rhetorical mode of expression. In his classic *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (1953), a work conscious of both English and German Romaniticisms, M.H. Abrams declares that the “majority of lyrics consist of thoughts and feelings uttered in the first person, and the one readily available character to whom these sentiments may be referred is the poet himself” (85). This itself follows upon ideas like William Wordsworth’s statement from the “Preface” to *Lyric Ballads* that poetry is “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility” (611), or John Stuart Mill’s declaration that “eloquence is *heard*; poetry is *overheard*. [...] Poetry is feeling confessing itself in moments of solitude, and embodying itself in symbols which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet’s mind” (81). These formulations put the origin of lyric in the subjectivity of an individual, and filter it through memory, and as a result fasten it firmly within the structure of the individual’s reflective feelings. If stone is typically understood to be the antithesis of feeling, then any idea of lyric that looks to stone not simply as an object to be described, or as the souvenir of feeling, but instead as in some way modeling a nonhuman, mineral language, poses a profound challenge to these characterizations of poetry.²⁶

This is not to say that forms of feeling cannot be *attached* to nonhuman nature. Mary Jacobus, in *Romantic Things: A Tree, a Rock, a Cloud* (2012), has studied how various kinds of things, including stone, are figured as vessels of feeling in Romantic and post-

²⁶ Admittedly, Abrams, Wordsworth, and Mill each write within more or less limited contexts, yet their ideas have gone on to influence the interpretation of lyric in and from a wide range of contexts.

Romantic literature (including Wordsworth, Rilke, and W.G. Sebald).²⁷ Such considerations are also there in Chandos' envisioning of a mute language of things, for it provides him an alternative in a time of *felt* crisis. Moreover, as I discuss in chapter two, early twentieth-century texts by Rilke, Mandelstam, and Trakl epitomize such possibilities. On the other hand, evidence of alternatives is embedded in these texts as well; although stone is often semantically linked to pain in Trakl's verse, for instance, his lyric "Bright Spring" characterizes a tombstone as an enduring marker of loss in the *absence* of any possible subjective feeling. As texts look beyond affective relations with stone, they explore the nature of a mute language of stone itself, from the Acmeist emphasis on detachment and concreteness, to the poetics of Mandelstam, Celan, and Sachs from the Stalinist and post-Holocaust eras, respectively, in which the non-feeling language of stone and abstract vocabulary of stone serve as lyric models precisely because they do not carry the emotional weight of the German and Russian languages that had been misused and distorted for horrendous ends.

Walter Benjamin's conceptualizations of the nonhuman in essays including "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" and "The Storyteller" seek to expand definitions of language, bringing concepts drawn from mysticism, myth, and natural

²⁷ Shahidha K. Bari's *Keats and Philosophy: The Life of Sensations* (2012) picks up from Jacobus' work, bringing a philosophically-inclined framework of investigation to bear on a lyric subjectivity in Keats' works that is variously described as "relational," "reflective and auto-affective," "irrevocably singular," etc. (xiii). The fifth chapter turns attention to stones in Keats' lyrics, in which the resilience of the mineral becomes the ground for particularizing lyric subjectivity. Bari reminds us, quoting from Hamilton's essay "Poetic Astonishment" that "The dissolution of self in environment, as opposed to the treating of environment as a signature of self, is a peculiarly Romantic problematic [...] The intensification of this surrender to environment is at most striking where the element yielded up to is most unyielding, mineral" (Bari 129; Hamilton, 126). Even in these cases, however, Bari's articulation of lyric subjectivity returns to the paradigm of the "speaker." To read the twentieth-century lyrics of stone in the same terms of what Abrams calls the "greater Romantic lyric" in which the subject is dissolved in nature but reconstructed in the poem's moment of recollection (much like the recuperative conclusion of sublime experience according to Kant's aesthetic theory), however, is to miss how they critique this idea of a cohesive, individual subject (see chapter four of this dissertation).

history to bear on a theory of communication. In this dissertation's conclusion, I discuss how Benjamin's concept of the language of things helps to articulate the complexities of translating nonhuman languages of stone into lyric. Benjamin's studies of the nonhuman (including stone) are conscious of the ethical questions surrounding its terminology, as Beatrice Hanssen's *Benjamin's Other History* indicates. Hanssen notes, in an honest appraisal of Benjamin's work, that his theorizing of the nonhuman at times reaches anarchistic points: "Benjamin's call for the radical destruction of the human and humanism still came dangerously close to the rhetoric of the subhuman (*Untermensch*) propagated by fascist ideologues" (6).²⁸ While I do not read the lyrics of stone in this dissertation in terms of a lyric humanism, neither do I suggest that they demand an erasure of the category of "human" as such.

As a model for lyric, stone represents qualities like gravity, weight, permanence, coldness, non-absorption, and density. Integrated into lyric, these thwart organic readings of lyric according to which the forms of the outer world, and experiences of it, would come to be digested and reconstructed in the lyric expression of an individual, recollecting subject. Celan, perhaps the century's foremost practitioner of petrological verse, gestures toward the illuminating strangeness of the literary nonhuman in his essay "The Meridian." At one point in the essay—the same one which so impressed Susman in its articulation of lyric "muteness"—Celan cites a passage from Georg Büchner's novella *Lenz* in which Lenz is struck by the simple beauty of two young girls sitting together on a

²⁸ The seventh chapter of Hanssen's *Benjamin's other History* ("Benjamin's *Unmensch*: The Politics of Real Humanism") provides a critical study of the semantics of *Unmensch*, *Untermensch*, and related terms.

rock: “Sometimes one would like to be a Medusa's head to turn such a group to stone and gather the people around it” (42).²⁹ Celan then comments:

Please note, ladies and gentlemen: “One would like to be a Medusa's head” to... seize the natural as the natural by means of art! *One* would like to, by the way, not: *I* would. This means going beyond what is human, stepping into a realm which is turned toward the human, but uncanny – the realm where the monkey, the automatons and with them...oh, art, too, seem to be at home. (*Collected Prose*, 42-43)³⁰

Much like many of Celan's poems, this extraordinary passage suggests an art that would look beyond the “I,” even beyond the ostensibly human. The result characterizes not an interior subjectivity reflected back on itself, but rather in which the nonhuman “seizes” language and leaves it fundamentally estranged and astonishing, just as the Medusa's head would transfix an onlooker to stone.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON STONE, LYRIC, AND COMPARISON

This dissertation is the first study to consider in detail how poetic approaches to stone shape and inform critical notions of lyric subjectivity. It is not, however, the first to consider the poetics of stone at length, and my own work responds to and extends these previous studies in specific ways. In the chapters that follow, I engage with a wide variety of critical studies that consider stone and/or geological discourse in relation to the works of specific authors, such as Tobias' *The Discourse of Nature in the Poetry of Paul Celan: The Unnatural World*, Lyon's “Paul Celan's Language of Stone: The Geology of the Poetic Landscape,” and Thomson's “Mandel'stam's *Kamen*': The Evolution of an Image.”

²⁹ “Man möchte manchmal ein Medusenhaupt sein, um so eine Gruppe in Stein verwandeln zu können, und den Leuten zuzurufen” (*GW* 3:191-192).

³⁰ “Meine Damen und Herren, beachten Sie, bitte: ‘Man möchte ein Medusenhaupt’ sein, um ... das Natürliche als das Natürliche mittels der Kunst zu erfassen! *Man* möchte heißt es hier freilich, nicht: *ich* möchte. Das ist ein Hinaustreten aus dem Menschlichen, ein Sichhinausbegeben in einen dem Menschlichen zugewandten und unheimlichen Bereich – denselben, in dem die Affengestalt, die Automaten und damit ... ach, auch die Kunst zuhause zu sein scheinen” (*GW* 3:192).

Aside from these, studies like Erika Schellenberger-Diederich's *Geopoetics: Studies of the Metaphorics of Stone from Hölderlin to Celan* (*Geopoetik. Studien zur Metaphorik des Gestein von Hölderlin bis Celan*, 2006), productively examine the poetics of stone from transhistorical perspectives.³¹ Schellenberger-Diederich's text is exemplary for its historical and generic breadth (inclusive of both lyric and prose works, like Adalbert Stifter's *Bunte Steine / Many-Colored Stones*). Rather than seek to historically contextualize a series of discrete case studies, however, my own approach is to focus more on examining the interplay between the writing of stone and lyric subjectivity across seven decades of the twentieth century. This also allows me to look beyond metaphorics alone and account for the range of possible rhetorical relationships between text and stone (writing *about* stone, *to* stone, *in terms of* stone, and *as* stone).

Other studies consider the particularity of stone's temporality, and the natural history it implies as an alternative to human history. Georg Braungart's "Poetics of Nature: Literature and Geology" ("Poetik der Natur. Literatur und Geologie"), for example, makes references to German literature of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries in order to discuss how the proliferation of a geological sense of time since the late eighteenth century—in which human history is but a miniscule blip at the very edge of the timeline of the world—has profoundly altered the epistemic sense of subjectivity—a "*temporal* marginalization of the human, that signifies a fundamental shock to modern

³¹ I omit from this overview scholarly studies of the poetics of stone that are not focused at least in part on twentieth-century literature. Examples of these include Heringman, Wyatt, Robertson, Engelhardt, and Haberkorn. Other relevant transhistorical works include *Kamień w literaturze, języku i kulturze* (ed. Roszczyznialska and Wadolna-Tatar, 2013) and Gourio's *Chants de pierres* (2005), which surveys stone in the French poetry of Paul Valéry, Yves Bonnefoy, Eugène Guillevic, René Char (as well as the writings of Caillouis), and others in relation to questions of dehumanization and temporality. In addition to Gourio's study, *L'Esprit Créateur* 45:2 (2005) is devoted to "*Écriture des pierres, pierres écrites—territoires de l'imaginaire minéral dans la littérature du XXe siècle*" (including a contribution by Gourio). For examples of work examining German and English literature and geology from historical perspectives, see: Engelhardt, Furniss, Haberkorn, Heringman, Wyatt, and Ziolkowski (*German Romanticism*).

consciousness.”³² Throughout this dissertation, I will draw attention to how lyric poems engage stone’s temporality, while in chapter three, “Lyricizing the Lexicon of Stone: Geological Discourse and Lyric Temporality in Mandelstam and Celan,” I turn attention to the question of how the works of these authors draw upon geological terminology precisely to critique notions of lyric subjectivity in terms of questions of time.

This dissertation is thoroughly comparative in its method, both in terms of the literatures it examines (German and Russian), and the theoretical contexts it responds to (German, Russian, and Anglo-American). Kirsten Blythe Painter’s *Flint on a Bright Stone: A Revolution of Precision and Restraint in American, Russian, and German Modernism* (2006) is an important precedent. *Flint on a Bright Stone* takes a comparative approach to delineating what Painter deems “tempered Modernism,” a term which refers to a “tempered, moderate approach towards imagery, form, and the depiction of reality and the poetic self—in each case, emphasizing balance, precision, and the preservation of boundaries. [...It is] often neoclassical in sensibility, marked by lucidity, brevity, palpability, and austerity” (2). Central within this international trend, Painter argues, is a “poetics of hardness”:

Economy of language, balance of form and content, and moderate use of musical devices. Hardness is suggested by delineated imagery and defined boundaries. The arts which the Tempered Modernists associate poetry—architecture and especially sculpture—also lend themselves to the idea of hardness: poetry is hard like the stone walls of a cathedral or the marble of

³² “...die zeitliche Marginalisierung des Menschen, die eine fundamentale Erschütterung neuzeitlichen Bewusstseins bedeutete” (56). In articulating this thought, Braungart draws upon the work of Sigmund Freud and Steven Jay Gould. An equally shocking inversion of this thought is the idea of the anthropocene—the latest epoch of geological time, beginning only in recent centuries—which is marked by the profound effects modern industrial society has had on the earth itself (and which are expected to leave lasting traces in geological records). For a discussion of the idea of the anthropocene from the perspectives of the arts and cultural studies, see many of the essays collected in Ellsworth and Kruse, eds., *Making the Geologic Now* (2013), particularly Elizabeth Kolbert’s (“Enter the Anthropocene: Age of Man”) and Don McKay’s (“Ediacaran and Anthropocene: Poetry as a Reader of Deep Time”) (as well as the ongoing discussions at the collection’s website, www.geologicnow.com).

a sculpture. (63)

As Painter herself notes, figures of stone are obvious candidates for illustrating the poetics of hardness; as I detail extensively in chapter two, the qualities which Painter ascribes to the poetics of hardness are indeed important in the petrological lyrics of Rilke, Mandelstam, and Trakl. Painter concedes that her study is largely limited to the years 1906-1917, or approximately the same period I analyze in chapter two (4). In subsequent chapters, however, look beyond this period, considering Mandelstam's writings from the 1920s and 1930s, as well as texts by Celan and Sachs from three decades after that. In looking at a greater temporal span, I am also interested in how poetic possibilities suggested in works from the first two decades of the twentieth century are furthered, altered, and joined by additional ones in later lyric poetry. Thus, one finds not only a poetics of hardness expressed through figures of stone, but alternative lyric temporalities articulated through the use of geological discourse, unorthodox forms of "writing" borrowing from conceptualizations of stone as legible, and other lyric petrologies. Like the earlier works, petrological lyrics of later in the twentieth century look to stone as a model for new forms of language and subjectivity; rather than exhibiting a tempered and moderate poetics, however, these later works push these forms—and with them, the idea of lyric—to new limits, in pursuit of a nonhuman lyric that would be capable of being in a world in which violence and destruction had likewise been pushed to extremes.

I agree with Painter's statement that "[w]hat is lacking are comparative studies of Modernist poetry that cross the border between western and eastern Europe," adding that the same holds true for post-Modernist poetry (4). There are, however, objections to this position. Clare Cavanagh's *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics: Russia, Poland, and the West* (2010), for instance, discourages reading East European literature in the light of Western

theory in general, and warns Slavists not to adopt “Western theoretical models uncritically” (5). The third chapter of *Lyric Poetry*, “The Death of the Book à la russe: The Acmeists Under Stalin,” takes issue with critiques of subjectivity that arise in the works of “Western” theorists like Derrida, Foucault, and Barthes, who “commemorate the passing of the autonomous, individual creators of the objects known in less enlightened ages as ‘books’” (110). For Cavanagh, notions of the death of the author “are bound to give the Slavist pause, not least because such metaphors had, in recent Russian history, an uncomfortable habit of realizing themselves as they pass from theory into practice” (110).³³ Among those Cavanagh has in mind is Mandelstam, who died in 1937 en route to a prison camp after being arrested as a result of his dissident writings. Even in depicting how the petrological lyrics exemplify a nonhuman lyric, however, this dissertation is not arguing for the erasure of the author, nor belittling the loss of human life or the dire circumstances in which poets like Celan, Sachs, and Mandelstam sometimes lived and worked. Rather, my project seeks to demonstrate how their works explore the poetics of the nonhuman in response to, or in spite of, the specter of destruction that haunts the twentieth century.

Adopting a comparative perspective, as I do in this dissertation, returns a richer understanding of these poets’ works, at any rate. For one, they confound restricted categories of East, West, German, and Russian—whether the Berlin-born Sachs, who spent her productive years as a poet, dramatist, and translator while exiled in Stockholm after fleeing the Nazi state in 1940, or the Czernowitz-born polyglot

³³ Cavanagh traces the idea that individualism and lyric were suspect in early Soviet times (15), and thus that to forefront the individual became a form of protest. For example, Bogdanov’s *Art and the Working Class* (*Искусство и рабочий класс*, 1918), an early meditation on proletarian poetry, pursues the argument that “the author-collective and author-class disappear beneath the author-persona” (“Под автором-личностью скрывается автор-коллектив, автор-класс,” 11).

Celan who chose to write in and translate into German, while living in Paris during his most prolific years. Combrably, Nadezhda Mandelstam described her and Osip's existence as "fantastic homelessness," a characterization reflected in his surname (which bears a Germanic-Jewish root) and more generally in Acmeism's "longing for world culture" (Brown, 101, 136).³⁴

Stone encapsulates this cultural vagrancy and the possibility of comparative study in surprising ways. To borrow (and consciously misuse) Heidegger's terminology, stone is indeed worldless, if one means a world demarcated by national and political boundaries. That is, the topographical features of the earth and the types of stone to be found on and below its surface are not beholden to the most often invisible lines we draw to distinguish one place from another. A lump of granite can be just as readily found in St. Petersburg as in Berlin; the lumps might differ from one another in terms of exact composition, or they might be essentially the same material, but in either case artificially imposed political categories of space have no say in the matter. With a few exceptions, the petrological lyrics in this dissertation are not directly concerned with defining a geopoetic space (in the spirit of "geopolitical" as suggesting relations between the human and nonhuman world). Some of them can be considered "site-specific," such as Rilke's "Archaic Torso of Apollo" and Mandelstam's architectural poems "Hagia Sofia" and "Notre Dame." These texts from early in the twentieth century meditate on works of stone that are specifically identifiable, and unique, while the discourse of stone in the later works of Mandelstam,

³⁴ Furthermore, Russia is extremely important in the work of Prague-born Rilke (Brodsky and Tavis provide the most encompassing overviews); likewise for Trakl (see Gerigk, 114). Warsaw-born Mandelstam, the son of a Polish father and a Lithuanian mother, experienced as complex a relation to his mother tongue as Celan did, as he describes in his frenetic, autobiographical, *The Noise of Time*. On Celan and the problem of "mother tongue," see Felstiner. As I discuss in chapter two, Mandelstam's Acmeist poems reveal striking parallels to Rilke's *Neue Gedichte* (as Painter and George point out more extensively). On Mandelstam and Germany more generally, see Nerler.

Celan, and Sachs tends toward far more generalized geological terminology, and figures of “found” stone.

The poetic and poetological texts by these authors do suggest ways that features of the nonhuman earth provide concepts for resisting the politically-influenced concepts with which we often categorize poetry and poetic output. As I discuss in chapter four, “Lyricizing the Lexicon of Stone,” one example is the discourse of “black earth” (*чернозём* / *Schwarzerde*) that develops across the texts of Mandelstam and Celan. The term refers to a band of particularly soil that stretches across parts of Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Moldova, and parts of Germany—a prime example of how the earth’s features do not oblige political boundaries. Another example is the notion of a poetic “meridian,” a term coined by Sachs and elaborated by Celan in his speech of the same name. In a letter to Celan, Sachs wrote “let us keep reaching across to each other with the truth. Between Paris and Stockholm runs the meridian of pain and comfort” (Celan and Sachs, 14).³⁵ A meridian in the strict geographic sense of the term does not exist between Paris and Stockholm; Sachs takes the idea of an invisible line on the earth’s surface as a license to imagine an alternative, invented concept for defining a literary (that is, non-geographic) link. In his speech “The Meridian,” Celan returns to this trope:

Let me now undertake a bit of topological research. [...] None of these places can be found. They do not exist. But I know where they ought to exist, especially now, and ... I find something else. [...] I find the connective which, like the poem, leads to encounters. I find something as immaterial as language, yet earthly, terrestrial, in the shape of a circle which, via both poles, rejoins itself and on the way serenely crosses even the tropics: I find ... a *meridian*. (trans. Waldrop, 55).³⁶

³⁵ “Lieber Paul Celan, wir wollen uns weiter einander die Wahrheit hinüberreichen. Zwischen Paris und *Stockholm* läuft der *Meridian* des Schmerzes und des Trostes” (*Briefwechsel*, 25).

³⁶ “[U]nternehme ich – jetzt – Toposforschung: [...] Keiner dieser Orte ist zu finden, es gibt sie nicht, aber ich weiß, woe s sie, zumal jetzt, geben müßte, und ... ich finde etwas! [...] Ich finde etwas – wie die Sprache – Immaterielles, aber Irdisches, Terrestrisches, etwas Kreisförmiges, über die beiden Pole in sich

Celan defines the meridian to be as “immaterial” as language, yet at the same time “earthly, terrestrial” (“etwas [...] Immaterielles, aber Irdisches, Terrestrisches”).

Although the concept does not directly refer to stone in this instance, this characterization speaks to the way in which the earthly material of stone becomes, in texts like Celan’s “Erratic,” “Le Menhir,” and “Stretto” (see chapter four), a means for reimagining the categories of spatial and thereby literary organization within the far less tangible medium of language. In other words, the discourse of stone allows one to draw new, invisible connections on the map of literature, and thus to devise new modes of comparative (or communal) inquiry.

While I draw inspiration from these broad, imaginative geographical concepts, my readings of lyrics by Rilke, Trakl, Mandelstam, Celan and Sachs focus more on the poetics of stone, strictly speaking. The prefix *geo-*, “earth,” is applied to both space (geography, the description of the earth) and stone (geology, the discourse of the earth). The discourse of stone certainly involves considerations of space, but of time as well; for this reason, and to distinguish my own argument from the ambiguity of the term “geopoetics,” I characterize the project as a whole as a study of *petrological* lyrics. In some instances, I do utilize the term “geopoetics,” either to index its deployment in the work of Schellenberger-Diederich and others, or to consciously draw attention to its ambiguity.³⁷

selbst zurückkehrendes und dabei – heitererweise – sogar die Tropen Durchkreuzendes –: ich finde ... einen *Meridian*.” (*GW* 3:202)

³⁷ Schellenberger-Diederich does not define precisely what she implies by the term “geopoetics” (*Geopoetik*), which is used in varying contexts. On this, and the use of the term in literary and cultural studies, see Italiano. For other studies utilizing the term *Geopoetik*, see Marszalek and Henrich.

The term “geopoetics” is closely associated with the Scottish-French poet Kenneth White, the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics, the International Institute of Geopoetics, and allied authors such as Canadian poet Don McKay. As White defines it, geopoetics is “deeply critical of Western thinking and practice” that separates humans from the rest of the natural world, and “seeks a new or renewed sense of world, a sense of space, light and energy that is experienced both intellectually [...] and sensitively”; it “requires both serious study and a certain amount of de-conditioning of ourselves by working on the body-mind” (“What is

Finally, although this dissertation emphasizes the analysis of lyric texts rather than theoretical ones, a comparative approach to these authors and texts does encourage new theoretical perspectives as well. As I have outlined in this introduction, recent Anglo-American work in lyric studies provides critical vocabulary to think *with* these German and Russian petrological lyrics, rather than to *apply* to them indiscriminately. An open-minded comparative outlook also allows us to investigate theoretical convergences. For instance, Lidiya Ginzburg, an extraordinarily attentive reader of Mandelstam, expresses a more capacious understanding of lyric in her transhistorical study of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian poetry, *On lyric (О лирике)*, 1964; revised, 1974), one which contains remarks on a theory of Russian verse that are not incongruous with those found in Nietzsche, or Susman, or Adorno:

In lyric the subject is active, but the subject of lyric is not necessarily individual. [...] The special position of the persona in lyric is known (although understood variously). Yet lyric has its own paradox. The most subjective genre of literature, it, like no other, is directed toward the general, toward the representation of psychic life as universal.³⁸

Similar comments by theorists and critics like Viktor Zhirmunsky and Mikhail Gasparov made in regard to Mandelstam's work in particular, for example, can be productively

Geopoetics?"). "What is Geopoetics" cites "intellectual nomads" like Henry David Thoreau and Nietzsche as the movement's forbearers, authors who have been central to ecocritical work; I suggest a similar perspective and relation to these "nomads" is found in Jeffers' philosophy of Inhumanism, which likewise considers a worldview and ethics shifting emphasis from the human to the nonhuman, and another in Heidegger's poetics of being in accordance with the earth (evident in his readings of works by Hölderlin, Rilke, and Trakl, for instance (See: del Caro, Brasher). While ecocritical questions are not central to this dissertation, there is some overlap in terms of a critique of subjectivity; Geopoetics and/or ecocriticism often critique the notion of the chain of being with the human having dominion over the earth, the speciesist notion of acting foremost for the human, and the individualist notion of acting for the persona-subject foremost, all of which are considered to have been detrimental to the earth; the lyrics of stone critique notions of the individual or persona being at the center of lyric, and likewise suggest that figures of the earth and/or stone can shift focus to more encompassing notions of subjectivity.

³⁸ "В лирике активен субъект, но субъект лирики не обязательно индивидуалед [...] Особое положение личности в лирике общепризнано (хотя понимают его по разному). Но у лирики есть свой парадокс. Самый субъективный род литературы, она, как никакой другой, устремлена к общему, к изображению душевной жизни как всеобщей" (10).

read against notions of lyric's erasure of the personal in Nietzsche's theory.³⁹ Alternatively, reading Mikhail Bakhtin's comments on lyric in various writings, positioning the genre as monologic, emotional, and heightened discourse bears resemblances to persona-based models of lyric.⁴⁰ In short, with a critical view that is panoramic rather than narrow, this dissertation runs on the faith that in looking comparatively, beyond either/or dichotomies, richer understandings of poetic *possibility* can come to light.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Lyric Petrologies reads a wide range of poetic and poetological texts, demonstrating how the possibilities of stone are formulated in lyric and thereby construct a shifting *poetics* of stone. In the following chapters, I track this poetics of stone as it develops across twentieth-century German and Russian lyric, demonstrating how the absorption of ideas about stone as non-vocal, non-feeling, and impersonal, as well as its deep temporality and alternative legibilities estrange our fundamental notions of lyric and lyric subjectivity. My project follows a roughly chronological order, beginning with texts by Rilke, Mandelstam, and Trakl from the first two decades of the twentieth century and ending with Celan's and Sach's texts of the 1950s and 1960s. At the same time, the chapters are structured to define the set of rhetorical approaches that characterize the varying petrological lyrics from across the twentieth century.

Chapter two, "Invocations of Stone in Mandelstam, Rilke, and Trakl:

Architecture, Anthropomorphism, Petrification," considers lyrics that raise the first of

³⁹ See: Zhirmunsky (123, 131-132); Gasparov ("Commentary," 17).

⁴⁰ For an overview of Bakhtin's comments on this topic, as well as an argument his work actually presents a more complex understanding of poetry, see Eskin, "Bakhtin on Poetry."

these rhetorical approaches, writing to and about stone. Lyrics by these authors exemplify what I argue to be a special mode of address, or invocation. I begin by examining Mandelstam's early poetics of stone as articulated in his manifesto "The Morning of Acmeism" and his first collection of verse, *Stone* (1913). I focus attention on two of his Acmeist poems, "Hagia Sophia" and "Notre Dame." For Mandelstam and his fellow Acmeists, stone signifies ideals of concreteness, groundedness, and a detachment from personal feeling that was an explicit departure from the otherworldly poetics of preceding Symbolism movements. Nikolai Gumilev, for example, writes in his essay "The Legacy of Symbolism and Acmeism" ("Наследие символизма и акмеизма," 1913) that Acmeism "demands a greater balance of force and a more precise knowledge of the relation between subject and object than was the case for Symbolism."⁴¹ For the Acmeists, this sense of detachment, balance, and concreteness is directly related to the importance of figures of architecture.

The architectural poems "Hagia Sophia" and "Notre Dame," addressing works made of stone (which have uncanny parallels to Rilke's own architectural and sculptural verse, as I indicate in this same chapter) bear traces of human craft, history, and anthropomorphic structure. As I show by reading John Ruskin's comments on architecture alongside Mandelstam's verse, however, even in invoking these crafted works, these lyrics grapple with stone's qualities of resistance, endurance, and hardness as elements that estrange subjectivity, suggesting that the works of stone have as much power to act on the writing of them as does their hypothetical observer.

⁴¹ "На смену символизма идет новое направление, как бы оно ни называлось, — акмеизм или (от слова *ἀχμη* — высшая степень чего-либо, цвет, цветущая пора), или адамизм (мужественно твердый и ясный взгляд на жизнь), — во всяком случае, требующее большего равновесия сил и более точного знания отношений между субъектом и объектом, чем то было в символизме" (146-147).

Following these Acmeist poems, I examine Rilke's sonnet "Archaic Torso of Apollo" from his *New Poems* (1907-1908), which likewise considers how the thingishness of stone resists our attempts to domesticate it. The poem invokes a marble statue of Apollo, but ruined one: a crafted, anthropomorphic work that is returning to its constitutive minerality. Even in writing about an anthropomorphic work that would seem to submit to language's humanization, Rilke's lyric cannot help but invoke the stone's potential to resist and leave an indelible mark on that language.

In the final section of chapter two, I discuss how lyrics of stone thwart the genre's standard associations with voice and expression through a reading of Trakl's three-part poem "Bright Spring." Trakl's lyric positions a tombstone as an enduring marker of human absence, as a material entity that stands in marked contrast to the inevitable decay of organic life and the decline of human existence. "Bright Spring" foreshadows the exploration of stone's temporality in the later works of Mandelstam and Celan, while also verbalizing the poetics of the tombstone as a legible entity that "speaks" for the absent human in its durable silent minerality, as Heidegger's reading of the poem illuminates. "Bright Spring," I argue, figures the tombstone as the petrification of the human word, so that the task of the lyric becomes one of reversion.

In chapter three, "Lyricizing the Lexicon of Stone: Geological Discourse and Lyric Temporality in Mandelstam and Celan" I analyze a second major rhetorical approach of the petrological lyrics: writing *in terms of stone*. Mandelstam's poetological essays and lyrics of the 1920s and 1930s explore the lyric potential of stone in sharp contrast to his earlier architectural interests, drawing instead upon "found" stone and natural history. In his essays like "The Word and Culture," "The Wheat of Humanity," and "Conversation about Dante," and lyrics like "The One Who Found a Horseshoe,"

Mandelstam articulates a deliberately anachronistic vision of poetry. It is one drawn in opposition to the development of Soviet culture during this period, one that instead aligns poetry with the temporality of stone and natural history, and seeks out tropes taken from the language of archaeology, fossilization, petrification, and excavation.

Celan's poetics of stone, deeply and openly indebted to Mandelstam as it is, likewise draws upon geological discourse to investigate alternative modes of lyric temporality. The terminology of stone in Celan's works is often taken from texts on geology, mining, geography and other scientific sources. Abstract, technical, highly specialized, and far removed from the typical language of expressive lyric, this discourse implies that the very vocabulary of these texts lies outside the boundaries of any conceivable individualized subjectivity. In this chapter, I focus on Celan's use of geological discourse in poems from his *Breathcrystal* cycle of the collection *Breathturn* (1967)—“Slickensides, fold-axes,” “Wordaccretion, volcanic,” and “Eroded by.” These texts, like Mandelstam's, position the vast temporality of stone as yet another means to think of a lyric mode outside of individual expression.

Chapter four, “The Legible Mineral: Emulations of Stone in Sachs and Celan,” examines a third rhetorical approach of the petrological lyrics: writing *as* stone. Texts by these authors emulate stone's varying legibilities—as a scientific or mystical record of the readable earth, or as a *tabula rasa* for more idiosyncratic, phenomenological readings. Though such possibilities are hinted at in earlier works, Celan's and Sachs' lyrics of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s explore them most extensively. Drawing upon notions of fossilization, stratification, and mineralogy, texts from Celan's collections *Speech-Grille* (1959; “Draft of a Landscape,” “Stretto”) and *The No-One's Rose* (1963, “Le Menhir,” “Erratic”), and lyrics from several of Sachs' collections from the same period (i.e.,

“Chorus of Stones,” “Fleeing,” and “The Archive”), forefront stone as an alternative kind of text, with an entirely different mode of legibility to be emulated in lyric. As I demonstrate in chapter three, the conceptual resources Celan’s and Sachs’ texts draw upon are manifold, including Kabbalistic notions of the alphabet of creation and originary language, the metaphors of the readable world, and scientific perspectives on the earth as a legible record of natural history. I buttress my exposition of these concepts with references to works by Hans Blumenberg and Roger Caillois on the legibility of the earth and stone, Gershom Scholem’s studies of the Kabbalah, Daniel Tiffany on “lyric substance,” and Christopher Tilley on landscape phenomenology. In the light of debates about the legitimacy and efficacy of post-Holocaust lyric, and of the way that Celan and Sachs have been critically held up as its representatives, their texts demonstrate stone’s potentiality to model reconceptualized lyric languages and subjectivities. Precisely because their petrological lyrics are founded on a nonhuman legibility, precisely because stone is structured to bear significance without being burdened by prior meaning and over-interpretation, it has the potential to model alternative languages not tainted by the misuses of German and the legacy of cultural destruction that preceded their writing.

This range of rhetorical approaches—writing to and about stone (invocation), writing in terms of stone (discourse) and writing as stone (emulation)—indicate the variability of the petrological lyrics, and diverse ways in which the nonhuman and human might be related in language. Chapter five, “The Language of Things and the Lyric of Stone (Conclusion)” takes a step backwards, chronologically speaking, in order to consider the conceptual grounds of this project. Taking a look at Benjamin’s essay “On Language as Such and On the Language of Man” and related works like “The Storyteller,” I put Benjamin’s concept of “the language of things” into conversation with

the languages of stone that the preceding chapters identify in the lyrics of Rilke, Trakl, Mandelstam, Celan, and Sachs. Benjamin's concept articulates a perspective on the powers things have to impact language—not to “speak” in any colloquial sense of the term, but to communicate themselves *through* human language, leaving indelible traces. In positioning things as having potential (rather than the bare passivity of Heidegger's stone, for instance), Benjamin's work presages that of contemporary political theorist Jane Bennett's explanation of “vibrant matter” and some aspects of recent work in Object Oriented Ontology and related critical discussions. However, Benjamin directs specific attention to the relation of language and materiality, a topic largely overlooked in the work of these contemporary theorists, who seek instead to identify independent ontologies of things. In the context of this dissertation, Benjamin's work helps to define the idea of a nonhuman lyric, theorizing the means by which stone's properties, temporality, and modes of legibility exemplify not only ways in which it is silently communicable to us, but communicates through poetic language, shaping its form and rhetoric. Examining Mandelstam's brief lyric “I shall perform a smoky rite” at the start of this concluding chapter, I close with a reading of Celan's “Mandorla” in the light of Benjamin's language of things, demonstrating that the poem's multi-faceted evocation of the presence and absence of stone and stony discourse exemplifies the dynamic strangeness of the petrological lyrics, the potential their nonhuman perspectives have to defamiliarize our notions of lyric and lyric subjectivity.

CHAPTER TWO

INVOCATIONS OF STONE IN MANDELSTAM, RILKE, AND TRAKL: ARCHITECTURE,
ANTHROPOMORPHISM, PETRIFICATION

One of the quieter lyrics in his collection *New Poems*, Rilke's "In a Foreign Park"
("In einem fremden Park," 1907) evokes a moment of visitation in a cemetery:

[...] alleingelassen wieder mit dem Steine
und wieder auf ihm lesend: Freiherrin
Brite Sophie - und wieder mit dem Finger
abführend die zerfallne Jahreszahl—.
Warum wird dieses Finden nicht geringer? (*WDB* 1:173)

[...] once again alone with the stone,
and once again reading on it: Baroness
Brite Sophie—and once again, with your finger,
feeling the crumbling date—.
Why does this discovery not become more remote?

I find this text illustrative not only as an epitaph to this chapter, an invitation to "Stay, Reader," but also because the lyric's gesture of a finger tracing the weatherworn date etched into the gravemarker brings human interaction with stone front and center; the addressee of this lyric is "alone with the stone."¹ "In a Foreign Park," and the poems I consider in this chapter, juxtapose the human and the stone in some of its crafted forms: architecture, sculpture, a tombstone. Mandelstam's "Hagia Sophia" ("Айя София," 1912) and "Notre Dame" (1912) present their eponymous structures as paradigms of how resistant stone can be transformed into something culturally and anthropomorphically legible. Ultimately, this possibility becomes the grounds of Mandelstam's Acmeist poetics.

¹ See Waters' *Poetry's Touch* for an extensive reading of this poem (98-104).

Rilke's "The Archaic Torso of Apollo" (1907), an imaginative reconstruction of a fragmentary statue, raises the possibility that an aesthetic encounter with a stone can have a formative bearing on subjectivity, insofar as the stone can be humanized. Trakl's "Bright Spring" (1911) a lyric that collides our notions of presence and absence, leaves one considering how a tombstone can simultaneously be a reminder of human loss and of stone's material and temporal persistence.

These texts invoke entities of stone that bear signals of language, history, and human experience written on their surface, so to speak, latent but brought forth in writing. Aside from analyzing the means by which "Hagia Sophia," "Notre Dame," "The Archaic Torso of Apollo," and "Bright Spring" individually approach these signals, another goal of this chapter is to demonstrate how the texts by Mandelstam, Rilke, and Trakl evidence poetic traits and possibilities which are explored to a greater extent in the later works of Mandelstam, Celan, and Sachs. For the earlier texts, stone's qualities like density, resistance, and durability become the conceptual means by which it pushes back against voice, affect, human history, and anthropomorphic form as present in lyric. The "found" stone which becomes so important in the poetics of the later texts—the mineral as such, not formed into architecture, sculpture, etc.—does not readily elicit narration, does not present human design, and is outside of human history. Not humanness is a given imprint upon stone as such, void of inherent significations, as it is for crafted forms of architecture and sculpture.

Even when reading stone in familiar terms, however, these early twentieth-century texts by Mandelstam, Rilke, and Trakl do a remarkable thing in invoking the paradigm of muteness—reminding us that one of the things which lyric can do so well, so pointedly, and so memorably is call the inanimate into the spotlight. Several times in his seminal

essay “Apostrophe”—which argues that the trope is identifiable with lyric itself—Jonathan Culler turns his attention to the possibility of addressing nonhuman things. In his attempt to sketch apostrophe’s importance in lyric, he first considers whether “to apostrophize is to will a state of affairs, to attempt to call it into being by asking inanimate objects to bend themselves to your desire. In these terms the function of apostrophe would be to make the objects of the universe potentially responsive forces” (139). Later in his essay, Culler posits another level of reading, “where the vocative of apostrophe is a device which the poetic voice uses to establish with an object a relationship which helps to constitute him.” (142). Similar questions about lyric’s relation to material objects have been raised by Barbara Johnson (*Persons and Things*), William Waters, and others. The strangeness of this is clear. Culler raises the possibility, but only obliquely. Waters, in his book-length study *Poetry’s Touch: On Lyric Address*, excludes the notion of addressing the nonhuman from the very first page.² In his own essay “On the Addressee” (“О собеседнике,” 1913), Mandelstam writes “people are right when they call a man mad who addresses his speech to inanimate objects, to nature, but never to his living brothers” (*CPL*, 67).³ Nevertheless, the lyrics by Mandelstam, Rilke and Trakl considered in this chapter demand that we think about the vitality of these mineral entities, their efficacy to act on us, even as they explore the means by which stone impacts lyric subjectivity to the extent to which it can be humanized.

² In opening his study, Waters asks a series of questions about address and apostrophe (“To whom does a poem speak? Do poems really communicate with those who they address? Is reading a poem like overhearing? Like intimate conversation? Like performing a script? [...] In the diverse poems I discuss here [...] the address itself always becomes an axis of the poem’s concern. The poem persistently revolves around, or thinks about, the contact that it is (or is not) making with the person to whom it is speaking”) before clarifying in a footnote that “I leave aside, as not raising the same questions, both apostrophe to nonhuman entities—houses, tigers, the age—and most poems addressing groups of people” (*Poetry’s Touch*, 1).

³ “И люди правды, когда клеймят именем безумца того, чьи речи обращены к бездушным предметам, к природе, а не к живым братьям” (*CC* 1:182).

“Hagia Sophia,” “Notre Dame,” “The Archaic Torso of Apollo,” and “Bright Spring” were all written within the half-decade of 1907-1912, though their authors were spread geographically across Europe from Paris to St. Petersburg, and linguistically from German to Russian. One could seek to understand this group of texts in terms of literary-historical connections (i.e., Mandelstam’s affinities with German culture, Rilke’s and Trakl’s with Russian, or the importance of all three for Celan and his own poetics of stone). I juxtapose works by these poets, however, because they are the most arresting examples of the poetics of stone in the first decades of the twentieth century, laying ground for work to come in its later decades. At the nexus of these lyrics by Mandelstam, Rilke, and Trakl, the poetics of stone vis-à-vis modes of humanizing it becomes visible as a shared exploration across German and Russian literatures, one with implications that extend even beyond their varied spaces.

RAISING THE STONE: THE ACMEIST POETICS OF ARCHITECTURE

The writings of Mandelstam and his fellow Acmeists draw numerous comparisons between the craft of poetry and the craft of architecture. In 1913, the St. Petersburg journal *Apollo* served as the staging ground for declarations of Acmeist poetics, and consequently as a forum for expressing their fondness for architecture. The third issue of *Apollo* from that year contains Acmeist manifestos by the poets Nikolai Gumilev and Sergei Gorodetsky (“The Legacy of Symbolism and Acmeism” / “Наследие символизма и акмеизма” and “A Few Tendencies in Contemporary Russian Poetry” / “Некоторые течение в современной русской поэзии,” respectively). Mandelstam’s manifesto “The Morning of Acmeism” (“Утро акмеизма”), though written at the same time, was ultimately not published in *Apollo*. In its place, his lyric poems “Hagia Sophia”

and “Notre Dame” were published alongside Gumilev’s and Gorodetsky’s essays. Standard readings of “Hagia Sophia” and “Notre Dame” understand the texts as paradigmatic instantiations of Acmeist aesthetics, and thus as *lyrical* manifestos.⁴

Both the prose and lyric manifestos turn to architectural imagery to express Acmeist ideals. In closing “The Legacy of Symbolism and Acmeism,” for example, Gumilev discusses Acmeism’s literary role models (Shakespeare, Rabelais, Villon, and Theophile Gautier), deeming each “a cornerstone for the building of Acmeism.”⁵ Similarly, in “The Morning of Acmeism,” Mandelstam cites the Russian poet Fyodor Tyutchev as yet another “foundation stone” of Acmeism.⁶ Writing about literary models as stones contributing to the edifice of Acmeism demonstrates one way in which the movement merged the verbal and the architectural; Mandelstam’s lyrical explorations of the architecture of Hagia Sophia and Notre Dame are another.

Yet the poetic movement saw an even more fundamental connection between the word and stone. Mandelstam’s first lyric collection is titled *Stone* (*Камень*, 1913), suggesting that the poems contained within ought to be read as “stones,” as defined, substantial,

⁴ Brown makes this point explicit, noting, for instance, that *Notre Dame* and *adam* (Adamism is an alias of Acmeism) rhyme and are anagrams (191). Mikhail Gasparov reiterates the argument that “Notre Dame” is a lyric manifesto, particularly since it followed Gumilev’s and Gorodetsky’s manifestos in *Apollo*. Brown and Cavanagh also see the two lyrics as instantiations of Acmeist principles. However, Gasparov also thinks of “Hagia Sophia” and “Notre Dame” in terms of binaries: the former text characterizes its structure as descending from the divine, and its key concepts are beauty, power, and staticism; the latter text figures Notre Dame as rising from the earth, and its key concepts are joy, force, and dynamism (204).

⁵ “В кругах, близких к акмеизму, чаще всего произносятся имена Шекспира, Рабле, Виллона и Теофиля Готье. Подбор этих имен не произволен. Каждое из них — краеугольный камень для здания акмеизма, высокое напряжение той или иной его стихии” (44).

⁶ Referencing Tyutchev’s poem *Problème* (1833/1857), Mandelstam writes: “But Tyutchev’s stone, which ‘having rolled down the mountain, lay in the valley, torn loose itself, or loosened by a sentient hand,’ is the word. The voice of matter in this unexpected fall sounds like articulate speech. Only architecture can answer this challenge. Reverently the Acmeists raise this mysterious Tyutchevian stone and make it the foundation stone of their own building” (“Но камень Тютчева, что «с горы скатившись, лег в долине, сорвавшись сам собой иль был низвергнут мыслящей рукой», — есть слово. Голос материи в этом неожиданном падении звучит, как членораздельная речь. На этот вызов можно ответить только архитектурой. Акмеисты с благоговением поднимают таинственный тютчевский камень и кладут его в основу своего здания.”) (*CC* 1:178; *CPL*, 62).

grounded units of language. Aside from the title of Mandelstam's collection, Ronen has argued that "stone" is key to understanding the very name of Acmeism.⁷ As the architectural language of the movement emphasizes, however, it is not simply an identification of word and stone which is significant, but rather the drawing of a corollary between architecture and poetry: as the architect takes the unhewn matter of stone and shapes it into a meaningful structure, so the poet takes the fundamental material of words and forms it into structures of lyric meaning. There is an emphasis on craftsmanship; "The Morning of Acmeism," for example, praises the guilds of workers that built medieval cathedrals as an artistic ideal.

The honor of craft, for the Acmeists, comes in the human effort of work, that reforms material into structures of function, beauty, or both.⁸ "The Morning of Acmeism" forges a close analogical link between the material stone and the origin of art: "The artist [...] considers his world view a tool and an instrument, like a hammer in the hands of a stonemason, and his only reality is the work of art itself" (*CPL*, 61).⁹ According to this analogy, a worldview is a tool for understanding and shaping reality, as a hammer and chisel are tools for shaping stone. In fact, reality only emerges in the shaping, for it is only found in the work of art itself, Mandelstam asserts. The end result is evidence of a reciprocal relationship: stone must be overcome in the shaping of reality and the process

⁷ Ronen traces *ἀγχι* (*acmē*) to the Greek word for "anvil" or "meteoric stone" (*akmōn*) and to the Sanskrit *ācman* (meaning both "stone" and "sky"), and also suggests that *acme* (as in "Акмеизм" / "Acmeism") ought to be seen as an anagram of *камень* (*kamen'*, the Russian word for "stone") ("Лексический повтор," 16). This *acme* – *kamen'* connection is made quite clear on the title-page to the first edition of *Stone*, where the former word appears below the title (see Basker). For more overviews of the poetics of stone in Mandelstam's Acmeist work, see: Ronen ("Лексический повтор"), Glazov-Corrigan (29-32), Darwin, Thomson.

⁸ As the Acmeist manifestos elaborate, this praise of craftsmanship and the reshaping of hard, grounded, resistant material is also a polemical response to the more mystical and unearthly poetics of the movement's Symbolist predecessors.

⁹ "Между тем мироощущение для художника орудие и средство, как молоток в руках каменщика, и единственно реальное—это само произведение" (*CC* 1:177).

of creation, but that same process depends on stone to happen at all. On the other hand, stone acquires meaning only when the stonemason has shaped it.

As lyric manifestos, Mandelstam's "Hagia Sophia" and "Notre Dame" express Acmeism in theory and practice. Besides their initial appearance in *Apollo*, the pair concludes the first edition of Mandelstam's *Stone*. With its final and penultimate lyrics treating renowned and sacred structures from the East and West, the 1913 edition of *Stone* simultaneously addresses Acmeism's "longing for world culture" and its fondness for architectural subject matter and tropes (Brown, 136). As works that draw specific attention to the material composition of the structures they reference, the two lyrics also comprise compelling case studies for analyzing Mandelstam's poetics of stone.

HAGIA SOPHIA: THE WEIGHT OF HISTORY

Mandelstam's "Hagia Sophia," in many respects, can be read as a short, ekphrastic ode. Its five regularly rhymed (*abab*) and metered (iambic) stanzas praise the form of the building, beginning with an obligatory apostrophization: "Hagia Sophia— here did God decree / That nations and emperors should halt!" ("Айя-София,— здесь остановиться / Судил Господь народам и царям!").¹⁰ Cavanagh's reading of the text argues that the metrical particularity of its opening ("Hagia" / "Айя" is the only trochaic foot in the largely iambic lyric) and the visual impact of the dash create a sense of "remove and isolation" (*Modernist Creation*, 73). Yet I see this heralding of the magnificent structure not as a lyrical move of distancing but, quite the contrary, as a lyric invocation, as a presencing of Hagia Sophia. The structure's name is inescapable, given once in the

¹⁰ In this chapter, I quote from the (slightly amended) translations of "Hagia Sophia" (CC 1:79) and "Notre Dame" (CC 1:79-80) from Cavanagh (*Modernist Creation*, 69, 70).

lyric's title and then immediately echoed in its first two words; the dash which follows represents an astonished pause, a moment of awed silence in which one might indeed halt before the sublime work of architecture. The lyric's announcement of God's order to halt there is not only an index to the historical succession of the building's Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim possessors, but an imperative to the reader to "halt here" ("здесь остановиться"), and behold the lyric's representation of Hagia Sophia.

The interior stanzas of "Hagia Sophia" highlight and concentrate attention on specific architectural details of the structure, lyrically deconstructing and reassembling it. Thus, the apostrophization of Hagia Sophia is not only a call to observe the weight of history, the narrative of "nations and emperors" legible on the stony palimpsest, but a imperative to consider in detail the hefty stones which compose the structure itself. Thinking in textual terms befitting the Acmeist corollary of architectural stone and poetic word, we can characterize Mandelstam's approach to Hagia Sophia as a close reading of the structure, with an attendant argument: the structure is a signifier of conflicts between time and material, between the dynamic and the static. For example, the sense of history evident in the arresting emphasis of the first lines of "Hagia Sophia" is contrasted, in the stanza's third and fourth lines, to the material of the structure itself: "In fact, your cupola, as one eyewitness said, / Seems suspended from the heavens on a chain" ("Ведь купол твой, по слову очевидца, / Как на цепи подвешен к небесам").¹¹ That wondrous dome caps the huge complex of Hagia Sophia, "in fact" (*ведь*), as though to prove the reasons why "nations and emperors" would halt there. The material of the structure, we are reminded, is inseparable from its cultural significance.

¹¹ Thinking biographically, Pzybylski writes that Mandelstam never visited Hagia Sophia, and relied on the descriptions of it by Procopius of Caesaria, an "eyewitness," for his lyric about the structure (109).

Indeed, Hagia Sophia's cupola is something to marvel over. Viewed from the outside, it appears as a multitude of precisely-cut stones shaped to form an enormous, smooth, and rounded dome capped by a golden spire. Viewed from the inside of the structure, the dome's sweeping expanse seems to defy logic: how could such heavy, resistant stones be formed into something so open, high enough that it could enclose the Tower of Pisa (Howse)? As Mandelstam's lyric attests, the dome appears to balk at its own enormous weight and float suspended atop the rest of Hagia Sophia. Architecture, in Mandelstam's Acmeist thought, is the transubstantiation of that which is heavy and earth-bound (stone) into that which rises into the heavens above.

The sublime wonder in all of this lies in the overcoming of stone's material resistance, the mastery of it by the architectural human. Mandelstam's "Hagia Sophia" continues to celebrate this in its second stanza. There, once again, the lyric is conscious of history, alluding to the Emperor Justinian's sixth-century order to remove one hundred and seven marble columns from the temple of Artemis (Diana) in Ephesus to be reused for renovations of Hagia Sophia.¹² Granted, these marble columns were taken with divine aid (as befits a religious structure, an intermediary between the earthly and the divine), the lyric asserts, for Diana "permits" their "theft" for "foreign gods" ("Когда похитить для чужих богов / Позволила эфесская Диана / Сто сем зеленых мраморных столбов"). Yet the allusion is still a celebration of the human's mastery of stone, for the theft of the marble columns is described in "Hagia Sophia" as an "example" or monument (*пример*), and indeed an enduring one, for it is one "for all the ages" ("всем

¹² In his writings on architecture, Hegel also mentions the theft of the columns from the Temple of Ephesus for the renovations of Hagia Sophia (see Sallis, 50). There is no direct evidence that Mandelstam ever read Hegel, though he might have during his study abroad in Heidelberg prior to writing *Stone*, where he attended lectures on architectural history (Nerler). At any rate, the coincidence demonstrates that the historical incident might have circulated widely in architectural discussions.

векам”). This notion of the “example” has a ring of pride about it, especially within the context of the odic “Hagia Sophia.” The example itself again demonstrates how culture and material stone collide in Mandelstam’s lyric, for it is a sign not only that a historical emperor could have the authority for such a theft, but a celebration of the fact that humans could move something so heavy and resistant as stone, even across great distances, in order to create.

The third, middle stanza of “Hagia Sophia” takes a more hesitant approach to thinking about human ingenuity in mastering stone; the entire quatrain forms a single question, rather than the assertion of another paradigmatic “example”: “But what was your lavish builder thinking / When high in spirit and design / He distributed the apses and exedrae / Having shown them which was west and which was east?” (“Но что же думал твой строитель щедрый, / Когда, душой и помыслом высок, / Расположил апсиды и экседры, / Им указав на запад и восток?”). The stanza pays due attention to architectural detail, the “apses and exedra,” incorporated precise terminology used to characterize the human’s rational, intentional shaping of stone which, the lyric asserts, arise as the act of a builder “high in spirit and design.” Yet the stanza hesitates, for the builder is described as *щедрый*, which might be “generous” but could just as well mean “lavish,” pointing toward a kind of cultural excess, a doubting of the structure’s justice.

In the fourth stanza, however, all hesitation and doubt vanish as the lyric reasserts the humanistic, cultural mastery over stone. It begins like a revision of the first stanza, by re-apostrophizing Hagia Sophia, this time not by its given name, but via an epithet, “beautiful temple” (“прекрасен храм”). The stanza likewise praises the cupola (*купол*), as the first stanza does. Mandelstam’s stanza is an accurate ekphrasis of the cupola, for it describes the forty windows that surround the cupola, along with the famed mosaics of

four six-winged angels that are present on the pendentives supporting the dome. In the first line of the stanza, the temple as a whole is beautiful (*прекрасен*), but its final line declares these angels to be the “most beautiful of all” (“прекраснее всего”). This chiasmus marks a hierarchical relationship. Though the angels are humanoid figures, not strictly human ones, they are more recognizably human than the temple’s constitutive stone.¹³ Even in a text which celebrates the potentiality of heavy, resistant stone to be transformed by human hands into something marvelously aloft, it is the representations of a humanoid figure on the stone walls of the temple which become the pinnacle of beauty.

Shifting between close readings of the temple as a historical index and close readings of the temple as an awe-inspiring work of stone, “Hagia Sophia” presents an impressive, imposing structure. Its essential materiality, the lyric boasts in the final stanza, “will outlive nations and ages” (“Народы и века переживет”) despite the superficial subtractions and additions that have occurred in the fleeting successions of history.¹⁴ Having hailed the structure by name in its first line, the lyric’s final stanza reiterates an address to Hagia Sophia, albeit a translated one. Cavenagh argues that the text’s title and opening address transliterate the name of Hagia Sophia into Cyrillic characters as *Айя-София*, but do not translate its meaning (“divine wisdom”), so that “the reader is on foreign soil from the start” (73). Yet, I argue, echoing this initial address in the final stanza, the text designates Hagia Sophia a “wise, spherical building” (“мудрое сферическое зданье”), which translates the idea of wisdom, *sophia*, into a native Russian

¹³ I utilize the term “humanoid” in this chapter to mark the fact that statues of human forms are themselves nonhuman (made of stone), as are other types of representations of the human in the nonhuman (e.g. treating the Gothic cathedral as modeled on human physiology). I also utilize the term as a reminder where human-like or anthropomorphic forms are representations of the divine or divine power.

¹⁴ Mandelstam’s “Реймс и Кельн” (1914), perhaps in response to the destruction of the Reims cathedral by German forces, turns instead to the possible fragility of architecture, when a personified Cologne cathedral stands in solidarity and asks “Что сотворили вы над реймским братом?” (CC I: 247). See also the notes to this poem in the Gleb-Filippov edition of the *Собрание сочинений* (1:480-481).

equivalent, “wise” (*μυθροε*). Since the characterization of Hagia Sophia as “wise” assigns it a quality not inherent to stone, but normally ascribed to humans, it demonstrates the Acmeist paradigm of architecture as the formation of stone into culturally legible, humanized forms.

OVERCOMING STONE: MANDELSTAM’S “NOTRE DAME”

Whereas “Hagia Sophia” stresses that the stones comprising the temple form a legible record of human history, its counterpart “Notre Dame” emphasizes the eponymous Gothic cathedral as a triumph of creative ingenuity: by the work of human hands, rough, raw, unordered stone was transformed into a soaring, sublime work of art. Elements of this idea that heavy and resistant stone must be overcome in architecture are likewise present in “Hagia Sophia,” as I have demonstrated. Yet “Notre Dame” characterizes this overcoming less as a historical process and more as an individual act of study and creativity.

Judging it by its first stanza alone, “Notre Dame” would appear to mirror “Hagia Sophia,” for both situate their respective works of architecture in terms of place: the latter as a point where “nations and emperors” ought to halt, along with the reader; the former as a “basilica” standing on the site “Where a Roman judge had judged a foreign nation” (“Где римский судия судил чужой народ / стоит базилика”). This pairing is evident even on the level of diction, as Brown indicates, for the first stanzas of each lyric prominently feature the same words: God decreed (“судил”) that nations (*народы*) should halt before Hagia Sophia, while “Notre Dame” declares that a Roman judge had judged (“судил”) a foreign nation (“народ”).

Yet below these obvious points of similarity, more subtle points differentiate Mandelstam's two lyrics. Certainly, both poems indicate specific historical events (e.g., Justinian's theft of the columns, or the fact that Notre Dame is located on the Île de la Cité in the Seine, where there was indeed once a Roman settlement) (Gasparov, *О Русской Поэзии*, 265). Yet "Notre Dame" gets history "wrong," so to speak, in calling the cathedral a "basilica" (*базилика*), which more properly applies to Eastern sacred architecture rather than Western (Steiner, 244). This is likely not a misnomer the architecturally-minded Mandelstam would have carelessly made. Rather, in one respect the terminological substitution reflects the programmatic Hellenism evident in much of Mandelstam's early work. Moreover, it points to the much more fanciful, creative approach "Notre Dame" takes to thinking about the stones that make up the cathedral.

"Hagia Sophia," for instance, marvels at the way that the massive stone dome of the temple floats as if suspended on a chain from heaven—yet "Notre Dame" compares the "light, cruciform arch" to the first man, Adam, "spreading out its nerves" and "play[ing] with its muscles" ("Как некогда Адам, распластывая нервы, / Играет мышцами крестовый легкий свод"). In "Notre Dame," architecture is not only wondrous for transforming heavy, resistant stone into soaring, sweeping archways, but also because these transformations take on an anthropomorphic character. The fundamental anthropomorphic plan of the stone cathedral alluded to here is part of the basic structure of the Catholic cathedral, which is modeled after the shape of the cross ("cruciform" / "крестовый") which Jesus' body hung upon. The idea of the cathedral as anthropomorphized stone has other origins in Christian scripture, as Cavanagh points out, for the Gospels of Peter and of Matthew both write of the members of the church as "living stones"; individuals make up both the church as congregation and the church as

edifice, just as the individual stones together make up the cathedral itself (*Modernist Creation*, 71). “Notre Dame” takes this basic allusion as the starting point for reading the stone cathedral as thoroughly anthropomorphic, in the “muscles” of the archways, or the structure’s “monstrous ribs” (“чудовищные ребра”), presumably its high vaults.¹⁵

Commenting on both Mandelstam’s and Rilke’s architectural lyrics, George writes that they “operate with a poetic corollary of architecture defined as human (and, more generally, animal) physiology, namely, that there exists a mysterious equation among the media of the divine creator (flesh), of the architect and sculptor (stone), and of the poet (word)” (4). The balance of this equation, as well as its stone-craft imagery, is rather Acmeist, contributing to the understanding of Mandelstam’s “Notre Dame” as a manifesto for the poetic movement. In “The Morning of Acmeism,” Mandelstam praises the logic of divinely-inspired Gothic architecture; this logic is celebrated in “Notre Dame” as well, for “a secret plan is betrayed from without” (“выдает себя снаружи тайный план”), demonstrating how the marvelous, soaring anthropomorphic architecture holds itself up. Viewing the cathedral from the outside, the lyric suggests, once can see that “Here the strength of the saddle-arches has taken care / so that the weighty mass won’t crush the walls” (“Здесь позаботилась подпружных арок сила, / Чтоб масса грузная стены не сокрушила”). Essentially, this secret plan demonstrates that the massive heft of Notre Dame’s stones is not suspended from the heavens above, as is Hagia Sophia’s, but rather rises from the ground up, thanks to human hands: the ingenuity of engineering, in the Gothic age, realized techniques (e.g. flying buttresses) for supporting the enormous

¹⁵ Cavenagh writes that “[t]he model for Notre Dame is our own physiology, the human body writ large” (74). See also Przybylski, who discusses anthropomorphism in Mandelstam’s architectural poems, attributing it to the poet’s interest in a renewed Hellenism, and who suggests that Dmitry Aynalov’s study *Эллинистические основы византийского искусства* (*The Hellenistic Foundations of Byzantine Art*, 1900) provided an important source for Mandelstam (108).

weight of the stone required for the sublime cathedral's high walls.

Divine as it may be in inspiration and layout, Notre Dame is also a testament to the human; not only in its symbolic anthropomorphism, but in the legible record of its architectural ingenuity. In this way, "Notre Dame" does recall the human mastery of stone likewise celebrated in "Hagia Sophia." The third stanza of "Notre Dame," however, seems unsure of how to understand the cathedral. The highly paratactic stanza differs from the others in the lyric, as Steiner notes, in its concentration on nouns and descriptive adjectives rather than verbs of action (247). Primarily, the stanza is a series of contrasting epithets describing the cathedral:

Стихийный лабиринт, непостижимый лес,
Души готической рассудочная пропасть,
Египетская мощь и христианства робость,
С тростинкой рядом — дуб, и всюду царь — отвес.

Elemental labyrinth, incomprehensible forest,
The Gothic soul's rational abyss,
Egyptian might and Christian modesty:
Beside the reed—the oak, and everywhere the plumbline is tsar.

These internal oppositions or presentations of semantically "contrasting qualities" call the building's internal logic into question. In this cathedral, where "the plumbline is tsar," all would seem placed along a precise axis, obediently subject to the master-law of gravity.¹⁶ Sets of pairs push back against this fundamental force, however. The structure is said to be both an "elemental labyrinth," a construct designed for confusion, and an "incomprehensible forest."¹⁷ It is also said to be the paradoxical "rational abyss," despite

¹⁶ Steiner (250-251) and Ronen (*An Approach*, 120-124; 194-195) study the figure of the plumb line from a different perspective, noting Freemasonic symbolism in Mandelstam's work, including "Notre Dame."

¹⁷ Gasparov (268) sees Gogol and Baudelaire (his poem "Correspondences," which is also cited in "The Morning of Acmeism") as sources of the architecture/forest comparison. Steiner (249) suggests that the comparison (and perhaps the spider imagery—see below on "I hate the light of monotonous stars") stems from the writings of Joris-Karl Huysmans, especially his 1888 novel *La Cathédrale* (it is thus worth noting that Mandelstam reviewed Huysmans' *Croquis parisiens* for *Apollo* in 1913). The image of the cathedral as a forest

simultaneously being the site of the “Gothic soul” (in “The Morning of Acmeism,” Mandelstam explicitly links logic and the Gothic style). “Egyptian might” is likewise contrasted with “Christian modesty,” referencing varying worldviews and ways of life: pagan vs. Christian, ancient vs. modern era, Eastern vs. Western, etc. The respective architectures are likewise contrasting. Pyramids, so identified with Egyptian culture, are strictly geometric, non-figural, non-human; their structure emphasizes only the massive bulk of the stones that comprise them. Stones of the Gothic cathedral, however, are laid according to an anthropomorphic plan; the lyric style of “Notre Dame” exhibits a corresponding dynamic vitalism. Steiner concludes that “such [dynamic] organization exactly fits Mandelstam's notion of the Gothic cathedral as a restless organism,” an idea mentioned in the poet's earliest essay, on François Villon, and in “The Morning of Acmeism,” I would add (249).

The final stanza of “Notre Dame” again brings such contrasts into dynamic juxtaposition, this time adding an additional, metapoetic assertion that states the lyric's stony manifesto in direct terms.

Но чем внимательней, твердыня Notre Dame,
Я изучал твои чудовищные ребра,—
Тем чаще думал я: из тяжести недоброй
И я когда-нибудь прекрасное создам...

But the more attentively, O fortress, Notre Dame,
I studied your monstrous ribs,
The more often I thought: from cruel weight
I too will create beauty some day.

The two halves of the stanza compare the anthropomorphism of the cathedral to the

is also evident, however, in Hegel's writings on architecture (see Sallis, 67), which Mandelstam may have become acquainted with by this time (ie, during his studies in Heidelberg). The forest/architecture duo also appears in Rilke's architectural poetry from *New Poems* (see George, 8). Furthermore, the forest imagery returns in Mandelstam's “Horseshoe Finder.”

materiality of its constitutive stone. Notre Dame is contrasted to the bare and lifeless “cruel weight” of the rock that composes it. The weight of Notre Dame’s stone is “cruel” in this final stanza (“из тяжести недоброй”), emphasizing the hard work required of the stonemason-poet. The metapoetic significance of this stanza can be seen when it is compared to the more objective-descriptive second stanza of “Notre Dame,” which elaborates how the more neutral-sounding “weighty mass” (“масса грузная”) of stone is supported by arches. The epithet used to describe the cathedral in the fourth stanza also signals the call to overcome stone: it is a “fortress” (“твердыня”), a defensive structure that may be invaded, rather than a cathedral or basilica, as the first stanza deems it. The surprising end of “Notre Dame,” the lyric manifesto that closes the first edition of *Stone*, is that this resistant, lifeless, and heavy stone motivates art and the beautiful (*прекрасное*). Lyric arises out of comparison with the cathedral’s materiality, from the way it elicits attention, captivates, and requires overcoming. Stone, the resistant material that must be overcome in order to be crafted into art and architecture, demands nothing less.

The central concept of the metapoetic statement in “Notre Dame” is also evident in another poem from Mandelstam’s *Stone*, “I hate the light” (“Я ненавижу свет,” 1912), a poem which Celan later translated:¹⁸

Я ненавижу свет
 Однообразных звезд.
 Здравствуй, мой древний бред,-
 Башни стрельчатой рост!

Кружевом, камень, будь,
 И паутиной стань,
 Неба пустую грудь

¹⁸ The final two stanzas of “I hate the light” feature a metapoetic turn, much like that at the close of “Notre Dame” (see Gasparov, 266): “My turn will come – / I sense the spreading wings. / Yes, but where will the arrow / of living thought go?” (“Будет и мой черед - / Чую размах крыла. / Так, но куда уйдет / Мысли живой стрела?”). For more on the evolution of architectural and stone imagery across these and other of Mandelstam’s poems, see Thomson (i.e., 512-513).

Тонкой иглою рань! (CC 1:71)

I hate the light
of monotonous stars.
Hello, my old delirium, –
the tower's pointed height!

Stone, be lace,
turn into a spider's web,
Stab the sky's empty breast
with a thin needle!

In “The Morning of Acmeism,” Mandelstam revisits the image of the Gothic tower, again with language stressing overcoming, even conquest. There, the desire to overcome material is furious, savage, almost palpably so: “[t]o build means to conquer emptiness, to hypnotize space. The handsome arrow of the Gothic bellow rages because its function is to stab the sky, to reproach it for its emptiness” (63).¹⁹ “The tower's pointed height” (“Башни стрельчатой рост!”) which appeared in “The Morning of Acmeism” is, in “I hate the light,” commanded to “[s]tab the sky's empty breast / with a thin needle!” (“Неба пустую грудь / Тонкой иглою рань!”). We might paraphrase this as an imperative for the tower to rise up to overcome the “cruel weight” of stone by humanistic design and ingenuity. The underlying material, stone, is commanded by name (*камень*) to “be lace, / turn into a spider's web” (“Кружевом, камень, будь, / И паутиной стань”)—gossamer, fragile, delicate substances that are polar opposites of the heavy, dense, and resistant stone. Comparison with such substances, so finely crafted and structured, suggests that a cathedral or Gothic tower represents the radical transformation of this resistant material into awe-inspiringly intricate forms which seem to defy the laws

¹⁹ “Строить – значит бороться с пустотой, гипнотизировать пространство. Хорошая стрела готической колокольни – злая, потому что весь ее смысл – уколоть небо, попрекнуть его тем, что оно пусто” (CC 1:179).

of gravity as they soar upwards: the flying buttresses which do indeed seem to fly overhead, Notre Dame's façade which supports a delicate rose-window (which does indeed resemble a spider's web), and the high arches of its nave.

Gorodetsky's manifesto "A Few Tendencies" articulates the Acmeist poetics of resistance, drawing upon the characteristics of stone in the process. His essay cites one of the Acmeist "cornerstones," quoting in Russian translation a stanza from Gautier's famous programmatic lyric, "L'art" ("Art"), from the collection *Enamels and Cameos* (*Émaux et camées*, 1852-72).²⁰ A prose translation of the stanza reads: "Yes, more beautiful works come from forms that resist being worked: verse, marble, onyx, enamel." One can see how this poem attracted Acmeist admiration, for it groups verse among stone and other hard materials. The comparison of verse and stone is imaginative, for the linguistic art of poetry bears no immediately apparent resemblance to the density and hardness of stone. Yet the suggestion of Gautier's lyric could nevertheless be upheld as a programmatic ideal for Acmeism: a stone-like language would offer a "more beautiful art" by virtue of its resistance, its need to be overcome by the force of human craft.

MANDELSTAM AND RUSKIN: THE ANTHROPOMORPHIC VITALITY OF STONE

Mandelstam's "The Morning of Acmeism" likewise advocates principles of poetic resistance (*сопротивление*): "What madman would agree to build if he did not believe in the reality of his material, the resistance of which he knew he must overcome?" (*CPL*, 62).²¹ The mastery of resistant material is a necessity in Mandelstam's Acmeist poetics.

²⁰ "Создание тем прекрасней, / Чем взятый материал / Бесстрастней! – / Стих, мрамор иль металл" (50). "Oui, l'œuvre sort plus belle / D'une forme au travail / Rebelle, / Vers, marbre, onyx, émail" (Gautier, 223). For more on Gautier's importance for Acmeism, see Rubins, 190.

²¹ "Какой безумец согласится строить, если он не верит в реальность материала, сопротивление которого он должен победить?" (*CC* 1:178).

Thinking of “Hagia Sophia” and “Notre Dame” as his own early manifestos, we see that both lyrics highlight the masterful transformation of stone into sublime works of art.

Still, for the Acmeists, there is nobility in the resistance of stone. It is something to be respected; not without reason does “The Morning of Acmeism” write of “reverently” raising the stone (*CC* 1:178; *CPL*, 62). Certainly, Mandelstam’s “Notre Dame,” much as it views the cathedral as an aesthetic ideal, also sees traces of imperfection upon its stones—lingering signs of its resistance. Its mass is “weighty,” not entirely light and soaring; it is called a “labyrinth” and an “incomprehensible forest”; and its rib-like vaults are “monstrous.” The view of the Gothic cathedral as simultaneously an aesthetic ideal and an imperfect structure recognizes its anthropomorphism and organic vitality imprinted upon it. This aspect of Mandelstam’s poetics can be illuminated, I argue, by comparing his work to that of the eminent Victorian social critic and art historian John Ruskin.

In a series of works, including *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53), *Modern Painters* (1843-56), and *Unto this Last* (1860-62), Ruskin elegantly rebels against the prevailing tastes of his Victorian England with a blend of aesthetic, ethical, economic and political criticism which champions both the modern art of figures like J.M.W. Turner and the Gothic style of the late medieval period.²² Ruskin’s works put him at the center of aesthetic debates among Anglophone readers at the time of their publication, while their reach abroad increased greatly as translations into various languages began to appear. Stuart Eagles and Rachel Polonsky have researched the circulation of Ruskin’s works in Russia, one country that the well-traveled Ruskin never

²² While there appears to be no direct evidence that Mandelstam read Ruskin’s texts, the poet’s interest in architecture, the fact that his colleagues were reading Ruskin at the time, and the way ideas of the two overlap all suggest that Mandelstam likely had at least some acquaintance with Ruskin’s ideas. The favoring of models from the distant past rather than from recent times is a sentiment repeated in Mandelstam’s “The Morning of Acmeism” or in his essay “The Nineteenth Century,” as well as Ruskin’s “The Nature of the Gothic” (from *The Stones of Venice*).

visited, “for fear of bears.”²³ Despite Ruskin’s comically skewed vision of Russia, his works found enthusiastic admirers among the intelligentsia, including Mandelstam’s circle and those close to it.²⁴

Mandelstam’s essay and lyric manifestos closely parallel some of Ruskin’s ideas on architecture. For instance, the section of *The Stones of Venice* on “The Nature of the Gothic” is announced as an explanation of the transition from the Byzantine to the Gothic, a shift that is mirrored in the ordering of “Hagia Sophia” and “Notre Dame” in *Stone*. Likewise, both lyrics are structured to highlight the external features of the buildings as well as the experience of being within them—the internal details as well as the “secret plan” glimpsed in the outer whole—and Ruskin similarly stresses that the Gothic is implicitly detectable in both external features (architectural details) and internal elements, “certain mental tendencies of the builders, legibly expressed in it; as fancifulness, love of variety, love of richness, and such others” (*LE* 8:153). This dialogue of mind and matter is particularly evident in “Notre Dame.”

The restless, unsettled style heralded in “Notre Dame” and in “The Morning of Acmeism” is matched by Ruskin’s insistence that a certain roughness is one of the six fundamental characteristics of the Gothic: “It seems a fantastic paradox, but it is

²³ Ruskin, quoted in Eagles, “For Fear of Bears”(157). For more on Ruskin in Russian, see: Eagles, “Ruskin and Tolstoy” and Polonsky, *English Literature and the Russian Aesthetic Renaissance*. At this time, Eagles is at work on a book devoted specifically to the topic of Ruskin in Russia, the first monograph of its kind in any language, as far as I can discern.

²⁴ Ruskin’s Russian readers included Leo Tolstoy, and a number of individuals (including Lev Nikiforov, Olga Soloveva, Zinaida Vengerova, and Adelaida Gertsyk) produced translations of Ruskin’s texts (Eagles, 157, 167). As Thomson suggests, Ruskin’s *The Stones of Venice*, which includes a famous section on “The Nature of the Gothic,” was “enjoying a belated success in Russia” in the period preceding the writing of “The Morning of Acmeism” (506, 526). The Symbolist poet Aleksandr Blok was also particularly impressed by Ruskin’s work (Polonsky, 140-151). For the Symbolists, Ruskin’s warning calls about the decline of modern capitalist society and art, and suggestion to counter this by reclaiming the Gothic, struck a chord with their own Nietzsche-influenced Decadent spirit. Even more specifically, Ruskin’s descriptions of geological changes in addition to architectural decay are similar in tone to Blok’s notions of civilization, which more than once took geological catastrophes as an analogy. See: Presto, “The Aesthetics of Disaster: Blok, Messina, and the Decadent Sublime.”

nevertheless a most important truth, that no architecture can be truly noble which is *not* imperfect” (*LE* 8:170).²⁵ For Ruskin, this noble imperfection is not only the distinctive signature of a Gothic cathedral’s craftsmen, but evidence of the organic and anthropomorphic nature of such architecture, detectable in both its internal and external features: “imperfection is in some sort essential to all that we know of life. It is the sign of life in a mortal body, that is to say, of a state of progress and change. Nothing that lives is, or can be, rigidly perfect; part of it is decaying, part nascent” (*LE* 8:171). Human vitality—with its attendant wrinkles, sags, and pains—marks a struggle against nature, decay, and death. Gothic architecture, though correspondingly imperfect, represents a triumph of this struggle in its reshaping of resistant stone into sublime and enduring forms.

Ruskin’s understanding of the nature of the Gothic allows us to see how Mandelstam’s “Notre Dame” humanizes the cathedral’s constitutive stones. Modeled on a basic anthropomorphic plan, with signatures of unevenness, imperfections, and contrasts in its construction, the cathedral is said to bear signs of vitality, a sense of life within the body built out of nonhuman stone. The imperfection and restlessness that are the hallmarks of Notre Dame and comparable structures are nothing less than the indelible traces of where the materiality of stone resists the human and its will of mind, though the latter ultimately triumphs in these cases.

²⁵ Mandelstam returns to the topic of the Gothic in his essays on “François Villon,” “Conversation about Dante,” “Humanism and the Present,” and “The Nineteenth Century.” The Gothic enters as a reference in a number of Mandelstam’s *Stone-era* poems, including “Notre Dame,” “I hate the light,” and “Falling is the steadfast mate of fear.” For a summary and review of the literature on Mandelstam and the Gothic, see: Gasparov, “Две готики и два Египта в поэзии О. Мандельштама. Анализ и интерпретация” (*О русской поэзии*, 260-295). Ronen (*Поэтика*, 17) suggests that Gogol’s essay “Об архитектуре нашего времени” inspired Mandelstam’s image of the Gothic tower in “I hate the light.”

Mandelstam’s *Stone* promotes architecture, the Acmeist symbol of supreme creation, as both a record of human experience and a testament to creative power. On the stones that form the medieval cathedral, one finds narrative traces of the struggle of life and flesh against the forces of time and material. As the metapoetic verses in “Notre Dame” and the programmatic statements in Mandelstam’s essays attest, the architecture and stone which are the actors in this drama are analogous to the craft of poetry and its language. One can read this analogy as an inversion of the human and nonhuman: the human is transformed into stone in the building of architecture; stone is made legible or vocal in the writing of lyric.

This inversion is less explicit in but equally characteristic of the poetry of Mandelstam’s contemporary Rilke. His middle-period collection *New Poems* (published in two parts, 1907/1908), which brought the thing-poem or *Dinggedicht* to new levels of sophistication, exhibits a high concentration of lyrics engaging with architectural as well as sculptural forms of stone. Whereas Mandelstam’s Acmeist writings treat architecture as a paradigm for a poetics and a *record* of experience, Rilke’s poetry explores the potentiality for crafted works of stone, when addressed in lyric, to enable thinking *about* experience. Such a possibility is suggested in the final, metapoetic stanza of Mandelstam’s “Notre Dame,” insofar as it alludes to the subjective experience of studying the Gothic cathedral as the impetus for a poetics. But whereas the poetics suggested by “Notre Dame” is deferred (“I too will create beauty someday”), the lyrics of *New Poems* are often more intensely immediate in their engagement with works of stone—above all, in the renowned sonnet “The Archaic Torso of Apollo.”

Given the apparent fact that stone is lifeless, inert, or simply worldless (to use Heideggerian terminology), these lyric proposals are surprising: how could the voiceless stone possibly “speak” to experience? The answer that comes in Rilke’s lyrics is close to Mandelstam’s: meaning and significance are found in crafted works of stone to the extent that they resemble the human, or what is familiar to the human. This is the case even for Rilke’s works that address with sculptural fragments, like “The Archaic Torso of Apollo.” With their humanoid form partially reduced to the bareness of stone, then apostrophized and rebuilt in lyric as something else entirely, these remnants demonstrate the strange urgency with which humanity may turn to materiality.

“Stone” is not a rare term in Rilke’s poetic catalog, though it is usually in reference to something *made* of stone. The poet’s works typically do not treat natural or “found” stone in the way that Mandelstam’s “Conversation about Dante,” or the later poetics of Celan and Sachs do—although Rilke’s work, like Mandelstam’s, proved enormously influential to lyric poetry of the second half of the twentieth century.²⁶ Like Mandelstam’s *Stone*, Rilke’s *New Poems* extensively explores the possibilities of treating sacred architecture in lyric, as in its so-called “Cathedral Cycle.”²⁷ Other lyrics from the collection treat archaic or medieval sculptures in stone.²⁸

²⁶ Some exceptions include the descriptions of mines and mining in Rilke’s “Orpheus. Eurydike. Hermes” from *New Poems*, and in the tenth of the *Duino Elegies* (*Duineser Elegien*, 1922). These texts indicate his absorption of Romantic and post-Romantic German literature (Novalis, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Adalbert Stifter), which make frequent use of mining *topoi*. See, for instance, Peucker (*Lyric Descent*) and Ziolkowski (*German Romanticism and Its Institutions*). Rilke was admittedly enthralled by Stifter’s books, as he describes in a letter to August Sauer from 1914, and made some study of geology and geological literature (Schellenberger-Diederich, 258-261).

²⁷ Lyric in this cycle include: L’Ange du Méridien (Chartres), “Die Kathedrale,” “Das Portal,” “Die Fensterrose,” “Das K apital,” and “Gott im Mittelalter.” Though evidently writing without knowledge of Mandelstam, Erich Heller uses language nearly identical to that of “The Morning of Acmeism” to describe the project of Rilke’s *Dinggedicht*, noting that his lyrics shed the “Romantic belief that poetry is the proper vehicle for communicating personal emotions, be they sad or joyful. Such poets, Rilke writes, are like invalids employing language in order to say where it hurts, instead of using words for building an edifice of poetry after the manner of medieval stone-masons who sank their selves into the equanimity of stone” (63).

Whatever “thing” they take up, Rilke’s *Dinggedichte* reveal traces of their aesthetic models. As critical literature has extensively documented, the new mode of perception that developed in Rilke’s thing-poems was honed during the time he lived in Paris, working as the sculptor Auguste Rodin’s assistant and biographer.²⁹ As he recounts in a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé from August 10, 1903, Rodin taught him patience, focus, and to learn from the observation of objects.³⁰ As Judith Ryan has pointed out, the Rodinian mode of seeing was equaled, in the development of the Rilkean thing-poem, by the influence of Ruskin, who similarly avowed that one should “be your own master, see with your own eyes.”³¹

That the sculptural-architectural prompts facilitated by Rilke’s encounters with Ruskin’s and Rodin’s ideas proved such durable models does not imply that *New Poems*

George’s “Metaphor versus Metonymy in Early Cathedral Poems” treats the coincidence of architectural lyrics in Rilke and Mandelstam, noting that both poets read sacred structures as representations of human physiology in stone (4). Other works studying Rilke’s architectural lyrics include: Bradley, “The Internal Unity of Rilke’s Cathedral Poems”; Jacob Steiner, “Rilke’s Cathedral Poems”; Thum, “Medieval City”; and Ziolkowski’s “Rilke’s ‘Portal’ Sonnets”; and Wolf, *Stone into Poetry: The Cathedral Cycle in Rainer Maria Rilke’s Neue Gedichte*. See also: Painter (77-82, 229); Prungnaud.

²⁸ Some lyrics from *New Poems* focus on sculptural accents or individual components of architecture, such as “Das Fensterrose” and the pair “Adam” and “Eva,” the latter two recalling sculptures which accent the façade of Notre Dame—or, at the same time, Rodin’s sculptures by the same titles (McIsaac, 171). Works that treat non-architectural sculptural forms include: “Grabmal eines jungen Mädchens,” “Römische Sarkophage,” and “Römische Fontäne,” all classic examples of the *Dinggedicht*. Painter suggests that “Orpheus. Eurydike. Hermes” and “Kretische Artemis” are also examples of Rilke’s poems on sculptural objects, and that his wife Clara Westhoff-Rilke, a sculptor and student of Rodin, was an important influence on this development in his writing (74, 228).

²⁹ See: Bridge, Büsch, Heller, McIsaac, Potts, Reed and Statkiewicz, Ryan (*Rilke, Modernism and Poetic Tradition*), and numerous others, as well as Rilke’s own writings on Rodin.

³⁰ “[...]ich ihm, Rodin, folgen muß: nicht in einem bildhauerischen Umgestalten meines Schaffens, aber in der inneren Anordnung des künstlerischen Prozesses; nicht bilden muß ich lernen von ihm, aber tiefes Gesammeltsein um des Bildens willen” (Rilke and Andreas-Salomé, 103). For a historical overview of Rodin’s sculptural influence on Rilke, within a discussion of the latter’s poetics of stone, see Schellenberger-Diederich (264-270).

³¹ Quoted in Ryan (*Rilke, Modernism and Poetic Tradition*, 92). As Ryan details, Rilke had read a German translation of *Stones of Venice* (92), and the French version of traveler’s edition of the text came out shortly before his trip to Venice in 1907 (91). Rilke traveled with *The Stones of Venice* in hand, and experienced the city with the gaze “of a child,” likening it to a “stone fairy tale.” The freshness of the Ruskinian/Rodinian mode of seeing is consequently encapsulated in a set of Venetian lyrics in the second part of *New Poems* (“Venetian Morning” / “Venizianischer Morgen,” “Late Autumn in Venice” / “Spätherbst in Venedig,” “San Marco,” and “A Doge” / “Ein Doge”). Ruskin’s analytical approach to architecture is evident in Rilke’s lyrics from *New Poems* that concentrate on sculptural accents, like “L’Ange du Méridien,” “Adam,” and “Eve.”

ought to be read as a collection of ekphrastic poems, or that one ought read these poems in terms of their “sources.” Indeed, the *Dinggedicht* “seldom exists in a straightforward relationship to a single object or museum setting, thus rebuffing interpretations dependent on an alignment of his writing with a single biographical experience” (McIsaac, 153). Instead, Rilke’s preoccupation with sculpture and architecture in life and lyric implies that poems engaging with these stone-based forms are paradigms of the thing-poem. The Rodinian-Ruskinian doctrine of patient observation centers on the premise that such an approach to the thing will reap high yields, specifically, that the object of study will reveal something of its innerness (Hoffmann, 13).

Since many of the thing-poems in *New Poems* engage with entities like statues, cathedrals, paintings, and traditional artistic/literary subjects, they could more precisely be deemed *Kunstdinggedichte* or “art-thing-poems” (Wolf, 13). Certainly, cathedrals and sculptures of stone lend themselves to considerations of history, style, etc., because the raw material of stone is reworked into cultured forms. The Ruskinian mode of careful, analytic observation is useful in these instances because it essentially facilitates a fluent reading of the history, style, and cultural implications legible on such crafted forms. Phrased differently, the fact that these works of crafted stone bear obvious signs of human history and the effort of human hands means that their significance comes more or less immediately. Even when attention is turned to the underlying materiality of these works, to their constitutive stone, they are legible and ultimately meaningful because they relatable in human terms. How could the humble, uncultured stone prove to be relevant, let alone of interest, when up against these sophisticated works of art, which almost effortlessly offer a rich innerness as a reward for observation?

Ruskin, for one, not only praises the importance of architecture, but also urges the study of bare, uncrafted, and uncultured stone. In his manual *Elements of Drawing* (1857), for instance, he drafts a version of his imperative to observe intensely, urging students and readers to select a stone from a garden for a series of careful, methodical studies as a “first practice” in learning to see and draw. Even more explicitly, in the fourth volume of *Modern Painters*, he writes that: “No human capacity ever yet saw the whole of a thing; but we may see more and more of it the longer we look. [...] There are no natural objects out of which more can be thus learned than out of stones. They seem to have been created especially to reward a patient observer” (*LE* 6:368). Precisely because stone is devoid of the distinguishing characteristics of the work of art, and because, as Lord Chandos’ list demonstrates, it is so far removed from the human, it necessitates patient observation to get anything out of it. Without immediately apparent traces of human touch, stone potentially offers rich rewards for such efforts—provided one can find a point of entry.

Such possibilities for finding alternative languages in “found” stone are most potently realized, I argue, in texts from later in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, Rilke’s poetry at least alludes to the poetic potentiality of stone as such. Lyrics from *New Poems* explore the border between natural and artefactual stone in two ways: first, by serving as reminders that works of crafted stone have originate in unhewn rock; second, by noting the weathering and fragmentation of works of stone, their eventual shedding of traces of the human’s touch, and their return to bare minerality. Rilke’s sonnet “The Cathedral Porch I” (“Das Portal I”) from the “Cathedral Cycle” exemplifies the first approach. The opening part of this triptych of sonnets fancifully imagines a cathedral emerging not as the result of masons’ labor, but by the forces of a tide wearing away at stones in its ebb and flow until recognizable forms are created: “There they remained as

though that tide / had been turned back whose great surf / washed against these stones
 till they emerged; / [...] They remained, distinguished from the basalt forms / by a
 nimbus, by a bishop's hat" ("Da blieben sie, als wäre jene Flut / zurückgetreten, deren
 großes Branden / an diesen Steinen wusch, bis sie entstanden; [...] Sie blieben, von den
 Formen in Basalten / durch einen Nimbus, einen Bischofshut," *WDB* 1:255; translation
 from Wolf, 58). The formation of aspects like the "bishop's hat" by the natural forces
 suggests an alternative, nonhuman history of the stone structures' origin.³² On the other
 hand, "The Cathedral Porch" suggests that the significance of these stones only comes
 once they emerge as a recognizably legible form: the mythical flood washed away at the
 stones "until they formed" ("bis sie enstanden") into the attributes expected of the
 cathedral.

Though "The Porch I" is rather anomalous in *New Poems*, Rilke's writings do
 demonstrate an extensive interest in the inverse of its proposition: rather than humanized
 things being formed out of stone, one finds in Rilke's work a poetics of the fragment, in
 which humanoid sculptures are deformed in such a way as to draw attention toward their
 constitutive stone.³³ Most celebrated, controversial, and provocative of such works is
 "The Archaic Torso of Apollo. Opening the second part of *New Poems*, "The Archaic

³² "The sculptures thus are said to be not the work of human hands but that of powerful natural forces, of the incessant pounding of a mighty surf—a 'großes Branden'—which eroded them out of the stones of the cathedral" (Wolf, 61). Wolf also suggests that a similar image of the sea "having gnawed at mountainous rocks in order to produce the porches of Chartres and their statuary" in Huysman's *La Cathédrale*, making for another point of convergence for Rilke's and Mandelstam's cathedral-poetics (61).

³³ Aside from archaic sculptural fragments in the Louvre like the *Miletus Torso* and *Head of a Youth*, and Michelangelo's famed unfinished *non finito* sculptures in the Galleria dell'Accademia (Florence), Rilke encountered stone sculptural fragments within Rodin's studio, and, moreover, in the fragmentary works which the sculptor was producing at the time. On Rilke's awareness of the statues in the Louvre, see Engelhardt, Hausmann, Schadewaldt, among others. For an article that puts Rilke's ("Das Portal I") and Michelangelo's (No. 63, "Si amico è 'l freddo sasso foco interno") poetry into a comparative context, see Lauster. For an overview of Rilke's engagement with Michelangelo's work, and scholarship on the topic, see the articles by Paleri, Rios and Schauder in *Rilke: les jours d'Italie / Die Italienischen Tage* (ed. Ebnetter).

Torso of Apollo” mirrors the sonnet “Early Apollo,” which opens the first part of the collection; both reference ancient sculptures that now exist only in fragmentary form.

RILKE’S “THE ARCHAIC TORSO OF APOLLO”

Rilke’s “Archaic Torso of Apollo” has generated enormous critical and popular interest. “We did not know his unheard-of head” (“Wir kannten nicht sein unerhörtes Haupt,” *WDB* 1:313), the lyric’s first line declares, exclaiming the fragmentary state of the statue from the beginning. The sonnet ends with the even more provocative imperative “You must change your life” (“Du mußt dein Leben ändern”), which has garnered spirited reactions from readers and critics.³⁴ My own reading of “The Archaic Torso of Apollo” asks for the sonnet to be considered in the light of my questions about the poetics of stone. Asking how the lyric reduces a partially-ruined torso of a god into a chunk of marble and back again into a think that reaches *us* with a transformative force exposes a novel perspective, another way of thinking about Lord Chandos’ “moss-covered stone” that becomes a “vessel of revelation.”

“We did not know his unheard-of head,” the sonnet proudly pronounces, with no mourning over the loss. Fragmented, lifeless stone as it may be, the torso is nevertheless infused with energy. Somehow, it “still glows like a candelabrum” (“sein Torso glüht noch wie ein Kandelaber”). The lyric’s fanciful comparison invokes something that is neither alive nor simply stone of the torso. To imagine the torso as emanating light is perhaps an allusion to the god Apollo’s association with light and the sun, yet at the same time Rilke’s lyric suggests that the torso glows because of a certain inner power. “His gaze” (“sein

³⁴ For representative discussions of the implications of the imperative at the end of “The Archaic Torso of Apollo,” see Waters (“Answerable Aesthetics” and, relatedly, “Rilke’s Imperatives”) and Sloterdijk, *Du mußt dein Leben ändern*.

Schauen”) is “screwed back” (“zurückgeschraubt”), the unheard-of head drawn into the body of the torso, just as the wick of a lamp or candelabrum might be; seen or unseen, the potential for illumination is still there. The sonnet even suggests that the unknown-head of the torso is in a way evident on the stony remnant, for it projects a kind of face. The torso glows like a candelabrum, and if it did not “the prow / of its breast could not blind you, and a smile could not go / in the quiet turn of its loins / to the center that carried the begetting” (“Sonst könnte nicht der Bug / der Brust dich blenden, und im leisen Drehen / der Lenden könnte nicht ein Lächeln gehen / zu jener Mitte, die die Zeugung trug.”).³⁵ Moreover, though we did not know the torso’s head, “in which the apple-eyes ripened” (“darin die Augenäpfel reiften”), the entire torso itself is like a giant eye, “for there is no place, that does not see you” (“denn da ist keine Stelle, / die dich nicht sieht.”).

Rilke’s sonnet is thus less a descriptive ekphrasis of the torso than an imaginative reconstruction of it. The lyric’s presentation of the sonnet suggests that a viewer is compelled to consider the torso in such a way. Its allure is even erotic. With seductive language, the sonnet’s lines follow the torso’s stony form, and guide the reader, to the center of erotic power: “in the quiet turn of its loins” (“im leisen Drehen der lenden”) provides the reader with much smoother sounds than harsher tones describing the torso’s gaze as “only screwed-back” (“nur zurückgeschraubt”). Captivated, seduced by the wonder of the torso, we see so intensely that we are lost to the thing: it sees us instead.

All of this—the emanating light, the erotic allure, the fanciful comparisons—is at odds with the basic idea of the torso as a stony fragment. Despite being broken, despite

³⁵ *Zeugen* and *Zeugung* are notoriously difficult terms to translate; *zeugen*, Weineck reminds us, means simultaneously to beget and to bear witness (69).

being mute and immobile, the stone has a powerful effect on the viewer. At just one point does Rilke's lyric draw attention to the fundamental materiality of the torso, referring to it as "stone." The imaginative re-vision of the torso is its power, the sonnet suggests; "otherwise this stone would stand defaced and short / under the shoulders' translucent stump / and not glimmer like a predator's coat" ("Sonst stünde dieser Stein entstellt und kurz / unter der Schultern durchsichtigem Sturz / und flimmerte nicht so wie Raubtierfelle"). In being referenced simply as a stone, the torso of Apollo—from which the head had already been subtracted, which stands on display as a fragment—arrives at the baseline of its being. To deem it a stone raises it only one tier of particularity above the bareness of "thing," stripping it of all other characteristics—but just for that one brief moment. Immediately following the reference to the torso as simply "this stone," the lyric returns to the ideas of the torso as emanating light and captivating the viewer, for it glimmers "like a predator's coat."

The sonnet is almost dismissive in its brief nod to the torso's stony materiality, verbally assaulting it with a repetitive series of sounds: "Sonst **st**ünde dieser **St**ein ent**st**ellt und kurz" ("Otherwise this stone would stand defaced and short"). This tactic hearkens back to another lyric from Rilke's *New Poems*, "L'Ange du Méridien," which focuses on a sculptural accent of Chartres cathedral, a statue of an angel holding a sundial. At first, the sonnet apostrophizes the sculptural accent as the "smiling angel, feeling figure" ("lächelnder Engel, fühlende Figur," *WDB* 1:253). The sonnet's final tercet addresses the sculpture directly: "What do you know, stony one, of our being?" ("Was weißt du, Steinerner, von unserm Sein?"). Much like "The Archaic Torso of Apollo," this line directs attention to the constitutive stone of the statue, rather than its humanoid form or characteristics. The phonetic echo between "stone" (*Stein*) and "being" (*Sein*) heightens

the sense of contrast between human and stone cathedral (similarly to Mandelstam's "Notre Dame"). To reference these works as stones is to momentarily reduce their human-like qualities, or our ability to read them as human—which is what the lyrics "The Archaic Torso of Apollo" and "L'Ange du Méridien" ultimately champion.

The Apollo sonnet refers to the torso's petrific materiality in one more subtle and ambiguous way. "Otherwise this stone would stand defaced and short / under the shoulders' transparent stump," the lyric asserts. "Stump," or *Sturz*, is a polysemantic term. Among its many definitions, it has an architectural meaning, signifying the lintel, a load-bearing stone or beam. One could see, with this definition in mind, how "The Archaic Torso of Apollo" makes yet another fanciful comparison: a "transparent" lintel formed by the shoulders that remain visible on the torso's remnant supports the unseen, unknown head, over the defaced and short stone. This would highlight the torso's materiality, were the comparison not in the subjunctive mood: the torso glows like a candelabrum, but if it did not, then the stone *would stand* defaced and short. Yet the stone emanates a captivating energy, and the lyric posits a remarkable humanness upon it.

According to the Grimms' *Wörterbuch*, *Sturz* also signifies the torso of a statue, in the terminology of art history at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The *Wörterbuch* cites prose by Johann Joachim Winckelmann as an example of this usage, from an essay that describes the famed Belvedere Torso—another archaic, fragmentary statue.³⁶ Calling the statue *Sturz*—which is simultaneously "torso" and "stump"—is yet

³⁶ Hatfield (17-20) notes many similarities between Winckelmann's prose and Rilke's lyric, going so far as to describe the former's essay as a kind of *Dinggedicht*. To these observations, I would add that the Belvedere Torso is seated on an animal skin, which Winckelmann suggests represents the Cithaeronian Lion defeated by Hercules. This hide may be alluded to by the "Raubtierfelle" of "The Archaic Torso of Apollo," perhaps indicating that the poem simultaneously draws upon multiple points of reference. Schadewaldt also links Winckelmann and Rilke, although he compares the poet's Apollo sonnets to Winckelmann's description of the Apollo Belvedere rather than the Belvedere Torso: "Das zweite der Apollo-Gedichte Rilkes,

another way of indicating almost pejoratively what it is, a stone. To deem the statuary fragment both “stone” (*Stein*) and “torso” (*Sturz*) doubly reduces it, albeit briefly, relative to the sonnet’s otherwise fanciful projections onto and out of the artwork.

Yet “The Archaic Torso of Apollo” allows the more imaginative readings to triumph, in the end. By phonetic similarity and semantic association, the sonnet’s final two stanzas link terms that refer to the torso as stony material (*Stein* and *Sturz*) in the first tercet to terms that are related to the imagery of light and vision (*Stern* and *Stelle*) in the second tercet. The final stanza, with its (in)famous imperative “You must change your life,” signifies it is the re-imagination of the torso which elicits its enduring power, despite its broken, fragmented state. Since the torso glows with light and allure, it bursts from its edges like a star. Given the stone-become-star, “there is no place, / that does not see you” (“da ist keine Stelle, / die dich nicht sieht”). Were it not for this place (*Stelle*) that sees *us*, the stone would stand defaced (*entstellt*, literally “dis-placed,” as though deformation takes something out of its proper order).

The sonnet ultimately suggests the torso has significance in its humanness. For the consideration of a humanoid statue, this is perhaps not surprising. On the other hand, this search, this desire for humanness proves to be so pervasive as to make a fragmented stone torso, one that confronts us with its nonhuman materiality, seem imbued with energy. With a face imaginatively inscribed upon its marble remnant, the torso mirrors the viewer. This crumbled chunk of stone can have such a powerful, even erotic effect on us, Rilke’s lyric proposes, because we are able to read it in familiar terms, as humanoid.

überschrieben ‘Archaischer Torso Apollos’, ist das eigentliche Rilkesche Pendant zu Winkelmanns Beschreibung des Belvedereschen Apollon” (24).

Classic readings of “The Archaic Torso of Apollo” tend to focus on the way the lyric creatively reverses the subject-object relations of the observer and observed.³⁷ According to these readings, the torso’s provocation of the reader/observer—and the direct imperative that closes the poem, “you must alter your life”—inverts the dynamic by which a text would describe a thing. Rilke’s sonnet, however, does not so much switch these poles as it creates a fluid state between subject and object, observer and observed, human and non-human. This intersubjectivity illuminates meaning latent in the stone torso, but it is a mimetic significance. Even as its form erodes back into its constitutive materiality, the stone is not simply a stone; it is still compared in terms that are human or familiar to the human. One might say that in “The Archaic Torso of Apollo,” Rilke has not followed the advice of his models Rodin and Ruskin. The lyric does not simply observe; it projects the human onto the fragmentary stone, desperately seeking it where it seems most in danger of erasure.

PRESENCE AND ABSENCE: TRAKL’S “BRIGHT SPRING”

Writing about apostrophe, Barbara Johnson notes that the rhetorical figure “turns toward anything the poet throws his voice to, and in doing so magnetizes a world around his call” (10). The lyric texts by Rilke and Mandelstam analyzed thus far in this chapter are notable, among other reasons, for the way in which they invoke monuments of

³⁷ Asendorf, for instance, writes of the ornamental entwining of the subject and object in Rilke’s writing (190). Jahraus writes that in “The Archaic Torso of Apollo” that “[d]as Ding ist nicht mehr Objekt eines Subjekts, so wie das Subjekt nicht Ursprung der Wahrnehmung und ihres Ausdrucks ist, sondern umgekehrt: Das Subjekt ist ihr Produkt. Und das würde auch die genannte Lesart stützen, derzufolge der imperativische Appell vom Torso selbst geäußert wird: Das Subjekt *ist* erst als angesprochenes” (126). Likewise, de Man’s rhetorical reading of the sonnet in *Allegories of Reading* argues that chiasmus is the figure which defines Rilke’s poetry, and that in “The Archaic Torso of Apollo,” “the reverse is ocular. The observer is, in its turn, being observed by the fragmentary statue which has been transformed into a single, large eye [...]. The reversal is possible only because the sculpture is broken and fragmentary” (44).

stone—the paradigm of heft—within the leanest of the verbal arts, lyric. Yet in calling their cathedrals and statues forth in lyric they, as Johnson suggests, create new worlds of meaning around these stones. In the works of these poets, the significances of the works of stone lie in their anthropomorphism, their humanness, or their ability to be read as human-like—surprising as these semblances may initially be.

As the metapoetic turn of Mandelstam’s “Notre Dame,” and the imaginative transformation of a sculptural fragment in Rilke’s “Archaic Torso of Apollo” demonstrate with particular force, the creation of this meaning has much to do with envisioning the human’s means of overcoming the materiality of stone in order to shape or reshape it, whether as an exercise in poetological thinking or as the encapsulation of aesthetic experience. Trakl’s “Bright Spring” (“Heiter Frühling” 1911/1913), written in the five-years separating Rilke’s *New Poems* and Mandelstam’s *Stone*, invokes stone not as something to be rendered human-like, but to signify a place of human meaning.

The lyric’s cheerful title is deceiving, for the text is steeped in a sense of decline, culminating in a pseudo-epitaph that suggests a tombstone will continue to “speak” for human concerns. In *Poetry’s Touch: On Lyric Address*, William Waters argues that “[t]he real virtuoso at the affecting art of setting something present against the background of its own imagined absence is Rilke” (34). Yet Trakl’s “Bright Spring” invokes stone to describe how mute minerality can herald the human in *its* absence. Surrounded by a sense of inevitable decay, the resistant materiality of stone represents that which does not decay—the stone essentially serves as a petrification of the human word.

Trakl's poetry is both notoriously demanding and deceptively simple.³⁸ In some respects, his verse is similar to the thing-poems of his contemporaries Rilke and Mandelstam, typically described as objectified, impersonal, and detached.³⁹ On the other hand, Trakl's texts rarely identify a particular, named thing. Rather, they concentrate on abstract ideas and generalized imagery, seemingly evoking a mood or tone rather than defining a thing. The effect of the poems in Trakl's two printed collections, *Poems (Gedichte)* and *Sebastian in a Dream (Sebastian im Traum)*, might best be described as reading through a kaleidoscope: a relatively limited circle of references, which are primarily autumnal in tenor, seem to shift from one turn to the next, forming new combinations from the same underlying material.⁴⁰ In "Bright Spring," one of Trakl's most ambitious lyrics, an additional estranging force comes from the fact that the text reveals not what it ostensibly seems to, but rather its inverse. What would seem to be an idyllic pastoral actually imparts a sense of decay and illness, the decline of life in the midst of the season of rebirth: not spring so much as autumn, the most characteristic mood of Trakl's verse.

³⁸ Though Trakl's writing has generated numerous critical studies, they are widely divergent in method, aim, and scope. The poet and his work have been analyzed through psychoanalytic and biographical readings (e.g., Sharp), strictly formal analyses, contextualization within discussions of Modernism and Expressionism (e.g., Eric Williams, Csúri), some combination of all of the above (e.g., Detsch), immanent ontological readings (Heidegger, see below), or in relation to other authors, such as Hölderlin, Novalis, Rimbaud, Rilke, and Celan (e.g., Peucker, Eric Williams, Böschenstein).

³⁹ Walzel's early review of Trakl's verse, "Schicksale des Lyrischen Ichs" (1916), for instance, notes that the poet's verse tends toward objectivity and narrative (262). Though he does not use the term *Dinggedicht* (which does not appear to have been in circulation until Oppert's 1926 article), his summation of the lyric style of Trakl and his contemporaries utilizes the same language of de-personalization and objectivity: "Das Ich des Dichters tritt zurück. Eine Lyrik der anderen tut sich auf. Ich möchte von einer Entichung der Lyrik reden. Und die alte Lehre, Lyrik sei im Gegensatz zu Epos und Drama subjective Dichtung, scheint zu wanken" (264).

⁴⁰ Heselhaus (229) also uses the figure of the kaleidoscope to describe Trakl's verse, although to characterize the effect of the poet's drug use on his writing. Phillips writes that "[s]ense is conspicuously a side-effect" in Trakl's poetry, before reviewing critical attempts to describe its style as a "cut-up," "montage," "art of quotation," or plagiarism (in studies by Modesto Carone Netto, Alfred Doppler, and Rudolf D. Scheier) (239). "Trakl withstands the temptation to produce a work," Phillips argues, and "the deterritorialization of the individual quoted verses is not thwarted by a reterritorialization on any notion of the poet's 'authentic' voice. Trakl's singular poem is elsewhere" (239). Phillips arrives at this final point through a critical reading of Heidegger's second essay on Trakl, "Language in the Poem."

In both the first and second, published drafts of “Bright Spring,” the first three stanzas evoke a landscape in which spring’s renewal is consistently paired with a sense of decline. Though the title of the lyric declares a bright, cheerful, or joyous spring (“Heiterer Frühling”), the first stanza evokes sounds that “glide wonderfully through the gray” (“Durchs Graue gleiten Klänge wunderbar”), and “last year’s dry straw” (“das dürre Rohr vom vorigen Jahr”) in muted tones of a rather more somber scene (*DB* 1:49). Here, “a whiff of warm manure wafts by” (“Vorüberweht ein Hauch von warmen Mist.”), itself a reminder of the metabolic processes that are simultaneously a sign of life as well as its inevitable decline. In the second stanza, the melancholic tone is reiterated in the pairing of a soldier wistfully singing a sad song and a young child standing “soft and sweet” against the contours of the sky (“Sein traurig Lied singt träumend ein Soldat” / “Ein Kind steht in Konturen weich und lind.”). In the third stanza, there are “birches there, the black thorny bramble, / and forms suspended in smoke take flight”; the smoke suggests the potential burning of the birches, another perspective on the eventual end of organic life (“Die Birken dort, der schwarze Dornenstrauch, / Auch fliehn im Rauch Gestalten aufgelöst.”). This juxtaposition of the living and dying is stated in no uncertain terms in the same stanza: “Some light greenery blooms and other decays” (“Hell Grünes blüht und anderes verwest”).

The second trio of stanzas in “Bright Spring” appears to depart from the first in several ways, by emphasizing the presence of spring’s reawakening of life. First, it introduces personal pronouns and what appears to be a direct address: “I love you truly, earthy wash maid” (“Dich lieb ich treu du derbe Wäscherin”). However, “Bright Spring” makes no effort to narrate, to give any details about the origin of this utterance. Second, the imagery of the trio is more conventionally pastoral, with signs of life and its

emergence: “bees are still collecting with earnest effort,” and “buds crackle brightly every now and then” (“Bienen sammeln noch mit ernstem Fleiß. [...] Und Knospen knistern heiter dann und wann,” *DB* 1:49, 50). Yet within the larger structure of “Bright Spring,” what seems like a straightforward profession of rustic love or like signs of fertility is closer in effect to a *vanitas vanitatum*, a reminder of the transience of life in the midst of a lyric triptych bookended by stanzas in which the emergence of spring is counterbalanced by decay and decline.

Indeed, the final section of Trakl’s lyric returns to the paradoxical sense of decay within rejuvenating spring, opening with an exclamation: “How sickly seems all that is growing!” (“Wie scheint doch alles Werdende so krank!”).⁴¹ The statement, which reads almost like a detached aphorism, directly addresses the presence of decline within what seems like the time of emergence. The line does not suggest that all that *exists* is in decline, but more specifically that everything *becoming* (“alles Werdende”) seems ill, touched by decline. Adorno titles one of the short sections in his *Minima Moralia* with a quotation of this line, before stating that “[d]ialectical thought opposes reification in the further sense that it refuses to affirm individual things in their isolation and separateness [...] Thus it acts as a corrective both to the manic fixity and to the unresisting and empty drift of the paranoid mind” (71).⁴² If Trakl’s “Bright Spring” exemplifies a dialectic of emergence and decline, presence and absence, then the force of its “corrective” against “fixity” is

⁴¹ Doppler writes that “[w]ährend im Teil 1 Melancholie und Trauer überwiegen, dominiert im Teil zwei eine friedvolle, nur leicht gestörte (*verrückt – verzückt*) heitere Stimmung. [...] Teil drei führt diese beiden Erlebensweisen zusammen,” arguing that the overall structure of “Bright Spring” bears the form thesis-antithesis-synthesis (107-108).

⁴² “Das dialektische Denken widersetzt sich der Verdinglichung auch in dem Sinn, daß es sich weigert, ein Einzelnes je in seiner Vereinzelung und Abgetrenntheit zu bestätigen: [...] So arbeitet es als Korrektiv gegen die manische Fixiertheit wie gegen den widerstandslosen und leeren Zug des paranoiden Geistes” (78). If Adorno’s short entry in *Minima Moralia* takes a cue from the line in Trakl’s “Bright Spring,” then it is instructive to note that the philosopher reads the paratactic *Reihungsstil* as a “corrective” to the “empty drift of the paranoid mind,” in contrast to the psycho-biographical readings of Trakl’s work which focus on the poet’s own acquaintance with madness as a formative element of his lyrical writings.

formally expressed in the sharpness of its juxtapositions, with parataxis more pronounced here than even in Mandelstam's "Notre Dame."

In the single line "How sickly seems all that is growing!," the senses of decline and emergence are brought close together, but such juxtapositions are a major aspect of "Bright Spring" as a whole and indeed of Trakl's verse in general. In a letter to his friend and fellow writer Erhard Buschbeck (one of the few self-reflective poetic statements that Trakl recorded) he describes his use of the kaleidoscopic *Reihungsstil* or "serial style," a "pictorial style that in four-verse strophes forges four individual image-parts into one single impression."⁴³ A lyric restatement of this idea is suggested in Trakl's "Transfigured Autumn" ("Verklärter Herbst"): "How lovely image follows little image / that disappears in peace and silence" ("Wie schön sich Bild an Bildchen reiht – / Das geht in Ruh und Schweigen unter"; *DB* 1:37). The highly paratactic "Bright Spring" exemplifies this form, ending every line with a punctuation mark or the conclusion of a syntactic unit, as if emphasizing the discreetness of each thing even as they are brought together in the text's evenly rhymed quatrains. Though sometimes considered a mimetic representation of disjointed and fragmented modern life, the *Reihungsstil* in Trakl's "Bright Spring" explains the formal means by which conflicting states—life and death, presence and absence—can be juxtaposed in lyric.

⁴³ "[...M]eine bildhafte Manier, die in vier Strophenzeilen vier einzelne Bildteile zu einem einzigen Eindruck zusammenschmiedet" (*DB* 1:478). The *Reihungsstil* has also been read as a sign of a fractured subjectivity in modernity. See the second chapter of Vietta's and Kemper's *Expressionismus*, "Ichdissoziation im Expressionismus."

STONE: THE PETRIFIED WORD

The opening of the final stanza of “Bright Spring” reiterates the sense of decay and decline within the blossoming of the season, noting that “what lives” is “painfully good,” the poignancy of the statement heightened by its contradictory phrasing:

So schmerzlich gut und wahrhaft ist, was lebt;
Und leise rührt dich an ein alter Stein:
Wahrlich! Ich werde immer bei euch sein.
O Mund! der durch die Silberweide bebt. (*DB* 1:50)

So painfully good and truthful is what lives;
And softly an old stone touches you:
Truly! I will always be with you.
O mouth! That trembles through the silver-willow.

The first two lines effectively continue the parataxis prevalent in the rest of the lyric, even though they are linked by a conjunction. The “and” which connects these lines (“So painful good and true is what lives; / and softly an old stone touches you”) is ambiguous; it does not define the nature of the relationship between the two statements. Is the touch of the old stone a consequence of what lives? Does the touch of the old stone complement what lives? Does the “and” signify simultaneity, or a sequence? In any case, the conjunction serves to join the nonhuman stone and something organic, something “that lives.” Yet this raises more questions. How is an entity that is neither alive nor decays—stone—relevant in a lyric which consistently focuses on the juxtaposition of life and death? Moreover, what sort of relationship exists between the line about the stone and the exclamations that immediately follow it? In this stanza of “Bright Spring,” we find that the verbal and the mineral, a pair far from obviously related, are juxtaposed without a clear conjunction.

Characteristically indirect as Trakl’s lyrics are, the stanza does not define precisely what the “old stone” is, though there are compelling reasons to read it as a tombstone.

Lösel suggests that the exclamation, “Truly! I will always be with you,” echoes a Biblical verse (evidently Matthew 28:20), as might have been engraved on such a stone (285).⁴⁴ “Stone,” variations of the term, and semantically related words (i.e. “petrified,” “crystal,” “metal”) are among the most common images incorporated into Trakl’s *Reihungsstil*—a point which Heidegger notes in one of his essays on the poet, “Language in the Poem: A Discussion on Georg Trakl’s Poetic Work” (“Die Sprache im Gedicht: Eine Erörterung von Georg Trakls Gedicht,” 1952).⁴⁵ As Heidegger’s writing in this and another essay on Trakl, “Language” (“Sprache,” 1950), demonstrates, a correlation between stone and pain runs throughout Trakl’s lyric poetry.⁴⁶ Bearing this in mind, the reduction of the image of a tombstone to the bareness of the referent “an old stone”—which recalls the invocation of the archaic torso as simply “stone” in Rilke’s sonnet—functions as an index to this correlation. Rather than describe a tombstone, “Bright Spring” cites the bare minerality of the stone as a reminder of what is “painfully good”: life’s inevitable decline. This reductive reference points, in its own way, to the purpose of a tombstone; the mineral stands as a reminder of the loss of what once was, the living human. Correspondingly, the lyric exclamation “Truly! I will always be with you” is both the implied representation of words engraved on stone and the articulation of a sense of permanence implicit in the silent stone itself.

“Softly an old stone touches you,” the lyric states, exposing immediacy and intimacy, the point of contact between the human and the mineral. If stone, the lyric suggests, becomes the material that will “speak” for the human, or as an *Ersatz* for the

⁴⁴ See also: Casey (45); Wetzel, “Kommunikation und Gemeinschaft” (23); Doppler (108). Compare: “Und siehe, ich bin bei euch alle Tage bis an der Welt Ende” (Matthäus 28:20, Luther 1912).

⁴⁵ Casey (41-50), utilizing the “method of cross-reference,” systematically discusses stone as a major semantic complex in Trakl’s work. See also: Wetzel, *Konkordanz zu den Dichtungen Georg Trakls*.

⁴⁶ Examples of Trakl’s texts that connect “Schmerz” or “Trauer” and “Stein” or “versteinern,” include “Ein Winterabend,” “Nächtliche Klage,” “Winternacht,” “Klage,” and others.

human, then it does so after death and the return of the body to its constitutive materiality. This implication has some affinities with the mute language of things as described in Hofmannsthal's "A Letter," "a language of which I know not one word, a language in which mute things speak to me and in which I will perhaps have something to say for myself someday when I am dead and standing before an unknown judge" (*LC* 127-128).⁴⁷ The stone as *momento mori* in the final stanza of "Bright Spring" is likewise a nonhuman idiom, one deferred to the afterlife of the human. Trakl's lyric prompts us to look back at Hofmannsthal's prose piece, to ask if having something to say in the mute language of things might very well mean that the stone speaks on behalf of the "I".

Stone stands against that which decays: in "Bright Spring," that means organic life. A human body, after the expiration of life, decays relatively quickly, is broken down into its mineral components. Stone, by contrast, endures—at least much, much longer than anything organic. The scales of time and force that can ultimately alter stone are of a sublime magnitude. Neither living nor dying, stone stands in a temporality outside of the human's. Stone outlasts the human, and so in placing stone as a reminder of the physical loss of an individual, the endurance of stone becomes the endurance of lament.

On the other hand, stone can also be a more legible extension of life, through processes like fossilization and petrification. A fossil records traces of former life in rock, extending its visibility if not its vitality. Petrification transforms the organic into the mineral, likewise extending its presence, while at the same time fundamentally changing its substance. Given Trakl's work's tendency to invert notions of presence and absence, it is understandable that petrification emerges as a prominent concept in his lyric. More

⁴⁷ "[...] eine Sprache, von deren Worten mir auch nicht eines bekannt ist, eine Sprache, in welcher die stummen Dinge zu mir sprechen, und in welcher ich vielleicht einst im Grabe vor einem unbekanntem Richter mich verantworten werde" (*Sämtliche Werke*, 31:54).

often than not, it forms a semantic constellation with “pain” (*Schmerz*). In his essay “Language,” Heidegger remarks on this correlation in a reading of Trakl’s “A Winter Evening” (“Ein Winterabend”), concentrating on the third stanza:

Wanderer tritt still herein;
Schmerz versteinert die Schwelle.
Da erglänzt in reiner Helle
Auf dem Tische Brot und Wein. (*DB* 1:102)

A wanderer steps quietly inside;
Pain has petrified the threshold.
There, shining in pure brightness
On the table, bread and wine.

Even more apparent in German than in English, pain is said to petrify threshold, to turn it to stone (*versteinern*). Writing about this line, Heidegger states that “the pain that became appropriated to stone did not harden into the threshold in order to congeal there,” but rather “presences unflagging in the threshold, as pain,” in the process of being (*On the Way to Language*, 201).⁴⁸ The word “petrify,” he asserts, “name[s] something that has already persisted” (201).⁴⁹ Though Heidegger’s writing on poets such as Trakl has garnered criticism because of its hermeneutic method, his reading of this stanza from “A Winter Evening” productively brings Trakl’s “metaphysics of absence” into view. The threshold—the point marking both arrival and parting, presence and absence, joy and pain—joins Trakl’s stone as the substantiation of spirit, the petrification of life within lyric.

That the term in “A Winter Evening” is “petrification” is crucial, precisely because it does *not* use the language of life and the body: being is not incorporated, embodied, or incarnated, but petrified, turned to stone. Heidegger similarly declares of

⁴⁸ “Aber der zu Stein ereignete Schmerz hat sich nicht in die Schwelle verhärtete, um in ihr zu erstarren. Der Schmerz west in der Schwelle ausdauernd als Schmerz.” (*Unterwegs*, 24).

⁴⁹ “Es nennt Wesendes, das schon gewesen” (*Unterwegs*, 23-24).

“Bright Spring” that “pain conceals itself in the stone [*Stein*], the petrifying pain that delivers itself into the enclosedness of rock [*Gestein*],” in other words, that a mineral substance makes present what is normally thought of as a human affect.⁵⁰ To paraphrase Heidegger’s comment in the light of other readings of “Bright Spring,” the tombstone stands as the petrification of pain; just as the petrification—of a tree, for example—describes a process by which organic material is gradually converted into mineral, the tombstone represents the material instantiation of human loss.

Heidegger’s reading of Trakl’s “Bright Spring” illuminates an additional aspect of its final stanza—the implications of its peculiar punctuation. Focusing on its middle two lines (“And softly an old stone touches you: / Truly! I will always be with you.”), he writes that “[t]he colon after the word ‘stone’ signifies that now *the stone* is speaking. Pain itself has the word” (*On the Way to Language*, 182).⁵¹ Whether or not the words that follow the colon represent an engraving on a tombstone, no stone is “speaking” in the colloquial sense of the term. Instead, Heidegger’s reading ascribes a lyric notion of voice within the text that extends even to the mute mineral, and in this way understands it as communicable. With the stone standing as a petrification, an extension of the presence of the human in the absence of life, it is also, in a way, an extension of the word identified with the human. “Silent since long ago,” Heidegger writes, the stone “now says to wanderers who follow the stranger nothing less than its own power and endurance:

⁵⁰ “Im Stein verbirgt sich der Schmerz, der, verseinernd, sich in das Verschlussene des Gesteins verwahrt” (*Unterwegs*, 59). My translation; for another translation of this passage, see: *On the Way to Language* (182). For a recent discussion of pain and Heidegger’s concepts of presence and absence, see Hanly. Krell, Derrida (*Of Spirit*), Harries, Mitchell, and Emad are also highly relevant. Schwenger’s *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects* is an extended discussion of the relationships of affect and objects. Also relevant is the important section of Benjamin’s *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, which discusses three primary symbolic manifestations of melancholy in early modernity: the dog, the sphere, and the stone.

⁵¹ “Der Doppelpunkt nach dem Wort ‘Stein’ am Ende des Verses zeigt an, daß hier *der Stein* spricht. Der Schmerz selbst hat das Wort” (*Unterwegs*, 59, emphasis in original).

‘Truly! I shall forever be with you’” (182). The stone “speaks” to others, perhaps on behalf of one dead, and does so because of its resistant and enduring materiality (“nothing less than its own power and endurance”).⁵² If stone “speaks” in this case, as Heidegger argues it does, then the address is a reminder of this sense of loss, a confrontation to the addressee. The stone’s appearance in the final stanza of “Bright Spring” is both a representation of this reminder and the erection of a similar element within the lyric as such. Silent yet unmistakable, as succinct as it could be yet eminently suggestive, the stone forms a petrified word, extended in time.

For all its subtle interest in the poetic potentialities of stone, “Bright Spring” also appears to reflect on its own lyricization of stone. The final line of the lyric, “O mouth! that trembles through the silver-willow” (“O Mund! der durch die Silberweide bebt”), is another exclamation. Unlike the tombstone invoked in the same stanza, the static and enduring reminder of the absent human, the “mouth” apostrophized here “trembles,” evoking a presence that is both animate and vocal—by extension, a lyricized one. The tombstone in “Bright Spring” may “speak” for the human, in the sense that it is legible as a sign of human loss. As a lyric, however, the text must ventriloquize the stone, making it the center of a voice that is understandable as a reading convention.

Like Mandelstam and Rilke, Trakl’s invocation of stone indicates the powerful draw to humanize stone, to make it resemble us—whether abstractly, like the cathedral’s anthropomorphic plan, or imaginatively, like the archaic torso that mirrors us. These early twentieth-century lyrics by Mandelstam, Rilke, and Trakl demonstrate a great and diverse interest in the poetics of stone. Their explorations find meaning in stone insofar as

⁵² For a case study on precisely this point, see Sallis’ study of the old Jewish cemetery in Prag, in the second chapter (“*Vorbei*”) of his book *Stone*.

it can be made familiar, though the mute mineral proves to push back against such conventions—from notions of architectural resistance in Mandelstam’s “Hagia Sophia” and “Notre Dame,” to the reversion of Rilke’s statue of Apollo back to its constitutive material, to the endurance of the tombstone as a replacement of the absent human in Trakl’s “Bright Spring.” In the later writings of Mandelstam, and the postwar lyrics of Celan and Sachs, one finds these latent possibilities to be brought front and center, evidencing a poetics of stone that sees it as an interlocutor to estrange lyric, moving it even further away from notions of voice, feeling, and traces of anthropomorphism.

CHAPTER THREE

LYRICIZING THE LEXICON OF STONE: GEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE AND LYRIC
TEMPORALITY IN MANDELSTAM AND CELAN

In 1933, living in the small Crimean town of Koktebel, Osip Mandelstam began an intensive study of Dante, even teaching himself Italian in order to read his works in their original language. In his essay “Conversation about Dante” (“Разговор о Данте”), the longest piece of critical prose he wrote, Mandelstam describes his idiosyncratic way of approaching the thirteenth-century Florentine poet. Walking the shore of the Black Sea, Mandelstam would comb for pebbles and stones to gather and study together with the *Divine Comedy*. “The most beautiful organic commentary to Dante is provided by a mineral collection,” Mandelstam writes in “Conversation about Dante,” for stones are a diary of the weather, and a crystallization of time (*CPL*, 438).¹

Mandelstam's approach to Dante is puzzling, willfully contrarian; it resists any immediately apparent sense. How is a collection of damp pebbles a commentary to Dante? What does stone—the mutest of materials, the paradigm of thingishness—have to do with the reading of poetry? One might be tempted, as critics have done, to draw biographical parallels between the two poets: Dante writing his *Comedy* while politically exiled from his native Florence, Mandelstam his “Conversation” and late poetry while

¹ “Минералогическая коллекция—прекраснейший органический комментарий к Данту [...] Камень—импрессионистский дневник погоды” (*CC* 3:256).

essentially banished to the Soviet provinces on the eve of his arrest and own exile.²

Harrowing as his story is, biographical details alone do not explain precisely what Mandelstam—who consistently wrote about poetic language with astonishing sensitivity and insight—suggests by the prospect of a mineralogical poetics.

Nor do these particular details account for the fact that Mandelstam’s writings engage seriously with figures of stone across his career, from his first collection *Stone* (*Камень*, 1913) to his late texts of the 1930s. Mandelstam’s initial poetics of stone found expression above all in architectural figures, signifying the shaping of stone into aesthetic forms that stand as indices of cultural history. As his writings developed in the 1920s and 1930s, however, they increasingly drew upon “natural” stone rather than “artefactual,” culturally legible forms.³ Along with this shift, his texts began to integrate geological discourse, and to use this discourse to reflect on poetic language, as in his “Conversation about Dante.”

Mandelstam’s geopoetic project seems to resurface in Paul Celan’s writings of the 1950s and 1960s, which likewise integrate geological discourse, perhaps even more pointedly.⁴ The similarity is all the more notable in the light of the distinct and specific

² See “Conversation about Dante” for Mandelstam’s comment about the exiled Dante’s “magnetizing impulse” and “yearning” for Florence (*CC* 3:255; *CPL*, 438).

³ See Ronen, *An Approach* (76). I am borrowing the artefactual/natural distinction, as used here, from the discussion of substances in the second chapter of P.M.S. Hacker’s *Human Nature: The Categorical Framework* (2007). To some extent, the “wild” or “found” stone of Mandelstam’s later works has a precedent in certain texts by his fellow Acmeists Nikolai Gumilev (“Камень,” 1908) and Mikhail Zenkevich (“Камни,” 1910; see also his collection *Дикая порфира / Wild Porphyry*, 1912), and his contemporaries Mikhail Lozinsky (“Каменья,” 1913) and Velemir Khlebnikov (*Зангезу*, 1922). See: Segel (362-367); Ronen, “Mandel’shtam’s ‘Kashchei.’” Zenkevich’s and Gumilev’s lyrics demonstrate an alternative, Adamist variant of Acmeism, showing that Mandelstam’s architectural poetics was not the only direction that an Acmeist poetics of stone could have gone; on the other hand, Mandelstam’s version is more extensively developed, and transitions in its own way from the artefactual to the natural.

⁴ I adopt the term “discourse” as used here from Rochelle Tobias’ *The Discourse of Nature in the Poetry of Paul Celan: The Unnatural World* (2006), in which she argues the integration of scientific discourse (from the earth sciences, astrology, and anatomy) “enables the text to draw attention to its operations not simply as a poem but as an archive of a vanished world” (1). For a discussion of Mandelstam’s use of scientific terminology,

connections between the two poets. Celan, sometime in the 1950s, discovers the deceased elder poet's writings, begins translating them, dedicates his 1960 collection *The No-one's Rose* (*Die Niemandrose*) to Mandelstam, refers to him as "brother Osip," writes a radio essay about the Russian poet's life and work, and borrows the motif of poetry as a message in a bottle from Mandelstam's critical essay "On the Interlocutor" ("О собеседнике," 1913) for his own speech accepting the Literature Prize of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen (1958).

Numerous critical studies have analyzed the literary connections between Mandelstam and Celan, and from varying perspectives.⁵ Moreover, studies of Mandelstam's⁶ poetics of stone, and of the equivalent in Celan,⁷ have enriched our understanding of each. What criticism has not considered, however, is the convergence of these points. No critical work, in other words, has compared Celan and Mandelstam in the light of their poetics of stone. Schellenberger-Diederich's *Geopoetik* (2006), a study of the poetics of stone in German literature from the late eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, mentions Mandelstam in its chapter on Celan, but only in the unilateral sense of explaining Celan's writings, and does not investigate Mandelstam's own writings on stone.

In this chapter, I define how texts by Celan and Mandelstam "think with" stone by integrating geological discourse. I demonstrate points of convergence and divergence; each poet's method is distinct, and so my point is not that Celan's geopoetic texts simply

see Litvina's and Uspensky's "Из наблюдений над поведением термина в поэзии Осипа Мандельштама."

⁵ Felstiner, Ivanović, Eskin (2000), Olschner, Glazova, Schellenberger-Diederich, Pickford, MacKay, Groves, and numerous others.

⁶ Thompson, Ronen, Darwin, Pollak (esp. 17-22), Glazov-Corrigan (29-32; 74-76; 81-85), Painter, etc.

⁷ Lyon, Schellenberger-Diederich, Tobias, Werner, Gadamer, Pöggeler (*Spur des Worts*, 212-213, 217), Henrich, Bambach, etc.

follow an approach presented in Mandelstam's. Buttressed by the distinctive literary connections between the two poets, however, I argue that what unites Mandelstam and Celan is a shared interest in articulating and enacting an alternative lyric temporality, one attuned to the deepness of geological concepts of space and time.

The geopoetic temporality explored in Mandelstam's and Celan's texts takes two basic forms. First, their texts draw upon geological discourse in order to describe an alternative literary history. The language of stone—of excavation, unearthing, and mining—enables a different way of imagining access to past literature, and its relevance to the present. The aligning of lyric temporality with geological temporality in their works suggests a project of writing against the grain of linear-progressive models of culture, similar to what Jeremy Tambling calls a “deliberate anachronism”: “being anachronistic has the potential of unsettling readings of history which see the times as moving forward steadily” (2).

Second, their texts draw upon geological tropes in order to imagine stone as fossilized language, as the petrification of the essential breath of poetry. Geological time is deep time, and the records of changes that are legible in and on the stone of the earth mark both sudden, catastrophic events like volcanic eruptions and slow, accumulative processes like the formation of rock layers via sedimentation. In drawing upon discourse that discusses these concepts, Mandelstam and Celan align poetry with a natural history, in addition to a human one.⁸ In summarizing the works of W.G. Sebald (another author

⁸ There is an ecocritical dimension to this project, one that has not been addressed in studies of either Mandelstam or Celan. On the ecocritical aspects of geopoetics, generally, see Mason's “Literature and Geology: An Experiment in Interdisciplinary, Comparative Ecocriticism.” In my own application of the term “geopoetics,” I intend to simultaneously signal the historical tradition of poetic tropes of stone that Schellenberger-Diederich identifies in *Geopoetik*, and the “geopoetics” of Don McKay, Kenneth White, and others. No study that I am aware of has put these two variations into conversation, but I tentatively suggest

highly attuned to the poetic possibilities of natural history), Eric Santner suggests that the novelist is indebted to the “Benjaminian” view that the “opacity and recalcitrance that we associate with the materiality of nature—the mute ‘thingness’ of nature—is, paradoxically, the most palpable where we encounter it as a piece of human history that has become an enigmatic ruin beyond our capacity to endow it with meaning, to integrate it into our symbolic universe” (xv). In my readings of Mandelstam’s and Celan’s geopoetic texts, I consider how they raise the inverse of this thought. In the imaginative space of lyric, these two poets carve out an alternative language and temporality, one that begins with a material far removed from the human. Stone is traditionally seen as voiceless and ineffectual, yet in their works it emerges, perhaps unexpectedly, as a more affirmative model. Precisely because it is voiceless, because its riches lie mute and dormant in the earth, stone provides a more enduring model of poetic survival. A geopoetic temporality evokes senses of lyric history and subjectivity that are substantially broadened.⁹

POETRY AS PLOW: MANDELSTAM’S GEOPOETICS OF THE 1920S

Mandelstam was a prolific prose writer, often using journalistic essays and reviews as forums for declaring his own literary and cultural principles. His first major essay of the 1920s, “The Word and Culture” (“Слово и культура,” 1921), turns to geological discourse in order to draft an affirmative vision of poetry. Written during the Russian

that they share a concern for considering deep time within poetic language, and with provoking the nature/culture divide, by thinking with the nonhuman and with stone above all.

⁹ See also Hanssen’s *Walter Benjamin’s Other History: Of Stones, Animals, Human Beings, and Angels*, which defines Benjamin’s and Adorno’s conceptualizations of a nonhuman, natural history and “examine[s] what could be called Benjamin’s *de-limitation* of the human subject through a reading of the figures of stones, animals, and angels that one finds scattered through his writings” (4). Adorno’s “The Idea of Natural History” (“Die Idee der Naturgeschichte,” 1932) seeks to overcome the antithesis of nature and history, suggesting with the help of ideas from Benjamin and Georg Lukács, that nature is petrified history.

Civil War and in the midst of a horrendous famine, just prior to the formal establishment of the USSR, “The Word and Culture” offers a defense of poetry’s endurance against times of change and trouble. The essay demonstrates the transitional state of Mandelstam’s political thought: “The separation of Culture and State is the most significant event of our revolution. [...] Today, the State has a unique relationship to culture that is best expressed by the term *tolerance*” (*CPL*, 113). Mandelstam implies that cultural tolerance is equivalent to religious tolerance, for “culture has become the Church” (112).¹⁰ Cultural tolerance alludes to a lurking intolerance, however, and of this Mandelstam is more critical:

Cultural values ornament the State, endowing it with color, form, and, if you will, even gender. Inscriptions on State buildings, tombs, and gateways insure the State against the ravages of time.

Poetry is the plough that turns up time in such a way that the abyssal strata of time, its black earth, appear on the surface. There are epochs, however, when mankind, not satisfied with the present, yearning like the ploughman for the abyssal strata of time, thirsts for the virgin soil of time. (*CPL*, 113)¹¹

Declaring at one moment that culture adorns the state, protecting it against the ravages of time, then at the next asserting that poetry is the plow that turns up time, the essay is subtly but firmly critical of State promotion of culture.¹² Poetry, “The Word and Culture” asserts, is not to be put into the service of the State. Rather, it is a force that resists crude formulations of cultural-political “progress.” That there are times “when

¹⁰ In later editions of this essay, Mandelstam replaced this sentence with “culture became a war camp” (“культура стала военным лагерем”) (*Слово и культура*, 40).

¹¹ “Культурные ценности окрашивают государственность, сообщают ей цвет, форму и, если хотите, даже пол. Надписи на государственных зданиях, гробницах, воротах страхуют государство от разрушения временем. Поэзия — плуг, взрывающий время так, что глубинные слои времени, его чернозем, оказываются сверху. Но бывают такие эпохи, когда человечество, не довольствуясь сегодняшним днем, тоскуя, как пахарь, жаждет целины времен” (*СС* 2:113).

¹² Institutions which developed in the USSR that were involved in this kind of promotion include: Gosizdat, RAPP (Российская ассоциация пролетарских писателей, 1925) and The Union of Soviet Writers (Союз писателей СССР, 1932).

mankind, not satisfied with the present, yearning like the ploughman for the abyssal strata of time, thirsts for the virgin soil of time,” demonstrates dissatisfaction with the present. The answer to this, the essay proposes, is to go backwards, chronologically speaking, or downwards, geologically speaking, to the deep abyssal time represented conceptually by our notions of the geological scale, and tangibly by the layered strata of the earth itself.

The plow as an image is indelibly tied to notions of cultivation and renewal. In “The Word and Culture,” however, the plow does not simply scratch the fertile soil of the surface to help nourish a burgeoning culture, but rather excavates the abyssal strata, turning them over to reveal instead the dormant but rich core of the past. Yet in the context of a Revolution founded on Marxist-Leninist principles of dialectical historical progress, such a willful anachronism could only be viewed as a regression.

Mandelstam was not unaware of the conflict between scientific (or quasi-scientific) principles of progress and evolution on the one hand, and his liberal and anachronistic poetics on the other. The poet found alternative philosophical grounds for his own theories. For example, in his essay “On the Nature of the Word” (“О природе слова,” 1922), Mandelstam accounts for a notion of temporality, drawing particularly on the ideas of Henri Bergson. The French philosopher, he writes “does not consider phenomena according to the way they submit to the law of temporal succession, but rather according to their spatial extension. He is interested exclusively in the internal connection among phenomena. He liberates this connection from time and considers it independently” (*CPL*, 117).¹³ Shortly thereafter, “On the Nature of the Word” puts things

¹³ “Бергсон рассматривает явления не в порядке их подчинения закону временной последовательности, а как бы в порядке их пространственной протяженности. Его интересует исключительно внутренняя связь явлений. Эту связь он освобождает от времени и рассматривает отдельно” (*СС* 1:217).

more bluntly: “A science based on the principle of connection rather than causality saves us from the bad infinity of evolutionary theory, not to mention its vulgarized corollary—the theory of progress” (118).¹⁴ The ideas drawn from Bergson, who insists in his groundbreaking *Creative Evolution* that “[t]he more we study the nature of time, the more we shall comprehend that duration means invention” and that “*time is invention or it is nothing at all,*” legitimized a freer, more imaginative sense of temporality (11, 341; emphasis in original).

Inspired by his friendship with the biologist B.S. Kuzin and his literary engagement with the naturalists Lamarck, Darwin, Pallas, Cuvier, and others, Mandelstam’s writings of the 1930s return to a critique of literary evolution.¹⁵ Already evident in “On the Nature of the Word” and other writing of the 1920s, however, is a refusal to think about literary history as yet another form of linear-causal progression. Bergson’s emphasis on creative, independent connections gave Mandelstam language for articulating an entirely different literary history. Tropes of stone become crucial because stone, particularly as it forms in layered strata, provides a way of thinking about a chronotopic convergence of space and time: stone symbolizes time instantiated in matter. Conceiving literary history in this way provides a different kind of access to the cultural past. The poetry of the past, in Mandelstam’s view, is not superseded; even if it lies dormant, buried beneath successive strata, it only awaits the plow that will excavate it and bring it out to the surface of the present.

¹⁴ “Наука, построенная на принципе связи, а не причинности, избавляет нас от дурной бесконечности эволюционной теории, не говоря уже о ее вульгарном прихвостне — теории прогресса” (CC 1:218).

¹⁵ For more on the evolutionary debates of the time, vis-à-vis Mandelstam’s literary production, see Boris Gasparov’s “The Iron Age of the 1930s: The Centennial Return in Mandelstam.” Spektor’s “The Science of Poetry” analyzes Mandelstam’s “Conversation about Dante” in terms of theories of evolution and scientific discourse in general, though not geology in particular.

“The Word and Culture” situates this project of cultural excavation as a matter of lyric temporality in particular. The essay declares, “I want Ovid, Pushkin, and Catullus to live once more, and I am not satisfied with the historical Ovid, Pushkin, and Catullus” (113).¹⁶ The language of Mandelstam’s personal desire to bring this trio of poets back to the surface echoes that which describes the plow of poetry turning up the abyssal strata of time: mankind is not “satisfied” with the present (“не довольствуюсь сегодняшним днем”), and so turns up the abyssal strata of time, just as Mandelstam’s imaginative repositioning of Ovid, Pushkin, and Catullus occurs because he is not “satisfied” with their inert historicization (“меня не удовлетворяет исторический Овидий”) (CC 1:213). The essay continues to critique the evolutionary-progressive model of literary history, noting that it is “indeed astonishing that all are obsessed with poets and cannot tear themselves away from them. You would think that once they were read, that was that. Transcended, as they say now. Nothing could be farther from the truth” (114).¹⁷ Practicing what it preaches, “The Word and Culture” excavates Ovid from the abyssal depths of time. The essay quotes Mandelstam’s poem “Heaviness and tenderness—sisters they are” (“Сёстры—тяжесть и нежность”) from his second collection *Tristia* (also the title of one of Ovid’s works), published in Berlin in 1920: “like murky water, I drink the turbid air / Time is upturned by the plough, the rose was as the earth” (114).¹⁸ As it turns

¹⁶ “Я хочу снова Овидия, Пушкина, Катулла, и меня не удовлетворяет исторический Овидий, Пушкин, Катулл” (CC 1:213).

¹⁷ “Удивительно, в самом деле, что все возятся с поэтами и никак с ними не развяжутся. Казалось бы — прочел, и ладно. Преодолею, как теперь говорят. Ничего подобного” (CC 1:213).

¹⁸ “Словно темную воду, я пью помутившийся воздух. / Время вспахано плугом, и роза землею была” (CC 1:214)

out, the upturning plow is itself an excavated figure, unearthed from the writings of Ovid.¹⁹

Mandelstam revisits these ideas in his essay “The Wheat of Humanity” (“Пшеница человеческая,” 1922), which once again draws upon geological discourse to aid in the articulation of an alternative cultural history and lyric temporality.²⁰ The essay offers a perspective that is perhaps not immediately compatible with the ideology of its original venue of publication. *On the Eve* (*Накануне*), a daily newspaper headquartered in Berlin, was intended to be a vehicle for persuading the Russian exile community to see the Bolshevik/Soviet cause.²¹ “The Wheat of Humanity” is openly critical of what it deems “messianistic” nationalisms, and promotes instead a kind of pan-European ideal to unite its population (the “wheat” referred to in the essay’s title): “Any national idea in contemporary Europe is doomed to be a nonentity so long as Europe does not regard itself as a whole, so long as it does not conceive of itself as a moral personality,” the essay states, and asserts that “the reestablishment of Europeanism as our great nationality” is a necessary alternative.²²

¹⁹ Ronen asserts that the image of the plow derives from Ovid’s *Ex Ponto* (IV, x), a text similarly concerned with time, material, and fate (*An Approach*, 83). Celan also translated “Сёстры тяжесть и нежность” (“Время вспахано плугом, и роза землю была.” / “Die Zeit – gepflügt, die Rose, die nun zu Erde ward”; *GW* 5:109). Pollak reads the plow in relation to Mandelstam’s stratigraphic presentations of his own history, particularly his relation to Judaism (6-7).

²⁰ “The Wheat of Humanity” has been largely overlooked in critical studies of Mandelstam. Fleishman (“Неизвестная статья Мандельштама”) provides a very brief contextualization of the essay’s political aspects, and notes in passing that its geological discourse echoes Blok’s (see note on Presto’s “The Aesthetics of Disaster,” below). Toddes (“Статья ‘Пшеница человеческая’ в творчестве Мандельштама начала 20-х годов”) provides a structural and subtextual study of the essay, and also briefly notes its language of geological catastrophe.

²¹ For a discussion of the ideology and influence of *On the Eve*, see Williams’s *Culture in Exile: Russian Émigrés in Germany, 1881-1941* (268-275). The newspaper, Williams writes, “was full of talk about the decline of Europe and the rise of the East” (269). See also Williams’ “‘Changing Landmarks’ in Russian Berlin, 1922-1924.” On Mandelstam in/and Germany, see Kirshbaum and Nerler.

²² “Всякая национальная идея в современной Европе обречена на ничтожество, пока Европа не обретет себя как целое, не ощутит себя как нравственную личность. [...] Выход из национального распада, из состояния зерна в мешке к вселенскому единству, к интернационалу лежит для нас

A natural, geological history is fundamental to what constitutes “Europe,” the essay argues; everything else arises only as an extension of this: “One can regard the political violence of Europe, its indefatigable desire to refashion its borders, as the prolongation of a geological process, as the need to prolong the era of geological catastrophes and fluctuations within history. [...] The spirit of politics—its nature—is catastrophe, the unexpected fault-shift [*сдвиг*], destruction.”²³ In an era of such political turmoil as the beginning of the twentieth century, the fundamental material of Europe lies dormant: “In Europe these days there is no and should not be any grandeur, neither the tiara, nor the crown, nor grandiose ideas like massive tiaras. Where did all this disappear to—the whole mass of cast gold of the historical forms of ideas? It returned to the state of an alloy, into the golden, molten magma.”²⁴ Under pressure, however, this ideological-geological material risks a catastrophic explosion.

Conscious of its position at the border of East and West, of Europe and Asia, Mandelstam writes, Russia “stoked this fire” in advance.²⁵ “The Wheat of Humanity” name-drops the figures of Alexander Herzen (linked to the nineteenth-century

через возрождение европейского сознания, через восстановление европеизма как нашей большой народности” (CC 2:250; my translation).

²³ “Политическое буйство Европы, ее неутомимое желание перекраивать свои границы можно рассматривать как продолжение геологического процесса, как потребность продолжить в истории эру геологических катастроф, колебаний [...] Душа политики, ее природа — катастрофа, неожиданный сдвиг, разрушение” (CC 2:249).

²⁴ “В нынешней Европе нет и не должно быть никакого величия, ни тиар, ни корон, ни величественных идей, похожих на массивные тиары. Куда все это делось — вся масса литого золота исторических форм идей? — вернулась в состояние сплава, в жидкую золотую магму” (CC 2:251). In her article “The Aesthetics of Disaster: Blok, Messina, and the Decadent Sublime,” Presto indicates that the language of geological catastrophe was already in use in literary works from the first decade of the twentieth century, particularly in the works of Alexander Blok. Presto argues that Blok saw an analogical link between the Messina earthquake of 1908, the failed Russian Revolution of 1905, and the impending collapse of Europeanism. These thoughts are remarkably close to Mandelstam’s in “The Wheat of Humanity,” and perhaps suggest that geological discourse resurfaced as an apt language for the turbulent 1920s. See also Glazov-Corrigan, who connects the notion of catastrophe in art to Blok and Mandelstam (49-51), as well as to Gumilev (158).

²⁵ “Россия сохранила это чувство для Европы подспудно и ревностно, она разжигала этот огонь заранее, как бы тревожась, что он может загаснуть” (CC 2:251).

Westernization movement in Russia), Nikolai Karamzin (who wrote the first extensive history of Russia but also the *Notes of a Russian Traveler* about his journeys in Europe), and Fyodor Tyutchev (a poet who lived most of his life in Germany, mingling with the likes of Heinrich Heine and Friedrich Schelling) as signals of Russia's proto-pan-Europeanism. These authors "felt the soil of Europe most powerfully where it reared up into mountains, where it preserved the living memory of a geological catastrophe."²⁶ This alternative history, petrified in the soil and stone of Europe, Mandelstam asserts, is memorialized in the works of these past authors. The soil of Europe, its bedrock, its mountain ranges: all of these disregard the artificial national boundaries inscribed on the continent, just like the authors cited who crisscrossed it.²⁷

If the alternative, natural history of Europe lies dormant but legible in the soil and stone of the continent, then "The Wheat of Humanity" cites poetic plows that unearth this petro-cultural memory. Twice the essay quotes poets on silence: first, Mikhail Lomonosov ("the delight of kings and earthly kingdoms, / beloved silence"), to demonstrate the materialization of silence ("the simple absence of a catastrophe felt almost material, like a certain thin ether of silence"); second, Tyutchev's "Over vineyard hills" ("Something festive blows, / like the silence of Sundays"), a short ode to the Alps which similarly suggests that a kind of silence is made tangible in the mountains at the center of Europe.²⁸ The trope of poetry as silenced, petrified in stone, is one developed further in Mandelstam's subsequent texts, and later in Celan's writings.

²⁶ "И тот, и другой сильнее всего чувствовали почву Европы там, где она вздыбилась горами, где она хранит живую память геологической катастрофы" (CC 2:251)

²⁷ Mandelstam's geography is as imaginative as his lyric temporality is anachronistic: though he declares it the "land which bore Kant and Goethe," Kant wasn't born in and never went anywhere near the Alps.

²⁸ "Царей и царств земных отрада, / Возлюбленная тишина' [...] простое отсутствие катастрофы ощущалось почти материально, как некий тонкий эфир тишины" and "нечто праздничное вест, как дней воскресных тишина" (CC 2:249, 251).

AIR AND EARTH: MANDELSTAM'S "THE ONE WHO FOUND A HORSESHOE"

Aside from the poetics of stone outlined in his early Acmeist lyrics, Mandelstam's major poems of the early 1920s, including "The Age," "The Slate Ode," "The One who Found a Horseshoe," and "1 January 1924" are all deeply concerned with questions of literary history, lyric temporality, and the possibility of stone as the memorialization of culture, the instantiation of poetry in dormant, silent stone. In this sense, these major lyric texts put into practice the general theory of poetry outlined in his critical essays. Given Celan's admiration for Mandelstam, and their shared investigation of the poetics of stone, it is worth noting that Celan translated each of these major texts into German in the 1950s. Celan, one might say, extends the project begun in Mandelstam's earlier texts.²⁹

Before turning to examine Celan's geopoetic texts of the 1960s, however, I will examine Mandelstam's lyric "The One who Found a Horseshoe" ("Нашедший подкову," 1923), which brings together many of the considerations of lyric temporality and geological discourse evident in Mandelstam's texts of the 1920s. "The One who Found a Horseshoe" was first published in the Moscow-based journal *Red Virgin Soil* (*Красная новь*) in 1923 (No. 2, March/April), and nearly simultaneously in *On the Eve*. The poem is a notable anomaly in Mandelstam's extensive *oeuvre*: it is his longest single poem (shorter only than his cycle *Verses about an Unknown Soldier*), and the only one of his poems written in free verse.

Given that "The One Who Found a Horseshoe" marks a poetic experiment, a shift in Mandelstam's politics and relation to the state, and the eve of his poetic silence, it

²⁹ For extensive discussions of Celan's translations of Mandelstam, see Eskin (*Ethics and Dialogue*), Ivanović (*Das Gedicht im Geheimnis der Begegnung*), and Glazova ("The Poetry of Bringing about Presence").

is no surprise that critics like Clare Cavanagh understand the lyric as a sign of Mandelstam's dissatisfaction with "cultural bankruptcy" in the dawning years of the Soviet Union, a poetic reflection of critiques raised in "The Word and Culture" and elsewhere.³⁰ While I find these readings vital to our understanding of the lyric, I argue that reading "The One Who Found a Horseshoe" closely in the light of Mandelstam's other texts will allow us to see that in the early 1920s, the poet was not only formulating his perspective on what were recent ideological shifts in Russia, but also articulating a much more expansive defense of poetry.

"The One who Found a Horseshoe" as a whole can be understood as a kind of cultural unearthing, as an archaeological venture. When first published in *Red Virgin Soil*, the poem carried the subtitle "A Pindaric Fragment" ("Пиндарический отрывок"). Its engagement with Greek antiquity is clear, if unusual. The free-verse form of Mandelstam's poem references the work of Pindar.³¹ Ronen, for example, argues that it represents "an attempt to recreate, with certain changes, the strophe—antistrophe—epode scheme of a triadic Greek ode," customarily associated with the name Pindar (229). Finally, some critics have read "The One who Found a Horseshoe" as "Pindaric" in terms of its use of myth and metaphor, and of the classical Hellenistic images it recycles, so to speak: chariots, ships, horses, and so on.³² Whatever motivated the assumption of a

³⁰ See chapter five of *Osip Mandelstam and the Modernist Creation of Tradition*. Myers' reading of "The One who Found a Horseshoe" sees it as a more positive affirmation of the evolution of cultural memory. Broyde reads the text as contiguous with Mandelstam's concerns about the continuity of art, which is also treated in the poet's essays.

³¹ Aleksandr Mets notes that Mandelstam took the free verse form "from German translations of Pindar" ["редкая у Мандельштама форма своегодного стиха – от немецких переводов Пиндара" (566)] while Ronen (188-89) writes that Mandelstam "must have been familiar" with at least some of these translations, and Broyde (174, 219) surmises that Mandelstam might have encountered Pindar in any one of a number of Russian, German, or French translations.

³² See, among others: Mets (566), Dobritsyn, Myers.

Pindaric form or *ethos*, “The One who Found a Horseshoe” draws upon the relics of the deep past, uncovering them for the sake of the future.

The archaeological project of “The One who Found a Horseshoe” is particularly notable in the light of its original venue of publication. *Red Virgin Soil* had an overtly progressive program. The journal, founded with input from Vladimir Lenin himself, was designed to adapt the Russian cultural tradition of the “thick journal” (*толстый журнал*) for Soviet audiences, with a blend of literary works (including serialized texts), cultural essays, political commentary and other genres, united by a common ideological focus.³³ The journal’s ideological content is reflected in its title: it is Soviet (“red”), and designed to be fertile intellectual content for the “New Soviet Man” (“virgin soil”). Its forward-looking program is also reflected in its titular word “virgin soil,” or *nov’* (*новь*), semantically related to the Russian word for “new,” *novyj* (*новый*).

Once again, we find Mandelstam as the disruptive plowman, unearthing the abyssal strata of time. Like “The Word and Culture,” the archaeological, nostalgic ideology of “The One who Found a Horseshoe” is out of joint with its venue’s progressivism: Mandelstam’s poetic project was to unearth the black soil and the abyssal strata of deep time, not the red virgin soil of progressivism. Mandelstam did publish several poems in *Red Virgin Soil*, however. Maguire suggests that some texts, like Mandelstam’s poems, were included in the journal as a kind of appeasement—a gesture toward its goal of encyclopedism—but are tangential to its central mission (245). Mandelstam’s archaeological venture in “The One who Found a Horseshoe” is legible

³³ The essential study of this journal and its significance is Maguire’s *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920s* (1968).

against the backdrop of his anachronistic geopoetics of the 1920s, and its incommensurableness with *Red Virgin Soil* only highlights this.

The lyric's first stanza suggests this anachronism, alluding to a bygone, mythical age while using the first-person plural in present tense: "We look at the forest and say: / here is a forest for ships, masts" ("Глядим на лес и говорим: / Вот лес корабельный, мачтовый").³⁴ It evokes an age of exploration, where the "seafarer, / in unbridled thirst for space / dragging a geometer's fragile instrument through the misty troughs, / collates the pull of the earth's bosom / with the rough peaks of the sea" ("мореплаватель, / в необузданной жажде пространства, / влача через влажные рытвины хрупкий прибор геометра, / Сличит с притяженьем земного лона / Шероховатую поверхность морей."). The sailing imagery of this stanza simultaneously unearths the civilizations of Mediterranean classicism and, as Eskin has pointed out, serves as one of Mandelstam's many metapoetic figures ("Of Sailors and Poets," 1; see also Glazov-Corrigan, 94-96). The archaeological venture of "The One who Found a Horseshoe," however, reveals that this past civilization can only be recalled in fragments; to think in Mandelstam's figures, what reaches the contemporary age is an exigent missive, a message in a bottle.

Indeed, the poem's second stanza counters the first's rather nostalgic presentation of a mythic, Classical golden age. It begins on a much more self-reflexive and self-conscious note, asking "Where to begin?" ("С чего начать?") Twenty-eight lines into the text, "The One who Found a Horseshoe" asks how it is to begin, a sign of doubt in an age in which "Everything sways and cracks" ("Всё трещит и качается."), as though the ship

³⁴ All citations of "The One who Found a Horseshoe" in this chapter are taken from CC 2:42-45 (my translation).

of poetry cannot hold. These lines prompt a comparison with the first stanza; whereas “under the salty heel of the wind the plumb-line balances” (“Под соленую пятою ветра устоит отвес”) and the trees that become ships’ masts stand tall and noble “on the famed mountainous ridge” (“На знаменитом горном кряже”), the situation described in the second stanza is one of instability and uncertainty. Such doubt extends even to the level of language, for “The air trembles from similes. / Not one word is better than another, / the earth roars with metaphor” (“Воздух дрожит от сравнений. / Ни одно слово не лучше другого, / Земля гудит метафорой”). Khagi concurs that this signals a temporal and ideological shift. Whereas the “departing Christian era used to give brief and honest replies: ‘At every touch it responded ‘yes’ and ‘no’ [...]. In the present, by contrast, everything swings to and fro in an overpowering verbal nausea. Language is inflated. Nature chokes with words” (108).³⁵

In the face of this verbal skepticism, the poem appears to assert the longevity of lyric: “Thrice blessed is he who puts his name into song; / a song adorned with an epithet / lives longer than others – / it is marked from its friends by the band on its brow” (“Трижды блажен, кто введет в песнь имя; / Украшенная названьем / Дольше живет среди других – / Она отмечана среди подруг повязкой на лбу”). “Thrice blessed” as such lyrics may be, these four lines only bear doubles. One whose name (*имя*) is lead into a song (*песнь*) is blessed because a song (*песнь*) decorated with a name (*название*)

³⁵ Khagi (109) and Freidin (369) both note that the lines describing verbal skepticism in “The One who Found a Horseshoe” closely parallel a passage from Pavel Florensky’s “Письмо второе.” Such admissions of verbal skepticism may come across as ironic in the midst of a lyric poem. Mandelstam’s “The One who Found a Horseshoe” initiates the same paradox that Hofmannsthal’s Lord Chandos letter does: verbal inadequacy, a profession of linguistic crisis, is given fluent expression in language. In fact, “The One who Found a Horseshoe” “deliberately undermines itself” (Khagi, 108). Though it may declare that “the air trembles from similes” and “the earth roars with metaphor,” the text itself makes virtuosic use of these devices.

lives longer among others (“среди других”), and stands out among its friends (“среди подруг”). The text of “The One who Found a Horseshoe” does not match its own boasts. The name that originally decorated it, Pindar, is there by cultural theft; it is an artifact unearthed, dusted off, and borrowed. Mandelstam’s skeptical lyric does not boast that *it* will live long, but its archaeological venture firmly asserts the potential endurance of poetry writ large.

Even with the mention of Pindar’s name, even with all of its allusions to the culture of antiquity, it is not the continuity of culture that is celebrated in “The One who Found a Horseshoe.” Language is called into question, and thus the possibility of a written chronicle of time is as well. Mandelstam’s text forefronts a poetics of the remnant; the poem is a Pindaric *fragment*, a shard of a cultural whole that has not survived, modeled after a poet whose works survive almost entirely as quotations in the works of others. In its place, we find a lyric language founded on the recovered artifact.

Material artifacts of the past can be understood as the silent instantiations of culture, waiting to be unearthed and read. “The One who Found a Horseshoe” suggests that cultural life might also be encapsulated via fossilization and petrification. “The fragile chronicle of our era is coming to an end” (“Хрупкое летоисчисление нашей эры подходит к концу”), that is, the time of the written chronicle (*летоисчисление*) has drawn to a close; more durable yet less immediately legible forms take its place. The age of speech, of “‘yes’ and ‘no,’” of a child answering “‘I’ll give you an apple’ or: ‘I won’t give you an apple’” is gone (“На всякое прикосновение отвечала ‘да’ или ‘нет.’ / Так ребенок отвечает: / ‘Я дам тебе яблоко’ или ‘Я не дам тебе яблока’”). Words, the sounds of speech themselves, are fossilized. The child’s face “is the exact cast of the voice that pronounced these words” (“лицо его точный слепок с голоса, который

произносит эти слова”). In this time of linguistic skepticism, the sounds of words are preserved in physical form as petrified impressions (*Abdruck*, in Celan’s translation of the poem; *GW* 5:135). This trope of preservation also appears in “The Word and Culture,” which writes that “[t]he poem lives through an inner image, that ringing mold of form which anticipates the written poem. There is not yet a single word, but the poem can already be heard” (116).³⁶

“One” is said to find a horseshoe, but this too is an artifact of a bygone, buried culture that must be recovered and dusted off. The horse to which the horseshoe once belonged, “lies in the dust” (“лежит в пыли”), at its end, yet “the sharp turn of his neck / still recalls the memory of its race with straggling legs / when there weren’t four, / but as many as there are stones in the road” (“крутой поворот его шеи / Еще сохраняет воспоминание о беге с разбросанными ногами / Когда их было не четыре, / а по числу камней дороги”). Essentially, it has become fossilized—turned to stone. Its form preserves (*сохранять*) the memory of the sounds of hoof beats on stones—an analogue for poetic rhythm, which in Mandelstam’s free verse poem of 1923 has been “lost” (Ronen, 84). Remnants of a long-silenced civilization, like grains of wheat, are themselves petrified (*окаменелый*, or *versteinert* in Celan’s translation) and take the place of the human word: “That which I am now saying, I am not saying, / but is dug up from the earth, like grains of petrified wheat” (“То, что я сейчас говорю, говорю не я, / а вырыто из земли, подобно зернам окаменелой пшеницы”). Physical forms—stone, artifacts, fossils, petrifications—preserve language when language itself cannot. The sound of poetry survives in the noiseless forms of stones. Paradoxically, then, the “sound is still ringing,

³⁶ “Стихотворение живо внутренним образом, тем звучащим слепком формы, который предваряет написанное стихотворение. Ни одного слова еще нет, а стихотворение уже звучит” (*CC* 1:215).

although the cause of the sound has been lost,” echoing the assertion presented in “The Word and Culture” (“Звук еще звенит, хотя причина звука исчезла”).

In characterizing how this petrified past culture is accessed, Mandelstam’s lyric revisits a familiar motif from his “The Word and Culture”: “Neaira’s damp earth, tilled each night anew / by pitchforks, tridents, hoes, plows” (“Влажный чернозем Нееры, каждую ночь распаханый заново / Вилами, трезубцами, мотыгами, плугами”).³⁷ To describe this poetic program, “The One who Found a Horseshoe” alters the usual resonances of poetry. Lyric is typically regarded as the lightest of genres; it is music, song, and breath. “The air trembles from similes,” the text states, while “the earth roars with metaphor,” suggesting a kind of equivalency between air—the vehicle of lyric—and the solid ground of earth. Yet as the plow of poetry turns up the black soil and reveals the strata of time, “the air is mixed as densely as earth” (“Воздух замешан так же густо, как земля”). Air, the vehicle of lyric, becomes as dense and heavy as the earth; so joined, it earns a far more stable existence than the “fragile chronicle of our era,” the written records of history, which “is coming to an end.”

³⁷ See Ronen (203) for a discussion of Neaere, from Chénier. The imagery of “black earth” or *чернозем* appears frequently in Mandelstam’s writings, including his poem “Black Earth” (1935). It also resurfaces in Celan’s works, including his own poem “Black Earth” (“Schwarzerde,” not a translation of Mandelstam’s poem), from his 1963 collection *The No-One’s Rose*, dedicated to Mandelstam (see Ivanović, *Das Gedicht*, 335 on the possibility that Celan knew Mandelstam’s poem). “Black earth,” sometimes transliterated as *chernozem*, refers to a band of rich soil covering parts of southern Russia, Siberia, Ukraine, southeastern Germany, and eastern Europe, including Celan’s hometown of Chernovitz, Bukovina (formerly part of Romania, now part of Ukraine), the name of which reveals the root *chern-* (“black”), common to many Slavic and East European languages. Celan may have also drawn on the discourse of *chernozem* from his geological sources that discuss it (including Günther, 124 and Brinkmann, 44-45; see Schellengerger-Diederich, 309-310). At any rate, I argue that *chernozem* provides another kind of “meridian” in Celan’s poetics, a way of connecting poets and places through geological considerations, rather than state or national boundaries.

PETRIFICATION OF THE PAST: MANDELSTAM'S "CONVERSATION ABOUT DANTE"

"The One who Found a Horseshoe" imagines accessing the past as condensed, whether through the air/breath of poetry turned to earth, or via the remnants of civilization reduced to fossils, fragments, and petrifications waiting to be unearthed. In his 1933 critical essay "Conversation about Dante," Mandelstam pursues this direction even further, imagining poetry as petrified, in stones marking geological rather than cultural time. The essay was written when Mandelstam was living in the Crimean town of Koktebel on the shore of the Black Sea, but was not published until the 1960s. The critical understanding of the essay is that while it purports to be a study of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, it is at the same time very much a statement of Mandelstam's own poetics; or, as George Steiner insists, "the best that the arts of modern literary criticism have to show" (along with Gershom Scholem and Walter Benjamin's discussions of Kafka) (13). The proper way to read Dante, Mandelstam argues, draws upon the language of the natural sciences, and geology above all (*CC* 3: 230; *CPL*, 411). Essentially, the essay proposes that this approach enables us to draw two conclusions: first, that Dante's work is fundamentally anachronistic, and functions with a temporality more geological than historical; second, that the structure of Dante's verse itself ought to be conceived of as crystallographic and petrological.³⁸

The essay treats Dante's work as anachronistic by asserting that it is aimed at a time outside of its historical context: "it is inconceivable to read Dante's cantos without directing them toward contemporaneity [...]. They are missiles for capturing the future"

³⁸ For notes on Mandelstam's shifting concepts of time, see Glazov-Corrigan (78, 165).

(420); “Dante’s method is anachronistic” (439).³⁹ Mandelstam declares that the Middle Ages held a cyclical view of time, that “Dante and his contemporaries did not know geological time. Paleontological clocks were unknown to them: the clock of coal, the clock of infusorial limestone, the clocks of sand, shale, and schist” (422).⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the geological time scale can aid us—the contemporary targets of Dante’s cantos—in seeing the poet as a rich lode from the abyssal strata of time, waiting to be unearthed and brought to the surface. “Conversation about Dante,” in other words, evidences the most extensive articulation of the alternative lyric temporality proposed in “The Word and Culture.”⁴¹

Geological discourse can also help us to understand Dante’s verse, and how its structure is tied to its temporality, “Conversation” proposes: its structure “can be well understood by making use of an analogy with rock strata whose purity has been destroyed by the intrusion of foreign bodies. Granular admixtures and veins of lava indicate a single fault or catastrophe as the common source of the formation” (407).⁴² Despite Mandelstam’s insistence, however, the usefulness of this analogy is not immediately

³⁹ “Немыслимо читать песни Данта, не оборачивая их к современности. [...] Они снаряды для уловления будущего” and “Избранный Дантом метод анахронистичен” (CC 3:238, 256). Echoing Mandelstam’s thoughts, Tambling argues that “[f]or Dante to bring Virgil into the *Commedia* is anachronistic, as is everything in that text: it is not coincidence that the question in Dante of what happens to language is comparable with demonstrating the power of the afterlife, with the sense that everything in the present life is subject to postponement, that it exists now in figural reality and will after death become more real. But for Dante there is not anachronism, since nothing is ever lost to time. That is because there is no simple chronology” (6). A collaborative study of Dante and Mandelstam is sorely needed.

⁴⁰ “Дант и его современники не знали геологического времени. Им были неведомы палеонтологические часы — часы каменного угля, часы инфузорийного известняка — часы зернистые, крупичатые, слойчатые” (CC 3:240).

⁴¹ Moreover, just as “The Word and Culture” and “On the Nature of the Word” propose this anachronistic approach to lyric temporality and as a counterpoint to evolutionary notions of literary history, A.A. Morozov argues that the essay on Dante is “involved in a polemic against the theory of evolutionary progress” (CPL, 680).

⁴² “Структура дантовского монолога, построенного на органной регистровке, может быть хорошо понята при помощи аналогии с горными породами, чистота которых нарушена вкрапленными инородными телами. Зернистые примеси и лавовые прожилки указывают на единый сдвиг, или катастрофу, как на общий источник формообразования” (CC 3:225-226).

apparent. Unlike his earlier architectural analogy for poetry, whereby stone is to building as word is to poem, this more petropoetic analogy does not define precisely what is being compared to what. “Conversation about Dante” deploys yet another analogy for Mandelstam to illustrate his idea. Many critics have proposed that Dante’s work is “sculptural,” he writes, but its “material structure” is more akin to a monument “intended not to represent a horse or rider, but to reveal the inner structure of granite itself” (407).⁴³ The comparison to granular admixtures in rock functions insofar as “[a]ny unit of poetic speech, be it a line, a stanza or an entire lyrical composition, must be regarded as a single word” (407).⁴⁴ A statue of a horse and rider, if broken, is a fragment that no longer holds its form, whereas a piece of granite—no matter what admixtures and intrusions comprise its structure—retains its material identity, even when broken down into smaller units. The primary material—stone or verbal—is emphasized, rather than the secondary forms that might be shaped out of it, once again demonstrating how Mandelstam’s later petropoetics are distinct from his Acmeist work.

This notion of the inner petrological structure of Dante’s lyric—or perhaps of poetry more broadly—informs the entirety of Mandelstam’s far-reaching essay. It also

⁴³ “Стихи Данта сформированы и расцвечены именно геологически. Их материальная структура бесконечно важнее пресловутой скульптурности. Представьте себе монумент из гранита или мрамора, который в своей символической тенденции направлен не на изображение коня или всадника, но на раскрытие внутренней структуры самого же мрамора или гранита” (CC 3:226).

⁴⁴ “Всякий период стихотворной речи — будь то строчка, строфа или цельная композиция лирическая — необходимо рассматривать как единое слово” (CC 3:226). This line, I argue, is one of the many instances where “Conversation about Dante” might reveal traces of the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin. It is not clear whether these traces demonstrate a critique of Bakhtin, or Mandelstam’s borrowing of Bakhtinian concepts. For more on traces of Bakhtin in “Conversation,” see CPL, 680. For an additional discussion of Bakhtin and Mandelstam regarding dialogism, see Eskin, *Ethics and Dialogue* (125-129). Critics have also wondered if Bakhtin drew upon Mandelstam’s ideas; his concept of dialogism, for instance, seems remarkably close to the theory of lyric dialog presented in Mandelstam’s “On the Interlocutor” (1913), later borrowed by Celan for the image of poetry as a message in a bottle. The idea from “Conversation about Dante” that any unit of poetic speech seems to foreshadow Bakhtin’s notion in his “Speech Genres” essay that all genres, from simple commands to lengthy novels, function as unified speech-units. The thought also foreshadows Heidegger’s reading of Georg Trakl in “Language in the Poem,” for that matter.

helps to contextualize the anecdote mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, in which Mandelstam describes gathering pebbles on the shore of the Black Sea as an aid to reading Dante. In the “Conversation” essay, Mandelstam confesses that he “openly consulted with chalcedony, cornelians, gypsum crystals, spar, quartz, and so on,” while reading the *Commedia*: “It was thus that I came to understand that mineral rock is something like a diary of the weather, like a meteorological blood clot. Rock is nothing more than weather itself” (438).⁴⁵ Stones, for Mandelstam, instantiate the past; they are legible records of an alternative, natural history. The rocky diary (*дневник*) of the earth, in the 1930s, proves a much more resilient and durable record than the “fragile chronicle” (*хрупкое летоисчисление*) cited in “The One who Found a Horseshoe.”⁴⁶

As one might expect, Mandelstam unites his notion of a natural, geological history to his excavatory literary history. He admits that the writings of the early German Romanticist Novalis were an inspiration for him, and a revelatory source explaining the “interconnection between mineral rock and culture” (439).⁴⁷ Novalis (the penname of Friedrich von Hardenberg) was both a poet and a practicing overseer of mines. One might also think of Goethe, who was interested in geology as well; in his “Goethe’s Youth: Radiodrama” (1935), Mandelstam draws on anecdotes from Goethe’s autobiography which describe his childhood perusals of his father’s mineralogical collection.

⁴⁵ “Я откровенно советовался с халцедонами, сердоликами, кристаллическими гипсами, шпатами, кварцами и т.д. Тут я понял, что камень как бы дневник погоды, как бы метеорологический стусок. Камень не что иное, как сама погода” (СС 3: 256).

⁴⁶ Pollak discusses stone as the diary of the weather in relation to Mandelstam’s consideration of the naturalist Pallas in his essay “About the Naturalists,” seeing the idea as “another version of the layers of time turned up by the plow of poetry” (20).

⁴⁷ “Прелестные страницы, посвященные Новалисом горняцкому, штейгерскому делу, конкретизируют взаимосвязь камня и культуры, выращивая культуру как породу, высвечивают ее из камня-погоды” (СС 3:256).

With these literary admixtures infused in his own writing, Mandelstam is poised to connect his ideas about the inner form of stone and those constructing an anachronistic lyric temporality. Mineral rock can be seen as an “impressionistic diary of weather” because its structure bears records of its formation (the veins, admixtures, infusions) that are the accumulation of “years of trouble” (*лихолетье*)—geological catastrophes, natural disasters, the events that punctuate natural history (CC 3:256). The notion of such catastrophic events, cited in the midst of the cultural turmoil of the 1920s and 1930s, seems particularly poignant. As he did in his critical essays of the 1920s, however, Mandelstam situates his petropoetics as an anachronistic alternative: this stony diary, “Conversation about Dante” declares, “is not only of the past, it is of the future: it contains periodicity. It is an Aladdin’s lamp penetrating the geological twilight of future ages” (439).⁴⁸

Stone imagined as the diary of the weather is also, by extension, a symbolic instantiation of air. In Mandelstam’s writings, this is linked to an entire range of metapoetic figures, from stone’s “voice of matter” in “On the Morning of Acmeism,” to the “language of flint and air” (“Кремня и воздуха язык”) cited in “The Slate Ode” (CC 2:45; Ronen, 76-82).⁴⁹ Air, or semantically relevant keys (weather, smoke, breath, etc.), index poetry in these works. In Mandelstam’s petropoetic writings, geological discourse is used to articulate the idea of stone as a “fossilization” of air, the vehicle of poetry. Thus, in his critical review “Some Notes on Poetry” (1923), he writes that poetic speech “can never be sufficiently ‘pacified,’ and after many centuries old discords are revealed within;

⁴⁸ “Камень — импрессионистский дневник погоды, накопленный миллионами лихолетий; но он не только прошлое, он и будущее: в нем есть периодичность” (CC 3:256).

⁴⁹ In his translation of “The Slate Ode” (“Griffel-Ode”), Celan emphasizes the idea of mute matter—both stone and the horseshoe—as communicative even more than Mandelstam’s original: “Der Stern zum Stern, machtvoll gefügt – / Der Kiesweg aus dem alten Liede – / Kies spricht und luft, Hufeisen spricht / zum Ring, das Wasser spricht zum Kiesel” / (GW 5:139).

poetic speech may be compared to a piece of amber in which a fly still buzzes, having long ago been buried under layers of resin, the living foreign body continuing to live even when fossilized” (165).⁵⁰ As we have seen, the notion of poetic silence lying dormant for a time, fossilized, surfaces in “The Wheat of Humanity” and “The One who Found a Horseshoe” as well. In “Conversation about Dante,” it is expressed in the figure of stone as a diary of the weather, and thus as a kind of air fossilized in stone. Twice the essay mentions the “smokiness” (*дымчатость*) of stone, suggesting that a moment of insight comes “[w]hen you read Dante with all your powers and with complete conviction [...], when you begin to catch through the smoky-crystalline rock the sound-forms of phenocryst inserted into it”; at that point, “additional sounds and thoughts [are] conferred on it no longer by a poetic but by a geological intelligence” (425).⁵¹ To imagine poetry as petrified air is perhaps a more enduring model, yet it is nevertheless one of shifted emphasis—one that thinks with stone, its “geological intelligence” contrasted to cultural history.

LYRICIZING THE LEXICON OF STONE: CELAN’S *BREATHCRYSTAL*

One of the most intriguing applications of Mandelstam’s poetry-as-plow analogy comes from Celan himself. In his transcript for a radio piece on Mandelstam, “The Poetry of Osip Mandelstam” (“Die Dichtung Ossip Mandelstams”) broadcast in 1960 on

⁵⁰ “Поэтическая речь никогда не бывает достаточно «замирена», и в ней через много столетий открываются старые неладья, — это янтарь, в котором жужжит муха, давным-давно затянутая смолой, живое чужеродное тело продолжает жить и в окаменелости” (CC 2:299).

⁵¹ “Когда читасшь Данта с размаху и с полной убежденностью, [...] когда начинаешь улавливать сквозь дымчато-кристаллическую породу формозвучания внедренные в нее вкрапленности, то есть призвуки и примыслы, присужденные ей уже не поэтическим, а геологическим разумом” (CC 3:243). See also “Исполню дымчатый обряд” (1935), which echoes “Conversation about Dante” in its mentioning the “опал,” “сердолики,” and “арат.” Nadezhda Mandelstam’s memoirs provide an account of Mandelstam’s pebble-collecting in Koktebel at the time of writing “Conversation about Dante” and “I shall perform a smoky rite” (*Вторая книга*, 478-479).

Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR)—written, in a very Mandelstamian fashion, to be read dialogically by two speakers—Celan provides some rather strange biographical mise-en-scène: “Osip Mandelstam, born 1891 in Warsaw and who grew up in St. Petersburg and Pavlovsk and about whom it is known, among other things, that he studied philosophy in Heidelberg and is presently enamored of Greek” (*Meridian*, 215).⁵² The radio program’s editor, Wilhelm Asche, assuming that the shift from past to present tenses in Celan’s sentence was a mistake, changed both verbs to the narrative past—before Celan insisted on the original tenses in the final proofs (Glazova, 1108).

The tense shift, from Mandelstam’s birth and past in which he “had studied” philosophy to the time in which he “presently” (*gegenwärtig*) raves about Greek, is no accident. In effect, it is an application of the Mandelstamian motif of poetry as a plow turning over the abyssal strata of lyric time. The temporality in which Celan evokes Mandelstam is hypothetical, a present that does not exist except as an imagined alternative to linear history. Indeed, later in the radio essay, Celan incorporates this very motif. In Mandelstam’s later poetry, it insists, “[t]he question about the wherefrom becomes more urgent, more desperate—the poetry—in one of his essays he calls it a plough—tears open the abyssal strata of time, the ‘black earth of time’ appears on its surface” (*Meridian*, 219).⁵³

⁵² “[D]em 1891 in Warshau geborenen, in Petersburg und Pawlowsk aufgewachsenen *Ossip Mandelstamm*, von dem unter anderem bekannt ist, daß er in Heidelberg Philosophie studiert hat und gegenwärtig für das Griechische schwärmt” (Ivanović, *Das Gedicht*, 325).

⁵³ The essay also borrows the message in a bottle motif that had already been unearthed in his 1958 Bremen speech: “The poem writes itself toward an other, a ‘strangest’ time.” (“Die Frage nach dem Woher wird dringender, verzweifelter – die Dichtung – in einem seiner Essays über die Poesie nennt Mandelstam sie einen Pflug – reißt die untersten Zeitschichten auf, die ‘Schwarzerde der Zeit’ tritt zutage. [...] Der Dichter schreibt sich einer anderen, ‘fremdesten’ Zeit zu”) (*The Meridian*, 219; Ivanović, *Das Gedicht*, 328). In her study of Celan’s dialog with Mandelstam, Ivanović suggests that the Mandelstam radio essay is the basis of Celan’s “Meridian” speech on receiving the Büchner Prize (1960), even though he is not directly referenced in the latter.

Celan's post-war, post-Holocaust poetry of the 1950s and 1960s draws upon geological discourse in order to address the very urgent circumstances of those years. Critics—Tobias (*The Discourse of Nature in the Poetry of Paul Celan*, 2006) and Werner (*Textgräber: Paul Celans geologische Lyrik*, 1998) in particular—have studied the poet's integration of figures of stone in this regard. Recently, however, Groves has questioned what he sees as a too-swift move in these critical texts “from identifying stones in the poems to identifying the poems with stone and then to identifying stone with the qualities of obdurateness and constancy” (472). Instead, Groves draws upon the contrasting work of anthropologists Ingold and Tilley (especially *The Materiality of Stone*, 2004) on “actual” stones in order to argue that Celan's texts instead articulate an (a)materiality (470). Groves' argument seeks to define an “aerography” “within but not opposed to Celan's geological lyric,” drawing out the figures of air and breath (*Atem*) that counterbalance those of stone in his texts (474). More than anything, I argue, this must be understood as part of Celan's deep engagement with “Brother Osip” Mandelstam's own deployment of geological discourse and figurations of poetry as petrified air, breath, and weather.⁵⁴

To demonstrate the development of these figures in Celan's texts, I will analyze lyrics from one of his later collections, *Breathturn* (*Atemwende*, 1967). This choice might raise questions from some readers, since the collection was published after what most critics see as the period of Celan's most intense involvement with Mandelstam, beginning with his translations of the Russian poet's work in the mid- to late 1950s, and ending with the publication of his collection *The No-one's Rose*, dedicated to Mandelstam, in 1960. I see an

⁵⁴ Another direction for studying this relation, though perhaps less immediately relevant, would be a comparative study of Celan's translations of Mandelstam's texts, such as “Breath” (“Дыхание”). Eskin (*Ethics and Dialogue*) provides the most thorough example of such a study, though it does not take geopoetic questions into consideration.

immanent engagement with Mandelstam throughout Celan's later works however. The works of both poets evidence an incorporation of geological discourse, and this is certainly the case in *Breathturn*. I focus on the concluding poems of the first section of *Breathturn*; the twenty-one poems from this first division of the collection were originally published, in the same order, as the limited edition book *Breathcrystal* (*Atemkristall*), together with eight copperplate etchings by the poet's wife, the artist Gisèle Celan-Lestrange, in 1965. Celan first proposed his poetological concept of the "breathturn" in his speech "The Meridian," given for his receipt of the Georg Büchner Prize in 1960: "Poetry is perhaps this: an *Atemwende*, a turning of our breath."⁵⁵ His later collection demonstrates a sustained involvement with the term. The *Breathcrystal* section, however, also belies an interpolation of Mandelstam's tropes uniting breath (poetry) and the hardness of stone.

The *Breathcrystal* poems exemplify Celan's late petropoetics: they are lapidary in form (short, sparse, words frequently truncated at the ends of lines) but also in diction, for they frequently draw upon geological terminology. Celan-Lestrange's accompanying graphics—scrawling, abstract textures—sometimes seem like close-up surface studies of flecked granite or gneiss, sometimes like the jagged lines of frost formed on a hard surface, and thus provide a geovisual accompaniment to Celan's lyrics.⁵⁶ In its eight clipped lines, the lyric "Slickensides, fold-axes" ("Harnischstriemen, Faltenachsen") exemplifies this approach, sketching a single geological conceit. The poem is comprised of two four-line stanzas, each punctuated by a colon. Neither is a complete sentence with a defined

⁵⁵ "Dichtung: das kann eine Atemwende bedeuten" (*GW* 3:195; trans. Waldrop, *Collected Prose*, 47).

⁵⁶ Celan wrote to Celan-Lestrange that "I recognize my poems in your etchings" ("[...] in Ihren Kupfern erkenne ich meine Gedichte wieder," *Die Briefe*, 206). An intermedial study of *Atemkristall*'s images and texts is needed.

subject and verb (Pöggeler, *Spur des Worts*, 172-175); rather, the correspondence of geopoetic thinking unites the two halves:

Harnischstriemen, Faltenachsen,
Durchstich-
punkte:
deine Gelände.

An beiden Polen
der Kluftrose, lesbar:
dein geächtes Wort.
Nordwahr. Südhell. (*GW* 2:28)

Slickensides, fold-axes,
rechanneling-
points:
your terrain.

On both poles
of the cleftrose, legible:
your outlawed word.
Northtrue. Southbright. (Trans. Joris, 101)

From its very first line, “Slickensides, fold-axes” demonstrates the complexities of reading Celan’s geopoetics, and the difficulties posed to the translator of his texts. “Slickensides” (*Harnischstriemen*) could be read as a neologism, as a compound word comprised of “armor” (*Harnisch*) and “welts” (*Striemen*), which could be translated as something like “armor welts” or “armored ridges” (see *Breathturn*, 47; Lyon 304-305). *Harnischstriemen*, however, is not a neologism, but instead has a particular, albeit rare geological meaning. Called “slickensides” in English, the term describes the movement of one mass of rock over another, such as occurs when tectonic plates meet. This movement results in a striated, scraped, and polished surface—the *Striemen* or welts—on the rock masses.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ “When a text speaks of ‘slickensides’ [*sic*], ‘fold-axes,’ and ‘cutting-points’ (‘Harnischstriemen,’ ‘Faltenachsen,’ ‘Durchstichpunkte’), one should not imagine a knight in armor,” but the geological connotations (Pöggeler, “Mystical Elements,” 105). On the other hand, insisting upon the geological

Given the intricacy of *Breathcrystal's* engagement with geological terminology, the issues of translation are not simply a matter of the (un)reproducibility of Celan's poems in another language, but of the way in which they are legible at all.

The first stanza lists three geological terms, one after the other: "Slickensides, fold-axes, / rechanneling- / points:" ("Harnischstriemen, Faltenachsen, / Durchstich- / punkte:"). These are all terms that appear, in the same order, in one paragraph of Roland Brinkmann's *General Geology (Abriß der Geologie, 1956)*, one of the scientific sources that Celan consulted (157).⁵⁸ Slickenside, once again, denotes a rock mass that has been scraped by another sliding over it, whereas a fold-axis is an imaginary line along the buckling point of a rock fold (Beringer-Murawski, 51). By representing the earth's surface as partial sphere along with a flat, planar projection of this surface, a "sphere diagram" (*Lagenkugeldarstellung*) can effectively visualize the movements of the plates of the earth's crust. Features like slickensides and fold-axes, Brinkmann writes, can be indicated by imaginary lines connecting the planar projection to the corresponding "rechanneling points" (*Durchstichpunkte*) on the semispherical representation.

translation ("slickensides") in English eradicates the concealment or ambiguity evident in "armor welts" or *Harnischstriemen*.

⁵⁸ "Kluftrosen bieten eine rasche Übersicht über die vorherrschenden Streichrichtungen (Abb. 120). Will man die räumliche Verteilung der tektonischen Elemente veranschaulichen, das ist die Lagenkugel das geeignete Mittel (Abb. 121). Man denkt sich alle im Gelände gemessenen tektonischen Merkmale parallel mit sich selbst in den Mittelpunkt einer Kugel verschoben und bildet sie auf deren unterer Wölbung ab. Linien, wie etwa Harnischstriemen oder Faltenachsen, erschienen unmittelbar mit ihren Durchstichpunkten durch die Kugeloberfläche" (157). See: Celan, *Die Gedichte* (724). Gadamer and Pöggeler both note that "Slickenside, fold-axes" and other poems by Celan borrow from special lexica and reference works, but do not specifically analyze the poems in the light of these sources, as Tobias does. Gadamer admits to having misread the geological terms in the first edition of his essay on Celan's *Breathcrystal, Who am I and Who are You? (Wer bin ich und wer bist du?, 1973)*, seeing them as neologisms to be read metaphorically. In the second, revised edition of his essay, Gadamer self-corrects his interpretation, taking the time to consider the geopoetic aspects of "Slickensides, fold-axes." Still, Gadamer's conclusion is understand the text's relation of lyric and geology as one of equivalency: in the text's stanzas, he writes, "Two statements are juxtaposed that correspond to each other: terrain and word. [...] The terrain is the terrain of the word" (115; "Zwei Aussagen, gegeneinandergestellt, aber eine der anderen entsprechend: Gelände und Wort. [...] Das Gelände ist das Gelände des Wortes," 95).

The lyric's engagement with geological terminology continues in its second stanza, where Celan draws upon terminology taken from the same paragraph of Brinkmann's text, and from another of its illustrations. The "rose diagram" or "cleftrose" (*Kluftrose*) is a type of histogram, or graphic representation of the relative densities of data. Histograms often take the form of bar graphs; the rose diagram, however, is circular in form and depicts data as rays or wedges. Often but not exclusively utilized in geology, rose diagrams are useful for the field because their circular form can indicate degree and direction as well as relative density, providing, for instance, "a quick overview of the primary strike directions" (see Brinkmann, 157). The strike, in turn, describes the horizontal orientation of one rock bed or fault as it meets another, which can be measured in angular degrees.

As Gadamer (*Wer bin Ich*, 96) and Pöggeler (*Spur des Worts*, 175) have indicated, orientation conceptually grounds both halves of "Slickenside, fold-axes," and is referenced by the figure of the cleftrose. The geological terms Celan utilizes all describe means of representing points of orientation: direction, angle, intersections, and connections, both spatial and temporal. "Due," or "true north," the second stanza announces, is legible (*lesbar*) "on both poles / of the cleftrose." The "Slickensides, fold-axes, / rechanneling- / points:" preface the caesura of the colon (*Doppelpunkt*). The final line of the first stanza ("your terrain"), because it follows this caesura-colon, has the effect of an appositive, Pöggeler argues. The terrain of the slickensides, fold-axes, and rechanneling points is, so to speak, "your terrain." The second stanza, Pöggeler notes, is also punctuated by a colon, and again sets up an apparent appositive: that which is "legible" "on both poles of the cleftrose" equates to "your outlawed word," the lyric

otherwise occluded. “The second stanza is a heightening of the first,” he writes, “since in it the terrain becomes legible and yields a word.”⁵⁹

Celan continues his engagement with geological discourse in the other poems from the *Breathcrystal* cycle, making its metapoetic dimensions even more evident. The lyric that follows “Slickensides, fold-axes,” “Wordaccretion, volcanic” (“Wortaufschüttung, vulkanisch”) also begins with a set of geological terms: “Wordaccretion, volcanic, / drowned out by searoar” (“Wortaufschüttung, vulkanisch, / meerüberrauscht”) (*Breathturn*, 103; *GW* 2:29). Once again, Celan’s text draws upon a specific geological source, this time Siegmund Günther’s *Physical Geography* (*Physische Geographie*, 1895). In a section on volcanoes and earthquakes, Günther writes at some length about the eruptions of oceanic volcanoes that sometimes result in the creation of new islands from magma and other material that spews from the volcano. This material accumulates either suddenly or in the course of time, creating a site of accretion or *Aufschüttung*, such as the isle of St. Ferdinand, “the product of volcanic accretion” (“vulkanisches Aufschüttungsproduct”) (41). Such geomorphic events creating new surfaces in the midst of the sea (*Meer*) (or their opposite—the destruction of existing land masses as a result of volcanic eruptions, such as the infamous Krakatoa) are rare but not unknown in human history. Yet with an eye to the deepness of geological time, Günther writes “in earlier geologic ages, the activity of undersea volcanic accretions was not uncommon.”⁶⁰

⁵⁹ “Die zweite Strophe ist eine Steigerung der ersten, da in ihr das Gelände lesbar wird und ein Wort hergibt” (*Spur des Worts*, 173). Pöggeler’s analysis of “Slickensides, fold-axes” eventually reads the “Northtrue. Southbright” (“Nordwahr. Südhell”) in mystical terms, influenced by Kabbalistic imagery of the north as the land of winter and death, the south its polar opposite—cardinal points which correspond respectively to the terrain in which Celan’s parents were killed, and to Israel (*Spur des Worts*, 175).

⁶⁰ “In früheren geologischen Zeitaltern war der Vorgang unterseeischer Vulkanaufschüttung kein seltener” (41).

Nevertheless, Günther's terminology strictly regards volcanic activity; he writes of *Vulkanaufschüttung*, but there is no *Wortaufschüttung*. Rather, the latter term is Celan's invention. In "Wordaccretion, volcanic," unlike in "Slickensides, fold-axes," Celan not only lifts terms directly from the source, but deconstructs and combines them with others. This time, the poet does create a neologism, albeit one prompted by geological discourse. Celan's word-play turns the geological discourse metapoetic. *Aufschüttung* or *Vulkanaufschüttung* in Günther's context describes an accretion of rocky material, while in the case of Celan's text, the "Wordaccretion" is "volcanic." The stony process and material of the volcanic accretion becomes verbal when described in geological discourse, whereas the opposite direction holds for the lyric: the verbal accumulation is qualified as volcanic. As Gadamer reads the text, the word-deposits are metaphorical: "That is how language exists: as the petrified configuration of earlier life-eruptions" (*Who am I*, 120).⁶¹

Like "Slickensides, fold-axes," "Wordaccretion, volcanic" indexes temporal processes. Accretion itself is temporal; it may occur slowly, or suddenly and violently, as in the volcanic examples that Günther discusses. The catastrophic events punctuating geological time—such as an explosion that results in the creation of a new island—offer an alternative to historical records. Aligning language with this alternative temporality, by analogy, marks a moment of human catastrophe while simultaneously shifting the emphasis of that catastrophe toward natural history, one written in stone rather than words, so to speak.

Just as Mandelstam's poetics of the 1920s and 1930s were concerned with the possibility of stone serving as a record of language, through tropes of fossilization and

⁶¹ "So ist die Sprache da: als versteinertes Gebilde früherer Lebensausbrüche" (*Wer bin Ich*, 101).

petrification, “Wordaccretion, volcanic” suggests stone to be a kind of memorialization, only on a larger geomorphic scale:

[...] der herz-
förmige Krater
nackt für die Anfänge zeugt,
die Königs-
geburten. (*GW* 2:29)

[...] the heart-
shaped crater
testifies naked for the beginnings,
the kings-
births. (*Breathturn*, 103)

The “heart- / shaped crater” signifies a way to read the remainder of a catastrophic event in earth history. A crater is legible to us as the sign of a past event, a moment of simultaneous destruction (explosion) and creation (accretion); ultimately, of reformation. A crater bares this openly, nakedly (*nackt*); it is the container of emptiness, of a material that once was present but is now elsewhere, formed into something else. The crater also testifies (“zeugt”), however, for what once was, for the deep geological time, “for the beginnings” (“für die Anfänge”), for “the kings- / births” (“die Königs- / geburten”).⁶²

The final poem of the *Breathcrystal* cycle, “Eroded by” (“Weggebeizt vom”) returns to questions of testimony and temporality, brought to the fore by geological discourse.

The landscape evoked by the lyric is icier and desolate:

Weggebeizt vom
Strahlenwind deiner Sprache
das bunte Gerede des An-
erlebten – das hundert-
züngige Mein-
gedicht, das Genicht.

Aus-

⁶² *Die Gedichte* (725) suggests that the “kings- / births” of this poem reference Celan’s translation of Shakespeare’s sonnet LX (*GW* 5:333).

gewirbelt,
frei
der Weg durch den menschen-
gestaltigen Schnee,
den Büßerschnee, zu
den gastlichen
Gletscherstuben und –tischen.

Tief
in der Zeitenschrunde,
beim
Wabeneis
wartet, ein Atemkristall,
dein unumstößliches
Zeugnis. (*GW* 2:31)

Eroded by
the ray-wind of your language
the gaudy chatter of the pseudo-
experienced—my hundred-
tongued perjury-
poem, the noem.

Hollow-whirled,
free
the path through the men-
shaped snow,
the penitent’s snow, to
the hospitable
glacier-parlors and –tables.

Deep
in the timecrevasse,
in the
honey-comb-ice,
waits a breathcrystal,
your unalterable
testimony. (*Breathturn*, 105, slightly altered)

The text puns on the words “poem” (*Gedicht*) and “not, nothing” (*nicht*) to create a neologism: “the hundred- / tongued perjury- / poem, the noem” (*Genicht*).⁶³ A space of

⁶³ Celan’s letter (6/23/1968) to Gideon Kraft is unusually direct about this line; he discusses the “von dem [*von*] mir durchaus polemisch gemeinten ‘Genichte’—‘Meingedicht’ (wobei ‘mein’ falsch bedeutet, wie in

the absence of language is also a space of physical erosion: “Eroded by / the ray-wind of your language” (“Weggebeizt vom / Strahlenwind deiner Sprache”). Critics have suggested that “Eroded” alludes to a post-nuclear-apocalyptic landscape; the “ray-wind” (*Strahlenwind*) of nuclear fallout, for example (Pöggeler, “Mystical Elements,” 105). Yet the text also overtly turns to thinking about language: it is the “ray-wind of your language / the gaudy chatter of the pseudo- / experienced” (“Strahlendwind deiner Sprache / das bunte Gerede des An- / erlebten”). Moreover, the text draws directly upon geological discourse to define its evocative and textual landscape, taken once again from Günther’s *Physical Geography*; in a section of his text that discusses deserts and wastelands, Günther describes the formation of specific types of rock formations due to wind erosion.⁶⁴

Celan’s imaginative reading and application of geological discourse transports this image; an eroding wind moves through the landscape of ice and snow that is metaphorically identified with the human. The entire sequence of figures in this lyric draws heavily on Günther, and illustrations from Langenbeck’s *Physical Geography* (*Physische Erdkunde*): “Hollow-whirled” (“Aus- / gewirbelt”) alludes to the process of evorsion (*Auswirbelung*), whereby rounded potholes gradually form in a streambed because of the circular motion of eddies and vorticies (Goudie, 349; Günther, 125). “Penitentes” or “penitent snows” (Spanish *nieve penitente* or German *Büßerschnee*) refer to thin blades or columns of ice, leaned toward the direction of the sun (and thus resembling crowds of people praying), that form on high-altitude mountains, particularly the Andes (Günther 112; Langenbeck 55; *Die Gedichte*, 726). “Glacier-tables” and “Glacier-parlors”

Meineid,” or perjury (*Die Gedichte*, 726). This notion of perjury speaks pointedly to the sustained treatment of witnessing (*zeugen*) in the closing poems of the *Breathcrystal* cycle, and elsewhere in Celan’s writings.

⁶⁴ “Nach Walther wären die Zeugen der libyschen Wüste, Gruppen von einzeln stehenden, in der Form abgekürzter Pyramiden aufragenden Felshügel, in der Weise entstanden, daß die weicheren Schichten, welche in der Vorzeit die Verbindung zwischen je solcher Kuppen herstellten, vom Winde weggebeizt wurden” (124).

(*Gletschertisch, Gletscherstuben*) refer to formations resulting when stones are found over beds of snow. The weight of the stones compresses the snow, making it denser. The denser snow melts more slowly than the uncompressed snow, eventually leaving a column capped by a stone, which resembles a table (Günther 115; Langenbeck, 56).⁶⁵

“Eroded by” directly incorporates specific terms from Günther’s *Physical Geography* and other sources, yet its quotations and allusions form more than a random collage. The geomorphic entities mentioned in the lyric have anthropomorphic or anthropological aspects: penitent snows are so named as they resemble humans; as the text alludes [“free / the path through the men- / shaped snow, / the penitent’s snow” (“frei / der Weg durch den menschen- / gestaltigen Schnee, den Büßerschnee”)], the glacier tables humanize the space. The figures also mark temporal change. The etching of the wind, eversion’s formation of potholes in streambeds, and the formation of glacier tables: all of these are processes that unfold in deep time.

The final stanza of “Eroded by” focuses on these temporal aspects of geological concepts and, in the context of Celan’s writings as a whole, reveal a powerful metapoetic dimension, one suggesting an alternative lyric temporality. “Deep / in the timecrevasse, / in the / honeycomb-ice, / waits a breathcrystal, your unalterable / testimony.” The “honeycomb-ice” (*Wabeneis*) is itself drawn from Günther, referring to formations of perforated ice within mountains (119). When compared to the previous poem in the *Breathcrystal* cycle, “I know you, you are the deeply bowed” (“Ich kenne dich, du bist die tief Gebeugte”), parallels and divergences become apparent.⁶⁶ The former poem suggests

⁶⁵ Pöggeler sees the glacier-tables as resembling mushrooms; in the context of the “ray-wind” of the first stanza, an allusion to a mushroom cloud (“Mystical Elements,” 105).

⁶⁶ “Ich kenne dich, du bist die tief Gebeugte” does not directly borrow geological discourse. Joris indicates that the poem is dedicated to Celan-Lestrangle (*Breathturn*, 282). I regard the poem as more subtly geopoetic, however. The quatrain is bounded, encased within parenthesis, in the midst of other poems incorporating

a word-stone drawn flaming from deep within the earth's hot core, while in "Eroded by" deep "in the timecrevasse," waiting in the cold honeycomb ice, one finds a "breathcrystal," something that seems both more fragile yet is also described as "your unalterable / testimony" (*Zeugen*). Thus, in a way, it answers the question of the previous poem: "Where does a word flame, that testified [*zeugen*] for us both?"

"I know you" ("Ich kenne dich") is tentative, questioning; it is unsure of language's capabilities. "Eroded by" links language to deep geological time, through its series of allusions to geological concepts. Yet the geopoetic lyric temporality it suggests is more precarious than that proposed in Mandelstam's texts. The processes and products listed in Celan's lyric are not just markers of geological time, but of geomorphic change. Stone, usually referenced as something stable and unmoving, is made vulnerable. "Eroded by" seeks an "unalterable testimony." Can this be found in stone? "Unalterable" or *unumstößlich* bears a root in *umstoßen*—meaning to topple, to knock over. When one reflects back on the "glacier table" of the previous stanza, to the image of a stone perched precariously atop a thin and fragile column of ice, it seems like something that could indeed be toppled over at the slightest brush of the "ray-wind." Perhaps remarkably, it is not the more powerful ray-wind, but the quieter air of the "breathcrystal" which is the "unalterable testimony," although it "waits," frozen in some unknown, uncertain chronotope.

geological discourse, as though it instantiates the "transpierced one" ("der Durchbohrte") that it names. "Where flames a word, would testify for us both?" ("Wo flammt ein Wort, das für uns beide zeugte?"), the quatrain asks, as though it answers its own question, by drawing upon the word-stone analogy common to both Mandelstam and Celan: a flaming word, with its own temporality untainted by human time, a stone from the interior of the earth, drawn out by the one who bore into its depths (*Breathturn*, 105; *GW* 2:30). The flaming word-stone from the heart of the earth is doubtful, perhaps impossible, as precarious as the message in a bottle: "You—all, all real. I—all delusion" ("Du – ganz, ganz wirklich. Ich – ganz Wahn"). See also Gadamer, who writes that this poem, remarkable for the strangeness of its lyric I, retains its relation to the poetic cycle "with a gesture of retreat" (122; "mit einer Gebärde des Rückzugs," 107).

The uncertain message in a bottle is thus not the only metapoetic trope that develops between Mandelstam's and Celan's texts.⁶⁷ Rather, both authors draw upon mute stone as a surprisingly articulate means of reimagining lyric temporality. Geological discourse, for Mandelstam, provides language for resisting anthropocentric notions of history. Lyric plays an active role in this resistance; it is a force that disrupts sequential notions of time, anachronistically excavating the past as a resource of the present. For Celan, the terminology of stone allows not only this productive disruption, but also a means of reorienting a shattered language. His "breath crystal" of lyric, though precarious, repurposes the terminology of stone and geology as a starting point for lyric language. In the works of these poets, taken together, we find one perspective on a petropoetics; perhaps a natural history of lyric remains to be written.

⁶⁷ See Bambach, who suggests that "Celianian justice" would take the form of geological deposits. Stones erode, break down, are transported, and enter new cycles, but in a temporality far more expansive than human history, "even as they point to a distant, precarious hope for a future that restores balance and offers the possibility of renewal. In this aporia between loss and hope, possibility and impossibility, Celan sends forth his poems as missives that take the form of 'primeval messages in a bottle' (*urweltliche Flaschenpost*), geological alluvia that carry tectonic traces of a world that has disappeared and fallen into oblivion. From the 'wound of the earth' (*Wunde der Erde*), Celan draws a meridian, searching for his lost place of origin, a place that no longer exists, that he hopes will lead to an 'encounter,' somewhere 'north of the future'" (269). Eskin ("Of Sailors and Poets") provides an insightful discussion of the trope of poetry as a message in a bottle as it develops in the works of Celan, Durs Grünbein, and Joseph Brodsky—three poets all explicitly indebted to Mandelstam. Any thorough discussion of Celan's incorporation of the trope, I would argue, needs to be triangulated with a study of his translation of American poet Robinson Jeffers' essay "Poetry and Survival" ("Dichtung und Dauer"), for Jeffers' own texts (which Celan knew also through the translations of his friend Eva Hoffmann) are deeply invested in stone as the figure for an alternate temporality.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LEGIBLE MINERAL: EMULATIONS OF STONE IN SACHS AND CELAN

Suppose that you're walking along the shore of the Black Sea, as Mandelstam did when writing about Dante, and you stoop to retrieve pebbles you find glinting in the damp sands: chalcedony, cornelians, gypsum crystals, spar, quartz, or an agate. To your astonishment, you notice that one is covered in spidery-thin markings, light against a dark ground, eerily reminiscent of writing, as though it were some primordial mineral rune. Another, translucent and crystalline, is marked by intrusions evocative of recognizable images—perhaps a hand here, a tree there. You turn the crystal in your hand, trying to get a better look at these, but they fleet from your eye in the refracting light. Or perhaps you pick up an opal, which does not seem to depict anything in particular. Yet still you are impressed by its significance—its richly opalescent depth and range of color (unearthly, you are tempted to say, were it not that you had picked it up from the ground)—and marvel at how something so small could appear so expansive.

If the intended allusion to Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels's "Against Theory" (1982) in the paragraph above is nearly indecipherable, then perhaps it is because the "languages" one might find legible in the stones are wholly unlike the idioms of lyric or literary theory. "Suppose that you're walking along a beach and you come upon a curious sequence of squiggles in the sand," Knapp and Michaels direct their

readers (727). The “squiggles,” to one’s imagined surprise, aren’t just any marks, but rather appear to spell out a poetic stanza:

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years. (727)

A found stone, even if one somehow perceived it as legible, would still not constitute writing as such. Knapp and Michaels, however, bank on their readers’ ability to recognize the words in the sand as the eminently recognizable lines of William Wordsworth’s “A slumber did my spirit seal.”

Knapp and Michaels intend the example to seem absurd, in order to illustrate their argument that no instance of language is unintentional.¹ To find perfectly legible letters of alphabet (in metrical and rhymed stanzas, no less) etched into the seashore by no human hand would indeed be miraculous.² Not only that, Knapp and Michaels claim, but even if the lines were attributable to nature—if they were imagined “as nonintentional effects of mechanical processes (erosion, percolation, etc.)”—then they would “merely seem to *resemble* words,” and not be language as such (728). Such a literary

¹ The aptly named “Against Theory” (1982) is certainly one of the twentieth century’s most controversial interventions in literary theory, for it aims to refute the entire project of speculative investigations into the nature of literature. The primary claim of “Against Theory” is that there are no literary works that do not arise as intentional, and thus no need for competing modes of interpretation—that is, literary theory (the ideal interpretation, they imply, is one that establishes the intentions of an author of a literary work). In this respect, the essay’s title elicits comparison with Susan Sontag’s contrary claim in “Against Interpretation” (1964). First published in *Critical Inquiry*, “Against Theory,” along with rebuttals by various critics—and responses by Knapp and Michaels—are collected in the volume *Against Theory: Literary Studies and the New Pragmatism*. In his book *The Shape of the Signifier*, Michaels returns to the thought experiment of poetry scratched into the landscape; in congress with the science fiction novels of Kim Stanley Robinson and Ben Bova, he transports the *topos* to Mars, although he arrives at the same conclusion vis-à-vis intentionality. As a recent issue of *New Literary History* (“Interpretation and its Rivals,” 45:2, Spring 2014) indicates, debates on interpretation and its place in the humanities are unlikely to be silenced anytime soon.

² One *might* be tempted to think of the lines on the shore as intentionless, they write, but if a moment later a receding wave left a second stanza in the sand (“No motion has she now, no force; / She neither hears nor sees; / Rolled round in earth’s diurnal course, / With rocks, and stones, and trees”), then surely the lines could not be counted as an accident. Some author—the divine, or a spectral Wordsworth, or (as they suggest) a mischievous band of offshore scientists playing a trick on passersby—would have to be the intentional author of the stanzas.

accident, if something so astounding were to actually happen, would be intentionless and therefore meaningless, according to Knapp and Michaels. In this chapter, I examine lyric poems by the mid-twentieth-century German-language authors Nelly Sachs and Paul Celan that investigate various legibilities of stone, thereby implying that the nonhuman material is anything but irrelevant to meaning.³ Whereas Knapp and Michaels' hypothetical lines in the sand cannot *merely* resemble words, because they are inescapably legible as writing (especially to readers of poetry and literary theory), the poetic texts I analyze here variously seek to emulate stone as something readable yet unlike human language as such; that is, as the bearer of alternative significances. Out of the opacity, density, and seeming non-reciprocity of stone, these texts create figures for a meaningful lyric language.

To find a recognizable quatrain scrawled on a beach presupposes a certain kind of subjectivity, for both the scrawler and the scrawled—a point that is not discussed in “Against Theory.”⁴ As Virginia Jackson demonstrates in her reading of the essay, Knapp and Michaels support their claims about interpretation and intentionality “with an instance of the literary genre traditionally devoted to begging the question of first-person coherence,” lyric poetry (111). On the other hand, to engage stone as a bearer of

³ The two authors corresponded in the 1950s and 1960s, and were intimately familiar with each other's work. They are often paired as representatives of post-Holocaust poetry, as I discuss below, yet I see the exploration of stone in Sachs' and Celan's lyric poetry as a natural point of convergence rather than a deliberate, programmatic collaborative project. Indeed, throughout my analyses of their texts, I will indicate critical stylistic and conceptual differences between their works. Criticism has paired frequently the two, and sometimes contrasted them: “When a European Jewish poet's turn came for the Nobel Prize in 1966, the more accessible Nelly Sachs got it, not Paul Celan” (Felstiner, xvii); “Nelly Sachs, who wrote poem after poem with explicit Holocaust themes, legitimately qualifies as a Poet of the Holocaust, but Celan [...] had no such ambitions” (Hoezel, 354); Liska also discusses how Sachs has often been described as the “voice” of a people, whereas Celan has been viewed as more experimental and hermetic (120-122, 136-137). With Sachs' works (including her translations) having recently been published in a four volume critical edition with commentary, it is now considerably easier to contextualize them in relation to their literary predecessors as well as their contemporaries.

⁴ The only mention of subjectivity in “Against Theory” is in a brief footnote, where Knapp and Michaels mention the problem of the reader's subjectivity with regard to meaning and interpretation (737).

significance, one to be translated into poetry, suggests entirely different models of lyric subjectivity, ones that in fact test its limits. If stone is legible in and of itself, it is hard to imagine its significance as emanating from an intentioned writer/lyric persona.

Alternatively, if the significance of nonhuman stone is thought to bear the signature of a supernatural author, then again it is difficult to imagine that as modeling a *first-person* coherence. Either case demands different models. By pursuing these and other potentialities, Celan's and Sachs' texts indicate an expansive understanding of lyric and the frameworks within which we read it.

An important point of distinction: the lyrics of stone I study in this chapter *emulate* the legibility of stone: they do not (and cannot) *replicate* it. Celan's and Sachs' texts are not depictions or descriptions of stones, but rather draw upon concepts according to which stone can be considered legible—fossils, particular mineral structures, its formations and locations on and in the earth, etc.—as models for lyric. In this respect, they seek something like what Daniel Tiffany calls “lyric substance.” Tiffany suggests that our “sense” of things is not located so much in responses to tangible matter as it is in our verbalizations of it; or, what we might gloss as the making of the thing in the writing of it. By the term lyric substance, Tiffany gestures toward the necessary bond between our understanding of objects (materiality) and our need to write about them in order to reach that understanding (poetic invention).⁵ Poetic language, for Tiffany, is especially apt for

⁵ Important to Tiffany's discussion of lyric substance is his argument that it elides the typical distinction between scientific and artistic interpretations of the world. See: *Toy Medium*, “Lyric Substance,” and *Infidel Poetics*. Tiffany traces the genealogy of lyric substance back to Heidegger's “The Origin of the Work of Art” (*Toy Medium*, 29-31), and also to Adorno's “Lyric Poetry and Society” (68-69), an essay which, in its English translation, specifically utilizes the phrase: “The universality of the lyric's substance, however, is social in nature” (“Jene Allgemeinheit des lyrischen Gehalts jedoch ist wesentlich gesellschaftlich.” NL 1:38; GS 11:50). Drew Milne's “In Memory of the Pterodactyl: The Limits of Lyric Humanism” suggests what it might look like to see Tiffany's supposition of poetry's decisive role in constructing notions of materiality joined with Adorno's socially-concerned study of lyric, when he asks “but what of lyric's constitutive

this task because of its propensity toward “density, particularity, and opacity of language” (Morris, 150). These qualities are also characteristic of stone, the primordial material. The lyrics of Sachs and Celan, I argue, investigate possibilities for a petropoetic substance, one that does not represent or describe stone, but phenomenalizes it, one that demonstrates stone’s potentiality as a lyric model.⁶

In this chapter, I outline the spectrum of ways in lyric texts engage with legibilities of stone, focusing on poems from Celan’s collections *Speech-Grille* (*Sprachgitter*, 1959) and *The No-One’s Rose* (*Die Niemandrose*, 1963, dedicated to Mandelstam) and from several of Sachs’ collections published in the late 1950s and early 1960s. I begin by discussing the idea of the legibility of the earth, and stone’s particular position within it, in order to establish a basic critical vocabulary. I then consider how ideas about the legibility of stone have impacted the existing critical reception of Sachs and Celan. As two poets described somewhat contentiously as Jewish, writing in German in the post-Holocaust period, the relationship of their texts to the poetics of response could almost—but must not—go without saying.⁷ Few other poets have been raised so eminently as the standard for

inhumanity, its relation to non-human nature?” (though Milne does not reference Tiffany’s discussion of lyric substance).

⁶ My emphasis on phenomenology as going beyond description is derived from the work of Bachelard, who in *The Poetics of Space* writes that: “[f]or a reader of poems [...] an appeal to a doctrine that bears the frequently misunderstood name of phenomenology risks falling on deaf ears. And yet, independent of all doctrine, this appeal is clear: the reader of poems is asked to consider an image not as an object and even less as the substitute for an object, but to seize its specific reality” (xix); and “[...] we must go beyond the problems of description—whether this description be objective or subjective, that is, whether it give facts or impressions—in order to attain to the primary virtues” (4). I am also reminded of Celan’s comments about Mandelstam’s poetry: “The twenty poems from the volume ‘The Stone’ disconcert. They are not ‘word-music,’ they are not impressionistic ‘mood poetry’ woven together from ‘timbres,’ no ‘second’ reality symbolically inflating the real. Their images resist the concept of metaphor and the emblem; their character is *phenomenal*” (*Meridian*, 215; “Die zwanzig Gedichte aus dem Gedichtband ‘Der Stein’ befremden. Sie sind keine ‘Wortmusik’, keine aus ‘Klangfarben’ zusammengewobene, impressionistische ‘Stimmungspoesie’, keine das Wirkliche sinnbildlich überhöhende ‘zweite’ Wirklichkeit. Ihre Bilder widerstehen dem Begriff der Metapher und des Emblems; sie haben phänomenalen Charakter.“ Ivanović, 325-26).

⁷ The extent to which Celan and Sachs ought to be labeled specifically or exclusively as “Jewish” poets, either on the basis of their biographies or on their works, is contested. On this question and Celan, see:

investigating the stakes of “poetry after Auschwitz” as these two.⁸ Some critics have come to see Sachs’ and Celan’s lyrics of stone as legible text-graves or text-gravestones for those murdered in the genocide, a rhetorical figure that transforms the lyric trope of the epitaph, one I call petropopoeia.

Next, I turn attention to demonstrating that Sachs’ and Celan’s texts are not restricted to being responses to the Holocaust (nor representations of it), but rather investigate the possibilities of lyric language after it. In doing so, their texts manipulate legibilities of stone, drawing upon the Kabbalistic notion of a divine alphabet that aided the creation of world and can be revealed in it. Likewise, their texts borrow from geological frameworks of understanding, whereby stone can function semiotically: for example, rock’s formation into variegated layers indicates the succession of time, and the form of a crystal implies the geometry of its underlying molecular structure. As I demonstrate, Celan’s and Sachs’ texts do not simply echo these structures of thought, but creatively transform them into distinctive legibilities of stone. Alternatively, their lyrics sometimes trope upon stone’s *lack* of a given or certain significance; precisely because it serves as a conceptual *tabula rasa*, stone in its lyric emulations can become an alternative ground of meaning. In each of these cases, Sachs’ and Celan’s texts explore oblique perspectives from which to examine possibilities for lyric language and subjectivity, in a time in which the very efficacy of poetic writing was called into question. Certainly, finding stone to be legible, and thus interpretable, is remarkably strange. Yet as Miguel

Liska (89-107); Hoebel; Felstiner. On this question and Sachs, see: Bower (“Nelly Sachs,” 1069-1070); Bower (*Ethics and Remembrance*, 7-9), Liska (120-137).

⁸ Certainly, Celan and Sachs are not alone in this regard (poets including Rose Ausländer, Eric Fried, Hilde Domin, and Primo Levi have also been held to this standard), but they are likely the two most often invoked as post-Holocaust poets, at least those writing in German, as I will discuss below. Adorno’s discussions of contemporary poetry invoke Celan as exceptional, and Enzensberger’s 1959 essay “Die Steine der Freiheit” positions Sachs as the premier post-Shoah poet, and the refuter of Adorno’s dictum.

Tamen argues, with particular reference to non-human matter, “there are no interpretable objects or intentional objects, only what counts as an interpretable object, or, better, groups of people for whom certain objects count as interpretable and who, accordingly, deal with certain objects in recognizable ways” (3). We may take the lyrics of Sachs and Celan their own kind of group, in which questions of meaning are introduced around ways one may read in and out of stone; emulated in lyric, stone’s legibilities suggest potential reconsiderations of what lyric subjectivity is or can be.

LISIBILITE DU MONDE, L’ÉCRITURE DES PIERRES

The notion of stone’s legibility, transformed as it is in Sachs’ and Celan’s lyrics, recasts and particularizes fundamental metaphors of the *world’s* legibility. These metaphors are pervasive, and profoundly influence structures of knowledge and perception. Indeed, they form one of what Hans Blumenberg terms “absolute metaphors,” as he details in his study of the topic, *The Legibility of the World (Die Lesbarkeit der Welt, 1981)*.⁹ To see the world as legible, Blumenberg demonstrates, belies an underlying belief in the possibility of its understandability. What we perceive, in other words, comes bearing a relative degree of decipherability or indecipherability regarding not only its own nature or meaning, but also its relation to the remainder of the constituted world. The conceptualization of this understandability as legibility, and often as the *liber mundi* or “book of the earth,” indicates the centrality of texts within the

⁹ On absolute metaphors, see Blumenberg’s *Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie*.

metaphors of knowledge: a textual world can be read, and interpreted, to reveal its nature.¹⁰

Concepts of the world's readability and consequent understandability are supported by both supernatural and natural structures of belief, Blumenberg reminds us, and there is considerable overlap between religious and scientific figures of legibility. For the former, the legibility of the earth is the revelation of divine authorship; for example, the Kabbalistic notion of a divine alphabet that took part in creation (an idea responded to in lyrics by both Sachs and Celan, as I discuss below). For the frameworks of scientific understanding, the legibility of the world allows for the rational description of the order of things, a *historia naturalis*.¹¹ This is certainly the case for the science of stones, geology—the *logos* of the earth.¹² Foundational works of modern geology rest on the assumption that the earth is legible: certain characteristics of rocks are signs of their constitutive materials, as well as the processes that act on them; within a rational structure of understanding, this can tell us something about the history of the earth's formation and subsequent changes.¹³ Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (first edition, 1830-1833), for example, famously features a depiction of the Macellum of Pozzuoli as its frontispiece; marble columns at the

¹⁰ Blumenberg does distinguish between the metaphors of the book and the metaphors of writing in general, and analyzes the implications of each: for instance, the idea that what is printed is a reproduction, a surrogate that falls short of reality—an idea that itself goes back to Plato and Socrates' suspicion of writing. Blumenberg writes: "Die geschriebene und schließlich gedruckte Tradition ist immer wieder zur Schwächung von Authentizität der Erfahrung geworden" (*Die Lesbarkeit der Welt*, 17). On metaphors of the world as book, and on the legibility of the world in general, as related to Celan's works, see the articles by Bücher, Ryan ("Die 'Lesbarkeit der Welt'"), and Schmitz-Emans.

¹¹ This notion of scientific objectivity and of the scientific understanding of the world as legible should be understood only as one model and should not necessarily be identified with any particular scientific practice or method. An entire body of scholarship takes the critique of these principles of science as its project, with Thomas Kuhn's groundbreaking study *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* as just one touchstone. This project extends, perhaps, to Tiffany's work on lyric substance.

¹² Blumenberg analyzes geology from the perspective of German authors who were fascinated by and practiced it (Goethe and Novalis), with regard to the legibility of the earth, in chapter fifteen ("Wie lesbar mir das Buch der Natur wird...") and sixteen ("Die Welt muß romantisirt werden") of *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt*.

¹³ Other systems for cataloguing the significance of stones exist, some of which, like medieval lapidaries, might be judged "pre-scientific" or "pseudo-scientific." On such lapidaries, see Allen and Robertson.

site show borings by certain mollusks, indicating that the columns (and thus the surrounding area) had at one time sunk below sea level, and then risen above it once again. Likewise, one of the twentieth-century's most revolutionary geological concepts, the theory of plate tectonics, was first described as "geopoetry" (Hess, 599). As the signs of plate movements are indirectly legible (i.e. at fault lines) but cannot be predictably detected by the human eye in real time, the theory was first announced as geopoetry because it initially relied more on an imaginative textual explanation than empirical observation; in its admission of language's role in determining a scientific concept, the term foreshadows Tiffany's notion of lyric substance.

For both religious and scientific structures of significance, the legibility of stone evidences a part-to-whole relationship vis-à-vis the legibility of the earth: revelations in stone function like one idiom within the entirety of the readable world, or as one chapter from the book of nature. Tropes of stone's legibility that become lyricized in the works of Celan and Sachs have iterations in other literature.¹⁴ Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice*, for example, uses textual metaphors to describe types of marble:

There is history in them. By the manner in which [colors] are arranged in every piece of marble, they record the means by which that marble has been produced, and the successive changes through which it has passed. And in all their veins and zones, and flame-like stainings, or broken and disconnected lines, they write various legends, never untrue, of the former political state of the mountain kingdom to which they belonged, of its infirmities and fortitudes, convulsions and consolidations, from the beginning of time. (*LE* 11:38)

Where Ruskin imagines the marbles to bear marks that can be read as their natural history, the lyric transformations of the trope imagine such visual aspects of stone to

¹⁴ Literary models for the legibility of stone that Celan or Sachs may have encountered include Theophile Gautier ("L'art"), Mandelstam ("Исполню дымчатый обряд"), Trakl ("Drei Blicke in einen Opal"), and Khlebnikov (*Зангези*)

provide a language for emulation—not to translate a text transmitted in stone, in other words, but to extend something like a petrific idiom to the rhetoric of lyric.

The legibilities of stone also reveal differences of scale, and correspondingly suggest different kinds of models of reading for lyric. To view strata of rock, layer upon layer, winding down the Grand Canyon, for instance, is a very different experience from holding a small stone in the palm of one's hand and examining it. The sublimity of the former spurs wonder at natural or supernatural authorship, while the intimacy of the latter elicits something rather more introspective, a mode of legibility at once phenomenological and eisegetical, a reading *into* stone.

The writings of Roger Caillois provide profound meditations on this mode of the legibility of stone. A philosopher who studied play and dreams from a number of perspectives ranging from anthropology to Surrealism, Caillois published several books about the interplay of the imagination and stone: *Stones (Pierres, 1966)*, *The Writing of Stones (L'Écriture des pierres, 1970)*, and *Reflected Stones (Pierres réfléchies, 1975)* and *Three Lessons from Darkness (Trois leçons des ténèbres, 1978)*.¹⁵ *The Writing of Stones*, as one might expect, is the text that most extensively explores the legibility of stone.

¹⁵ For more on Caillois' writings on stone, see: Cioran, "Caillois: Fascination of the Mineral"; Warner, Marina: "The Writing of Stones"; Gurio, "Caillois, Gaspar: Itinér(r)ance" in: *Chants des pierres*; and the articles by Beugnot, Gourio, and Memdough in *L'Esprit créateur* 45:2 (2005), *Écriture des pierres, pierres écrites: territoires de l'imaginaire minéral dans la littérature du XXe siècle*. It is not clear whether, though quite probable that, Celan would have become aware of Caillois' work on stone (which, however, was published after Celan had already established his own petropoetics) during his time in France. For example, in the fall 1954 edition of the journal *Perspectives USA* (published as *Perspektiven* in Germany, and *Profils* in France), Celan contributed a translation of Robinson Jeffers' essay "Poetry and Survival" ("Dichtung und Dauer") as part of a section titled "The Creative Artist and his Audience" ("Der schöpferische Künstler und sein Publikum"). Each essay in this section featured a rebuttal by leading intellectuals in the nations of the respective editions; Hans Egon Holthusen drafted a response to Celan's translation of Jeffers' essay in the German edition, for example, while Caillois responded to an essay by Saul Bellow in the French edition, which Celan may have encountered. Moreover, Celan may have known Caillois' work through their mutual acquaintance, the philosopher Emil Cioran, a Romanian expatriate living in Paris, like Celan. Celan translated Cioran's *A Short History of Decay (Précis de décomposition, 1949)* into German as *Lehre vom Zufall* (1953). Later, Cioran wrote on Caillois' works about stone ("Caillois: Fascination of the Mineral" in *Anathemas and Admirations*). Another

Yet what Caillois analyzes is hardly writing in any systematic sense. Each chapter of the book studies various kinds of stone that are visually rich (his text is accompanied by high-resolution, close-up images of stones), with markings that seem to reveal fascinating images, even uncanny calligraphy. However, the significance of these stones, whether they are pictorial or calligraphic, arises by the imagination collaborating with the mineral. For example, Caillois analyzes a section of agate that seems to display an image of a bird sitting on a branch, a slice of quartz and chalcedony that seems to expose the face of a monster, a piece of jasper whose colored ribbons form a rough likeness of a face, and the famed “ruin” marbles of Florence and Tuscany—cut pieces whose striations and colored blotches suggest depictions of ruined citadels.

The magic of such stones, *The Writing of Stones* suggests, lies in their discovery—that their images were discovered through chance, by cutting into a stone that might have looked dull and ordinary otherwise, to see inside it from a perspective that previously was not available, and thereon to miraculously find a revealed image. Yet these “images” also rely on the imagination of the viewer; as Caillois points out, such stones were often painted on to enhance what nature had already provided. One such example is a landscape marble (of which Caillois includes an illustration) that depicts Dante and Virgil in Hell—the underworld was suggested by the varicolored veins in the stone, while the artist needed only to paint in a few damned souls and a pair of poets to complete the image.

mutual acquaintance, Edmond Jabès, writes in *The Book of Margins* about his meetings with both Caillois and Celan—another possible point of intersection.

Other stones, such as the *septaria*, or “siliceous nodules crisscrossed with cracks filled with calcite,” more obviously approach runes or writing (*The Writing of Stones*, 45).¹⁶ Nevertheless, even though the markings on these stones appear *like* writing, they do not conform to any given script in the normal sense of the term. Caillois himself insists that “it is not an alphabet: it is a pattern without a message, like the wormholes made by insects in dead wood” (70). Yet the wonder of such writing seems to come from precisely this fact; *because* it somehow suggests language without being burdened by given significance from the start, it has the potential to model new forms of language: “To decipher such writing, if writing it is, would not mean trying to unravel an inextricable mass of lines and loops, but rather endeavoring to interpret anew some oft-repeated signs so turned in upon themselves that they refer only to their own form” (70).

Thus, the “writing” of stone that Caillois refers to emerges collaboratively, somewhere between creative imagination and mimesis: “The vision the eye records is always impoverished and uncertain. Imagination fills it out with the treasures of memory and knowledge, with all that is put at its disposal by experience, culture, and history, not to mention what the imagination itself may if necessary invent or dream” (78). One might characterize this as a form of anthropomorphism (ascribing aspects of humanity—here, writing—to nonhumans), yet as Marguerite Yourcenar writes in the introduction to *The Writing of Stones*, Caillois “advocated an inverted anthropomorphism” according to which the human borrows from the nonhuman as much as the opposite (xi-xii). This symbiosis is replicated in the lyrical “fascination with the mineral,” to borrow Cioran’s

¹⁶ The wonder at calligraphic marks in stone is evident in geological literature as well. As Jacobus writes, James Hutton’s groundbreaking *Theory of the Earth* “graphically depicts striated granite rocks as inscribed with protowriting of their origins: “They have not only separately the forms of certain typographic characters, but collectively give the regular lineal appearance of types set in writing” (Hutton, quoted in Jacobus, 152).

characterization of Caillois' work. The legibilities of stone which Sachs and Celan emulate in lyric create a structure of significance out of the "accidental" mineral idioms, forging lyric subjectivity with the nonhuman.

PETROPOEIA: THE DISCOURSE OF STONE IN POST-HOLOCAUST POETRY AND CRITICISM

The striking strangeness of these legibilities of stone, among others, renders potent models within Celan's and Sachs' texts in the post-Holocaust period, bolstered by the fact that stone is not conceptualized through the frameworks of organicism and holism pervasive in the ideology and language of the Third Reich.¹⁷ The two are certainly not the only authors characterized as post-Holocaust poets—Rose Ausländer, Erich Fried, and Hilde Domin are just three others criticism has identified as vital in this regard. Nor are they even the only authors whose post-Holocaust lyrics integrate the discourse of stone; Fried's *Kingdom of Stones* (*Reich der Steine*, 1963), including the section "Invocations of Stone" ("Beschwörung des Steins") is a notable addition.¹⁸ However, no other poets worked so extensively as Celan and Sachs with figures of stone. Moreover, the pair is held to a particularly high standard vis-à-vis the stakes of writing "lyric after Auschwitz."¹⁹ The goal of this chapter is not to debate with the extensive literature that has resulted in response to Theodor Adorno's well-known, oft-quoted (and misquoted) statements

¹⁷ On the discourse of organicism and holism in German culture in the Nazi era (and prior to it), see Harrington. For an illuminating contemporary account of the corruptive force of "Nazi-Deutsch," see Paechter.

¹⁸ On writing and stone in the literature of the Jewish diaspora, with reference to Fried and other poets, see Wogenstein.

¹⁹ For a sampling of criticism in this regard, see: *German and European Poetics after the Holocaust: Crisis and Creativity*, (Martin's and Dischner's articles on Sachs and Celan comprise the first and second entries, respectively, followed by Marko's on Ingeborg Bachmann, then Runte's on Rose Ausländer); Garloff's *Words from Abroad: Trauma and Displacement in Postwar German Jewish Writers* (which follows a chapter on Sachs with one on Celan); Neumann; Dillon; Krämer. See also: Auerochs, "Lyrik über die Shoah."

regarding the writing of poetry after Auschwitz, but in this section, I will describe how Celan's and Sachs' poetics of stone have been considered in the light of the questions this topic has generated.²⁰ In particular, I will demonstrate how certain modes of the legibility of stone have enabled a critical understanding of their lyrics (or at least some of them) as a petropoetic memorial to those murdered during and devastated by the Holocaust, and examine the implications of this approach to their texts.²¹

The rhetorical means by which the poetry of Celan and Sachs (or any other author, for that matter) can be understood a response to the Holocaust involves a form of prosopopoeia writ large, a model of lyric reading which sees their texts as speaking for the

²⁰ For excerpts demonstrating the permutations of Adorno's dictum, as well as contextualization and counter claims from his contemporaries, see the anthology *Lyrik nach Auschwitz?* (ed. Kiedaisch). Adorno's reiterations of his claim have received much attention regarding how they speak to its validity. What has not received close attention, however, is how the language of the various versions of the "lyric after Auschwitz" statement might belie Adorno's changing attitudes toward genre, the notion of "lyric," and the role of literature in society. In its first presentation in "Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft" (1951), Adorno's statement simply refers to the writing of "poetry" (*Gedichte*) after Auschwitz as barbaric. In his 1962 qualification "Engagement," he refers to "lyric" (*Lyrik*). This is significant, for in between he had written his seminal essay "Lyrik und Gesellschaft" (1957) its title echoing his 1949 piece. "Lyric Poetry and Society" presents a less pessimistic view of lyric (though the texts he examines are pre-Auschwitz lyrics of Eduard Mörike and Stefan George). In other words, Adorno's work with pre-Auschwitz lyric may have led him to soften his thoughts about the possibility of poetry after Auschwitz, as his thinking on the genre of lyric sharpened; later, in *Aesthetische Theorie*, Adorno would write fairly enthusiastically of Celan.

²¹ Enzensberger's "The Stones of Freedom" ("Die Steine der Freiheit") noted relatively early the importance of figures of stone in Sachs' lyric poetry, within an argument that directly cites and refutes Adorno's dictum. For Enzensberger, the "stones of freedom" are also an allusion to Sachs' eleventh-hour escape from Germany to Sweden in 1940, together with her mother, aided by the Nobel-prize winning Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf. He writes: Sachs "spricht nur von dem Glück, auf den uralten Steinen Schwedens auszuruhen. Mochten sie hart sein: es waren die Steine der Freiheit" (771). This autobiographical aspect of Sachs' lyrics of stone is evident in one level of reading of her poem "In der Flucht" (see below). It is not clear if Enzensberger knew this poem at the time of the writing of his essay, but it is highly likely: it was published in Sachs' collection *Flight and Metamorphosis* in 1959 and also in the journal *Merkur*, like Enzensberger's essay, just a few years prior to it; Enzensberger later cited "In der Flucht," in his introduction to a translation of Sachs' poetry, *O the Chimneys*. "Die Steine der Freiheit" positions Sachs as a figure of redemption ("Ihrer Sprache wohnt etwas Rettendes inne," 772), as Bower has indicated (*Holocaust Literature*, 1069).

Alexander Kluge's 1961 documentary film *Brutalität in Stein* presents an alternate perspective on the implication of stone in Holocaust and post-Holocaust culture, reading the characteristics of Nazi architecture (monumentality, starkness, etc.) as a legible instantiation of the regime's ideological inhumanity. The film announces: "Alle Bauwerke, die uns die Geschichte hinterlassen hat, zeugen vom Geiste ihrer Erbauer und ihrer Zeit auch dann noch, wenn sie längst nicht mehr ihren ursprünglichen Zwecken dienen. Die verlassenen Bauten der national-sozialistischen Partei lassen als steinerne Zeugen die Erinnerung an jene Epoche lebendig werden, die in die furchtbarste Katastrophe deutscher Geschichte mündete."

dead. Quintillian's classic definition of the trope already makes room for this possibility: prosopopoeia, he writes, allows a rhetorician to convey the thoughts of others, to introduce absent interlocutors into a conversation, and to "provide appropriate characters for words of advice, reproach, complaint, praise, or pity. We are even allowed in this form of speech to bring down the gods from heaven or raise the dead; cities and nations even acquire a voice" (51). The latter types allow language to figuratively do what is physically impossible, and critics such as Gubar, Guyer, and Hungerford have brought the concept of prosopopoeia to bear on analyses of the (im)possibility of post-Holocaust literature and/or literature about the Holocaust. As these critics see them, literary responses to the Holocaust prompt the ultimate test of prosopopoeia's limits: Is it just to speak on behalf of the murdered, to evoke them in literary texts? Can one, or ought one, speak of the unspeakable?²²

Celan's and Sachs' lyrics of stone, however, propose quite a different approach to prosopopoeia, one I identify as *petropopoeia*, so that these questions are in turn modified. Prosopopoeia implies giving a face (*prosopon*) to an absent or nonhuman figure or entity (hence the identification of it with personification), while in their lyric texts, stone is sometimes made to speak as the dead, but in other cases the lyrics "speak" *as* stone. Nonhuman entities can be personified, but a legible mineral does not ventriloquize the dead; it provides an alternate idiom which lyric can emulate.

The idea of reading Celan's texts as thanatological inscriptions is given a thorough conceptual framework in Uta Werner's *Textgraves: Paul Celan's Geological Lyric (Textgräber*.

²² See: Hungerford, Gubar, and Guyer; *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14.1 (2001), on the topic of "Interpretation and the Holocaust," with articles by both Gubar and Hungerford; and *Michigan Quarterly Review* 45:2 (2006), which includes Jay Ladin's "'After the World': Poetry of the Holocaust," along with responses by Gubar and other scholars). In "Hypogram and Inscription," de Man calls prospopoeia the "master trope of poetic discourse" (48). On prosopopoeia's efficacy to speak for the dead, via epitaphs and otherwise, see: Johnson, *Persons and Things* (10-14).

Paul Celans geologische Lyrik, 1998). Drawing upon the enduring temporality of stone, as well as its “semiotic” conveyance of natural history in sedimentation, petrification, and fossilization, Werner suggests that Celan’s texts, even where they do not overtly integrate geological discourse, can be understood as a textual grave memorializing the vast numbers who were annihilated and inhumanly interred (7). For a point in history that denied textual records of loss and destruction—either because the overwhelming majority of those murdered were unable to record their testimonies, or because the German language itself was seen as tainted—stone provides a model of a semiotically viable yet alternative mode of signification.

The notion of lyric poems as an alternative textual grave is present even more explicitly in Sachs’ works, though they have not been theorized as extensively as Celan’s in this respect. Her first post-war collection, *In the Habitations of Death (In den Wohnungen des Todes*, 1947), for instance, includes a section titled “Epitaphs Written in the Air” (“Grabschriften in die Luft geschrieben.”)²³ The epitaph has a very long and broad history in classical and modern literature; prominent in Romantic lyric, including Wordsworth’s poetry, the trope also appears in twentieth-century works by Rilke and Trakl (including their respective lyrics “In a Foreign Park” and “Bright Spring,” both examined previously in this study) and other poets.²⁴ The epitaph, characteristically figured as an inscription on a gravestone, is refigured in Sachs’ cycle as on in the air, indistinct and fleeting. This calls to mind the fact that the murdered were denied a legitimate epitaph—their “epitaph” might have been written across the sky in their own constitutive material, in

²³ The section includes poems written as early as 1942 and 1943, when Sachs received news of the deaths of people close to her who had remained in Germany after her own escape to Sweden (*NSW* 1:244).

²⁴ On the trope of the epitaph in Romantic literature and elsewhere, see: Hartman, “Inscriptions and Romantic Nature Poetry”; MacKay, *Inscription and Modernity: From Wordsworth to Mandelstam*; Scodel, *The English Poetic Epitaph*.

smoke that rose from death camp crematoriums. Sachs' cycle thus takes one version of the legibility of stone and reconfigures it as a trope emptied of stone at all—in other words, the emulation of *one* kind of stone's legibility here overtakes what is in being emulated. In the case of "Epitaphs Written in the Air," the cycle's rhetorical position is uniquely contextual, yet still demonstrates lyric's potentiality. Just as Werner considered Celan's lyrics as text-graves speaking on behalf of the dead, West sees Sachs' texts as inverting the traditional epitaphic trope, writing that in them "the saved address the dead, whereas the usual trope in epitaphs is for the dead to speak to the living" (79).²⁵

In "Chorus of Stones" ("Chor der Steine," *In den Wohnungen des Todes*), from the cycle "Choruses after Midnight" ("Chöre nach der Mitternacht"), Sachs revisits the inversion of the epitaphic trope. Formally, the lyric's parallelism recalls something like a Biblical psalm, while its first-person plural voice, befitting its presentation as a "chorus," colors its tone of collective lamentation. Mute stones cannot form a chorus in the normal sense of the term, and despite the fact the poem's stones describe themselves as "memorial stones" (*Gedenksteine*), they do not memorialize any specifically named figure or event, nor does Sachs' lyric frame them as inscribed with text. Instead, the lyric draws on the deep temporality of stone to describe them as a record of lament going back to the moment of creation:

Wir Steine

²⁵ West adds that "Sachs's poems do not seek, in general, to recover the dead; the dead in her work are already too present and bring to much mourning with them. There is relatively little need for prosopopoeia" (90). In criticism on his work can find comparisons of Celan's lyrics to epitaphs as well. Oppens, for example, understands Celan's poetics of stone as a systematic conceptualization that can be traced throughout the collections he surveys (*Mohn und Gedächtnis*, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, and *Sprachgitter*), or what he calls a cipher (*Chiffre*, 181). The poems of *Sprachgitter*, he writes, "wirken, als wären sie in Urstein eingraviert" (182). See also Johnson's distinction between epitaphs and elegies: for epitaphs, the "author must write like every mourner. In an elegy, a longer and more expressive genre, the poem can be the portrait and feelings of an individual mourner. In an epitaph, the opposite is true. What is marked and what calls out to the passerby has the proper name of the deceased, and the proper name of the mourner is not relevant" (14).

Wenn einer uns hebt
Hebt er Urzeiten empor –
Wenn einer uns hebt
Hebt er den Garten Eden empor (*NSW* 1:37).

We stones
When someone raises us
He raises primeval time—
When someone lifts us
He lifts the Garden of Eden

This is not the lament of an individual, but of “trillions of memories” (“Billionen Erinnerungen”), encapsulated and dispersed among like stones, “a wailing wall” (“eine Klagemauer”), “for we are memorial stones / enfolding all dying” (“Denn Gedenksteine sind wir / Alles Sterben umfassend”) (37, 38).²⁶ Sachs’ “Chorus of Stones” anticipates Celan’s works of the 1950s and 1960s, as well as Werner’s conceptualization of them as “text-graves,” for the lyric’s collective of stones declares, “Whoever raises us, raises the hardened graves of the earth” (“Wer uns hebt, hebt die hartgewordenen Gräber der Erde”). Thus, the stones—personified here as a chorus that can speak on behalf of the dead—are identified as the textualized interment of the dead; what *cannot* speak (stone) serves as the alternate epitaph of those who *could not* speak (the dead).²⁷

Celan’s lyric “Whichever stone you raise” (“Welchen der Steine du hebst,” *Speech-Grille*) alludes directly to Sachs’ “Chorus of Stones”, echoing both its imagery and its anaphoric phrasing: “Whichever stone you lift – / you lay bare / those who need the protection of / stones: / naked, / now they renew their entwinement” (“Welchen der

²⁶ The *Klagemauer* and *Gedenkstein* of Sachs’ “Chor der Steine” echoes the *Klagestein* in Else Lasker-Schüler’s lyric “Mein Volk” from her collection *Hebräische Balladen* (1913).

²⁷ One finds contrasting materializations of this thought two recent memorials: first, the *Stolpersteine* (“stumbling blocks,” small plaques embedded in sidewalks, engraved with sparse information about individual victims of the Holocaust) designed by Gunter Demnig and now located at sites throughout Germany and Europe; second, the *Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe* (*Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*) in Berlin, designed by Peter Eisenman and Buro Happold, which is composed of numerous bare concrete stelae of varying size laid out in rows.

Steine du hebst / du entblößt, / die des Schutzes der Steine bedürfen: / nackt, /
erneuern sie nun die Verflechtung,” *GW* 1:129; trans. Felstiner, 81). Vivian Liska very perceptively distinguishes Celan’s and Sachs’ textualized memorial stones, and reads Celan’s poem as a possible antagonistic response to the conciliatory tone of “Chorus of Stones” (129-131). Concerning the two poems, she writes: “What Celan ultimately rejects is the presumptuousness of speaking in the name of the dead and of forgiving in their stead” (131). While we might note that in this comment, Liska presumes to speak on behalf of Celan through some form of prosopopoeia, more importantly, we can be reminded that Sachs’ paradoxical chorus of *stones*—paradigmatically mute as they are—points to the very difficulty, even impossibility, of writing on behalf of the dead in any prior lyric mode. In both Sachs’ and Celan’s texts, the memorial stones are not figured within lyric as the grounds for a hypothetical engraved epitaph, but rather call to be recognized as legible on the basis of their bare materiality alone.

The lyric “Fleeing” (“In der Flucht”) from *Flight and Metamorphosis* (*Flucht und Verwandlung*, 1959) demonstrates an even more remarkable transformation of the epitaphic trope. Read at the award ceremony for Sachs’ receipt of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1966, critics like Enzensberger have read “Fleeing” in strongly autobiographical terms, understanding it to reference her escape from Nazi Germany to Sweden in 1940. While the poem, written in the first-person singular, can be read as corresponding to events from Sachs’ life, it gestures even more strongly toward a generalized, mythopoetic sense of transformation, particularly at its close:²⁸

Der kranke Schmetterling
weiß bald wieder vom Meer –

²⁸ In a letter to Hilde Domin, Sachs expressly rejects autobiographical readings of this poem—see *NSW* 2:299).

Dieser Stein
mit der Inschrift der Fliege
hat sich mir in die Hand gegeben – (*NSW* 2:73-74)

The sick butterfly
will soon learn again of the sea—
This stone
with the fly's inscription
gave itself into my hand— (*O the Chimneys*, 145)

The stone is said to bear not a fossil but an “inscription” (*Inschrift*)—a term ordinarily describing writing engraved in stone (as in the epitaph or *Grabinschrift*). The message of the fly's impression, which can be called writing only in Caillois' sense of the term, comes from the deep past, bearing the “text” of a natural history rather than a human one. By integrating the figure, “Fleeing” comments directly neither on Sachs' biography nor on the conditions of writing poetry after the Holocaust. Instead, it emulates the inscription/fossil: it registers surprise that something so slight and fragile the wing of a butterfly, and an ill one, no less, would be depicted in hard and enduring stone; but not preserved, strictly speaking, for the process of fossilization eradicates all authentically organic material, but nevertheless there to be read in a sign.

The metamorphosis of the butterfly (itself a figure of biological metamorphosis) *into* stone as an *inscription* encapsulates the broader sense of inescapable transformation signaled in the collection's title, *Flight and Metamorphosis*. The final lines of “Fleeing” comment further on the notion of transformation: “I hold instead of a homeland / the metamorphoses of the world—“ (“An Stelle von Heimat / halte ich die Verwandlung der Welt —”) (145/74). The German in these final lines is somewhat ambiguous. *An der Stelle* can figuratively suggest hypotheticalities—“instead of” (or to take another example, “an deiner Stelle” as “in your place” / “if I were you”). Alternatively, and more literally, the

phrase can emphasize “place,” *Stelle*: In the place of (that is, on the site of) homeland, I hold the metamorphosis of the world. The variant reading of the final lines suggests that the place of homeland/*Heimat* is the place of transformation, or the place in which it is found. Such transformation reflects several layers of reading: it refers at once to the relocation and exile of figures like Sachs, the transformation of the German *Heimat*, the metamorphosis of stone and of the butterfly’s inscription, and the ambiguity of meaning, the inversion of the epitaphic trope, and the idea that stone could be the bearer of significance. In a letter to Hilde Domin, Sachs discusses “Fleeing,” stating that stone, too will undergo its own metamorphoses: “[i]n countless years it will deteriorate back into dust.”²⁹ The metamorphoses of stone, in turn, could be taken as a figure for Sachs’ lyrics, which draw transformatively upon both linguistic and petrific figures to create new legibilities; these possibilities are explored to even greater depths in other lyrics by Sachs as well as by Celan.

SECRETS OF STONE: KABBALISTIC LEGIBILITIES IN SACHS AND CELAN

Kabbalistic literature offers yet another model for reading texts and the world, which within the lyrics of Sachs and Celan is transformed into a legibility of stone. Both authors immersed themselves in readings on Jewish mysticism and the Kabbalah, including the writings of Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Margarete Susman, and above all Gershom Scholem.³⁰ When, in the 1950s, the two poets began to correspond

²⁹ “Auch der Stein ist ein Universum. In ungezählten Weltjahren verfällt er sich drehend in Staub. Aber das ist ja keine Wissenschaftliche Abhandlung. Dies ist ja ein Gedicht und ein Geheimnis” (*NSW* 2:300; my translation).

³⁰ After her mother’s death in 1950, Sachs began an intensive study of Scholem’s *Die Geheimnisse der Schöpfung*, although, as numerous scholars have indicated, she must have been familiar with the Zohar before this time. See, for example, her lyric “Qual, Zeitmesser eines fremden Sterns” (written in 1943 or 1944 and included in *In den Wohnungen des Todes*), which has an epigraph from the Zohar. For Sachs’ notes recording her study of the Zohar and Kabbalah, see: *NSW* 4:101, 105-110. For critical studies of Sachs’

with each other and to trade poems, their mutual interests in the Kabbalah arose; Sachs wrote to Celan about the latter's *Speech-Grille*, declaring that "Your *Book of Splendor*, your *Zohar* is with me. I live within it."³¹

Kabbalistic literature describes a mystic alphabet that took part in the creation of the world. According to legend, before the creation of the world, twenty-six letters (corresponding to those of the Hebrew alphabet) descended from the crown of God, each petitioning in turn for the honor of having the world created through it.³² Each letter is rejected, however, because each is linked to both holy and unholy words; the letter Koph, for instance, although it begins the word *kodesh* ("the Holy One"), is also the start of the word *kelalah* ("curse") and thus is passed over. The letter Beth is finally chosen because it begins the word *baruch* ("blessed"), but then God notices the letter Aleph, who out of humility had not volunteered itself; because of its modesty, it is given the honor of beginning the Decalogue. The legend establishes the letters as vital forces, and also as the signs that indicate layered connections between texts and the meaningful world, a fundamental approach to Kabbalistic thought. The alphabet of creation suggests that these signs lend a certain mystical legibility to the world that has the potential to be revealed.

readings of Scholem and the Zohar, see: Bower (*Ethics and Remembrance*), Dinesen, Grittner, and Lehmann (169-196). Celan began reading Scholem's texts at least by 1957, judging by the entries in his personal library; according to Felstiner, Celan and Scholem met three times in Paris in the 1960s (235). For a bibliographic account of his readings of Buber, Susman, and Scholem, see Günzel (31-63 on Buber and Susman; 64-107 on Scholem); see also Dan and Wolosky on Celan and the Kabbalah and mysticism. For a discussion of Kabbalistic figures of stars and the heavens in Celan's poetry, see the second chapter, "Stargazing," in Tobias' *The Discourse of Nature in the Poetry of Paul Celan*.

³¹ "Ihr 'Buch der Strahlen,' Ihr 'Sohar' ist bei mir. Ich lebe darin. Die kristallinen Buchstabenengel – geistig durchsichtig – in der Schöpfung tätig jetzt – augenblicklich" (*Briefwechsel*, 23). See also: Felstiner (139).

³² The version of the legend as conveyed here is based upon that given in Ben Shahn's richly illustrated *The Alphabet of Creation: An ancient legend from the Zohar*, itself adapted from Edmond Fleg's *The Jewish Anthology* (translated by Maurice Samuel).

Sachs' texts allude to this Kabbalistic notion of legibility at numerous points, at times seeming to deny the possibility of it.³³ Lehman, for instance, reads trace references to *illegibility* in Sachs' works, such as her short lyric that reads: "This chain of enigmas / hung on the neck of night / a king's word written far away / illegible" (*O The Chimneys*, 239; "Diese Kette von Rätseln / um den Hals der Nacht gelegt / Königswort weit fort geschrieben / unlesbar" *NSW* 2:149). One could compare this, I suggest, to Celan's own allusions to illegibility, such as the lyric from the posthumously-published *Snow Part* (*Schneepart*, 1971) that begins: "Illegibility of this / World. Everything doubled" ("Unlesbarkeit dieser / Welt. Alles doppelt." *GW* 2:338; Bücher, 113).³⁴ According to Lehmann, the references to illegibility in Sachs' works, and indeed the invocation of a Kabbalistic veil of mystery (by which the true nature of the world would not necessarily be revealed), correspond to the insecurity about language evident in the wake of the Holocaust; a transcendent language seemed impossible in this context (169-172).³⁵ Moreover, Lehmann sees in Sachs' poetic project a return to Benjamin's reading of the opening chapters of Genesis in "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man." As Benjamin understands the narrative of creation in this essay, language is a deteriorated, forever deficient translation of the originary creative word of God. "As a model for literature, the Holy Scripture confronts the translator with both the impossibility of translating and the necessity of the task," Lehmann writes, drawing upon the ambiguity of *Aufgabe* ("task" but also "defeat" or "abandonment") evident in Benjamin's essay "The

³³ On *Buchstabenmetaphorik* in Sachs' works, see Grittner (76-84).

³⁴ Ryan describes "die zunächst Paradoxa anmutende Tatsache, daß bei Celan die Welt als lesbar und unlesbar zugleich erscheint. Unlesbar ist sie in dem Sinne, daß das 'Buch der Natur' nicht mehr unmittelbar zugänglich ist; lesbar insofern statt dessen die Texte vorangegangener Dichter sich dazwischenstellen" ("Die 'Lesbarkeit der Welt'," 20).

³⁵ Likewise, Martin suggests that the "deep cynicism" with which Sachs' lyric poems approach Biblical references challenges religious authority in the wake of the Shoah (163).

Task of the Translator” (“Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers”).³⁶ According to these observations, any possible mystical reading of the world would be subject to a greater or lesser degree of illegibility.

Certainly, any implied claims about language’s potentiality, including the legibility of stone, that emerge in Celan’s and Sachs’ are tenuous; on the other hand, the problematization of legibility is not the eradication of it. There are more references to the readable in the work of both poets than to the unreadable—one should bear in mind, however, that readability in their texts does not imply the possibility of complete understandability, as in may for some supernatural or scientific models. In this respect, it is vital to note that Sachs and Celan do not simply reiterate Kabbalistic concepts in their texts, but transform them. Most significantly, the Kabbalistic notion of a divinely sanctioned alphabet does not reference a legibility of stone, but a connection between the two is forged in the works of Sachs and Celan, inundated as they are with the discourse of the mineral world. Sachs’ stage piece *Beryll Sees in the Night, or The Lost and Regained Alphabet: Some Scenes from the History of the Earth’s Sufferings* (*Beryll sieht in der Nacht, oder das verlorene und wieder gerettete Alphabet. Einige Szenen aus der Leidensgeschichte der Erde*, 1962), written in free lyric verse, is her most extended work referencing the divine alphabet of creation.³⁷ Beryll, the hero of the piece, is also the name of a type of stone, a convergence Sachs drew explicit attention to.³⁸ In general, Sachs amalgamates Kabbalistic imagery and her

³⁶ “Als Modell der Literatur konfrontiert die Heilige Schrift den Übersetzer sowohl mit der Unmöglichkeit des Übersetzens als auch mit der Notwendigkeit dieser Aufgabe” (171).

³⁷ Aside from *Beryll* and the poems discussed below, other lyrics by Sachs taking up the notion of a mystical alphabet include “Geheime Grabschriften,” “O welche Rune schreibt der Erdenschoß,” and “Chassidische Schriften.”

³⁸ In a note to her poem “Da / um die Ecke,” which ends with the lines “Beryll ißt das Licht // Im Brunnen mit niemand – / verloren – ,” Sachs writes “Beryll Edelstein und zugleich in meiner dramatischen Szene Retter des Alphabets nach jeder Sintflut ißt (essen) das Licht.” See: *Nelly Sachs. Neue Interpretationen* (eds. Kessler and Wertheimer, 368). In her notes to the dramatic piece *Beryll*, Sachs writes “Aus dem Atem

more idiosyncratic poetics of stone, taking the former's broad structure of significance as a malleable ore to shape into the latter. As Enzensberger writes of Sachs' references to the Kabbalah, "[b]ook and inscription, archive and alphabet: these are concepts that recur throughout her work. They do not signify anything literary, but rather make literal use of the old concept of the book of nature, and, as it were, turn it around: the poetess does not copy nature's signs into her poems; she absorbs them so as to delineate future patterns" ("Introduction," vii).

A key example of Sachs' approach is "Then wrote the scribe of the Zohar" ("Da schrieb der Schreiber des Sohar") from her collection *And No One Knows How to Go On (Und niemand weiß weiter, 1957)*. As is evident from its title, the lyric is explicit in its Kabbalistic references; the poem is also the first in a cycle titled "A Secret Broke out of the Secret of the Zohar: The Chapter of Creation" ("Geheimnis brach aus dem Geheimnis Sohar: Schöpfungskapitel") which echoes the title of Scholem's translation of and introduction to a section of the Kabbalah, *The Secrets of Creation: A Chapter from the Kabbalistic Book Zohar (Die Geheimnisse der Schöpfung. Ein Kapitel aus dem kabbalistischen Buche Sohar, 1935)*. As Scholem's translation details, the "Book of Creation" section of the Zohar is an interpretation of the first book of Genesis "in which the unfolding of the alphabet—which composes God's name—creates the world" (Ostmeier, 136).

Sachs' lyric proposes the figure of the Zohar's scribe as a reader of this divinely-infused and legible earth, for he is the one who "opened the vein-net of words," the mystical revelation of creation (*NSW* 2:39). The "vein-net of words," as Kranz-Löber

wurde der Buchstabe geboren und wieder entsteht neue Schöpfung aus dem Wort. Dies ist im Buch des Glanzes – dem Buch Sohar, dem Buch jüdischer Mystik, darin sich die Mystik der ganzen Welt trifft – eingeschrieben. [...] Das Alphabet ist das Land, wo der Geist siedelt und der heilige Name blüht. Es ist die verlorene Welt nach jeder Sintflut" (*NSW* 3:280, 281).

summarizes, is associated with the Kabbalistic idea that the Torah mirrors the numerical proportions of the human body and can itself be seen as a divinely inspired circulatory system (95).³⁹ The legibility that confronts the Scribe, however, is indefinite, belonging to a language already in decline; thus, this text illustrates the skepticism that Lehmann identifies as characteristic of Sachs' texts:

Des Alphabetes Leiche hob sich aus dem Grab,
Buchstabenengel, uraltes Kristall,
mit Wassertropfen von der Schöpfung eingeschlossen,
die sangen – und man sah durch sie
Rubin und Hyazinth und Lapis schimmern,
als Stein noch weich war
und wie Blumen ausgesät. (*NSW* 2:39)

The alphabet's corpse rose from the grave,
alphabet angel, ancient crystal,
enclosed by creation with drops of water
that sang—and through them you saw glinting lapis, ruby and hyacinth,
when stone was still soft
and sown like flowers (*O the Chimneys*, 123, modified)

One finds the “corpse” of the alphabet in this second stanza, a far cry from the vitality of the “vein-net of words” mentioned in the lyric's first stanza, which, when opened by the scribe, “introduced blood from the stars, / that circled invisibly, ignited / only by yearning” (“führte Blut von den Gestirnen ein, / die kreisten unsichtbar, und nur / von Sehnsucht angezündet”; *NSW* 2:39, my translation).⁴⁰ Moreover, “vein” (*Ader*), a recurrent figure in Sachs' lyrics, has a petrological connotation (a *vein* is a band of

³⁹ Commentary to Sachs' poetry confirms these associations: “In der *Kabbala* durchzieht das göttliche Adernetz alles, auch die Welt der Zeichen und Buchstaben.” (*NSW* 2:335); “‘Der Worte Adernetz’ etwa assoziiert die kabbalistische Vorstellung, wonach die Tora die Zahlenverhältnisse des menschlichen Körpers widerspiegelt und mithin selbst ein lebendiger Organismus ist” (Kranz-Löber, 95). For lyricizations of the *Adernetz*, aside from in *Beyll*, see Sachs' “Wortlos spielt sie mit einem Aquamarin,” “Anders gelegt die Adern,” “Und wundertätig,” “Nacht der Nächte,” and others. See also Sachs' translation of Johannes Edelfelt, “Marmorscherben,” which describes “Adern [...] wie das Liniennetz einer Handfläche” (*NSW* 4:152).

⁴⁰ Compare lines from *Beyll*: “Einer hat seine Adern geöffnet / Blut füllt die Glorienkette des Alphabetes” (*NSW* 3:230).

crystalline material that forms between sections of another kind of rock—likely by the gradual secretion of minerals through semi-porous rock, which gather where there is a break in the primary material). The “words” of creation, that is, are figured simultaneously as an interconnected vein-web like that of the human body, and as a legible vein through stone. The divinely inspired alphabet of creation is not simply resurrected, it is petrified, brought forth as stones from the ground. A “literal angel” (*Buchstabenengel*) is equated with an “ancient crystal, / enclosed by creation with drops of water” so that the original water which flowed, like the blood of the “vein-net of words,” is now solidified into stone—translucent, like water, but hardened.⁴¹ Through this crystal gleam three precious stones of Biblical significance: lapis lazuli, ruby, and hyacinth (*Hyazinth* or jacinth)—the later two being stones of deep red color that suggest petrified blood.⁴² The ancient, once vital words of creation may survive as legible to the Scribe, but they are not transmitted as texts, but rather metamorphosed into readable and paradoxically singing stone.

In the same letter in which Sachs compares Celan’s *Speech-Grille* to the Zohar, she cites “the crystal literal angel” (*die kristallen Buchstabenengel*), thus drawing a connection to her own rewriting of Kabbalistic tropes in the lyric “Then wrote the scribe of the Zohar” (*Briefwechsel*, 23). Taking a cue from Sachs as a reader of Celan’s texts, the latter’s own transformation of that legibility in one of the most outstanding poems from *Speech-Grille* (the same collection Sachs compared to the Zohar), “Draft of a Landscape” (“Entwurf einer Landschaft,” 1958) is illuminated. “Draft of a Landscape” has been identified as a

⁴¹ “Das kabbalistische Hauptwerk ist für das Gedicht, was der Buchstabe der Tora für jenes war, ein Kristall, in dessen Innern als kostbare mineralische Reste die ‘Geheimnisse der Schöpfung’ locken” (Kranz-Löber, 95).

⁴² Difficulties in translation notwithstanding, such stones may recall those described on the priestly breastplate (Exodus 28:15-19), upon which twelve precious stones were inlaid, each engraved with one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

key geopoetic text in Celan's oeuvre (Tobias, 36-41; Werner 92, 106). Whereas "Then wrote the scribe of the Zohar" and other texts by Sachs reference the divine alphabet, "Draft of a Landscape" proposes a literalization of the earth. The lyric references "escarpments," or step inclines of rock layers: "Round graves, below. In / four-beat time of the year's step on / the escarpment around" ("Rundgräber, unten. Im / Viertakt der Jahresschritt auf / den Steilstufen rings," *GW* 1:184, my translation). The German term for "escarpment," *Steilstufen*, belies a Kabbalistic connotation. *Stufen* can generally refer to stages, tiers, or steps of any kind, including rock strata (Beringer-Murawski, 165), but also to layers of reading; Scholem's *The Secrets of Creation* utilizes the term frequently to the successive layers of interpretive reading that are revealed in the Kabbalistic approach to texts. Thus, "Draft of a Landscape" lays forth a geopoetic reading of landscape in which layers of rock are at once legible as a record of natural history and a reimagination of what constitutes a mystic text, emulated in lyric as its own staggered literal lines.

In "Draft of a Landscape," as elsewhere, Celan integrates geological discourse. Here, attention is drawn to the imagistic metaphoricity of that discourse so that another type of legibility is revealed. This is evident in the final stanza, for instance:

Ölgrün, meerdurchstäubt die
 unbetretbare Stunde. Gegen
 die Mitte zu, grau,
 ein Steinsattel, drauf,
 gebeult und verkohlt,
 die Tierstirn mit
 der strahligen Blesse. (*GW* 1:184)

Oil-green, sea-sprayed through the
 untroddenable hours. Across
 from the middle, gray,
 a stone anticline, upon which,
 bulged and carbonized,
 the animal's brow with

the radial blaze.

In the term *Tierstim* or “animal’s brow,” what may not be immediately apparent is that *Stirn* not only means forehead, but is also a geological term for a certain type of mountaintop, one which forms in rocky folds that resemble a furrowed brow (Brinkmann 1:150; Tobias 15, 32). Moreover, the incline is also known as a *Sattel* or “saddle,” another term that the stanza integrates. Thus, “Draft of a Landscape” takes these terms, mined for their metaphorical richness when used geologically, deconstructs the metaphor, and reconstructs a new one out of it, *Tierstim*, so that attention is drawn to the mobility of language vis-à-vis what passes as a “description” of landscape. Tobias argues that this geopoetic maneuvering, although one might say it is facilitated by the “accident” of the forms that topological features of the earth take, is not without significance. Far from it: the “the radiant blaze” which is said to appear on the “animal forehead” can be read as an allusion to a common symbol used for branding horses, the star; this in turn recalls the dehumanizing “branding” of Jews with the mandatory Star of David (“radial,” *strahlig*, like a star) to be sewn on their clothing during the Nazi regime (Tobias, 41).⁴³ Celan’s text takes the Kabbalistic notion that the connections in the world are made apparent through combinations of the letters of the alphabet, and transforms it by suggesting that this layer of reading can be projected onto the layers of the earth’s rocky landscape. The text then once again tropes on those mobile connections between language by integrating and reworking the discourse used to describe those landscapes. Finally the text obliquely

⁴³ “Blaze” or *Blesse* is also a term for a white mark on a horse’s forehead. See Baer, 237

suggests that the legibilities of natural history might be brought to bear on a written response to human history.⁴⁴

Sachs' "The Archive" ("Die Urkunde vor mir aufgeschlagen," *Noch feiert Tod das Leben*, 1961) can be read as a poetic response to Celan's "Draft of a Landscape," thus as another instance in which their texts are in correspondence (like "Chorus of Stones" and "Whichever stone you raise"). Like Sachs' "Then wrote the Scribe of the Zohar," "The Archive" text integrates Kabbalistic concepts of legibility, but also, like Celan's "Draft of a Landscape," repositions them within a textual terrain, and looks to stone for models.

Die Urkunde vor mir aufgeschlagen
in den Stufen der Marmortreppe
die Buchstaben entworfen
in den Kiemen der zeitalternden Wasserwunder (*NSW* 2:142)

The archive unfolded before me
in the steps of the marble stairs
the alphabet outlined
in the gills of age-old water marvels.

In this lyric, we again see the Kabbalistic imagery of the letters of the alphabet (*Buchstaben*). Whereas "Then wrote the scribe of the Zohar" associates them with the semi-historical author of the Zohar and the act of writing the manuscript, here, the divine letters are imprinted in the stones of the earth. The steps of marble (*Stufen der Marmortreppe*) are presented as an "archive" or "certificate" (*Urkunde*) of the divine, originary word, instead of the letters comprising the text of the Zohar; stone has become an *Ersatz* letter,

⁴⁴ Baer suggests that "Draft of a Landscape," with its reference to "Roundgraves, below" ("Rundgräber, unten") creates not only a text-grave like Werner argues, but also "an actual topographic sketch" of the memorial site at the former Buchenwald concentration camp (other references in the poem, he argues, seem to be recalled by the memorial at Treblinka). This memorial does feature a long procession of stone steps leading down to a circular area in which the remains of murdered inmates were buried. Though the memorials at both Buchenwald and Treblinka were completed after the composition of Celan's poem, Baer suggests that "Draft of a Landscape" is a "proleptic sketch" of them (241). In the light of Celan's work with Kabbalistic concepts, this perhaps indicates a strange foreshadowing by which the landscape comes to resemble the letter that preceded it.

an alternatively legible material, “unfolded” (“aufgeschlagen”) like a book. “The Archive” revisits the jointly Kabbalistic and geological layers or *Stufen* that are alluded to in Celan’s “Draft of a Landscape.” The descending layers of marble are read here as an analogue of the successive layers of interpretation that descend the depths of textual meaning, revealing successive insights in the process.

In “The Archive,” the legible message of the earth contained in the levels / *Stufen* of stone—the “archive,” so to speak—take the form of what are *called* letters (*Buchstaben*) “outlined” (“entworfen,” the past participle of the verb *entwerfen*) on the marble, a term which again recalls Celan’s “draft” (*Entwurf*, formed from the same root) of a landscape. As in Celan’s poem, however, the legible is not equated with the literal. The so-called letters are not drawn from the alphabet as such, but rather take the form of fossils: pictograms “outlined / in the gills of age-old water marvels,” signs revealed in the rocky layers.⁴⁵

Sachs’ lyric “reads” the fossil, noting that:

Atem der war
versteinert
und nun wie auf Blitzen mit Füßen
niedergetreten
von uns Beladenen
die wir unwissend verschulden
vieler Minuten Tod – (*NSW* 2:142)

Breath that was
petrified
and now as on lightning with feet
trampled down by us
who are burdened
and unknowingly cause

⁴⁵ The “Water Wonder” (*Wasserwunder*) is polysemantic. In a biblical context, the word could refer to at least two instances: the first miracle (*Wunder*) performed by Jesus, where he turned water to wine; or Moses’ act of striking a rock to make water miraculously flow while the Israelites were wandering in the desert. Here however, that the lyric refers to the fossilized gills suggests a different kind of “water wonder,” perhaps an ancient sea beast.

many minutes' death

The fossil of the water-wonder's gills does not preserve "breath," per se, but their mineralization creates a legible sign of their former existence. Like Sachs' lyric "Fleeing," which mentions the "inscription" in stone of a fragile butterfly's wing, "The Archive" registers a different kind of "wonder," that something as intangible and evanescent as breath could be "petrified," made legible as fossilized gills. Breath, also mentioned in "Draft of a Landscape,"⁴⁶ might be an analogue for poetry, especially in the light of Mandelstam's "Conversation about Dante," which describes stones as a diary of the weather, the solidification of air, and the perfect companion to a reading of poetry.

In its final stanza, "The Archive" again implies Kabbalistic notions of legibility informed by Scholem's *The Secrets of Creation*, citing "the soul's wandering secret," "disclosed in the Bible" ("Und dann / in der Bibel aufgebrochen / weissagend vom wandernden Geheimnis der Seele"). The "wandering" here applies to language as well, as meaning is transported across texts and even from stones to texts. To the extent that Sachs' lyric serves, like Celan's, as a text-grave, then in the line "always pointing as with fingers from graves / into the next dawn" ("immer zeigend wie mit Fingern aus Gräbern / in die nächste Morgendämmerung"), one finds an echo of the "roundgraves" from "Draft of a Landscape." As the lyrics of both Celan and Sachs suggest, the literality of the divine alphabet, and perhaps any possible descriptive language, has morphed into one of the earth, formed in stone; the text-graves are coherent insofar as they are founded on emulating this language of stone.

⁴⁶ "Laven, Basalte, weltherz- / durchglühtes Gestein. / Quelltuff, / wo uns das Licht wuchs, vor / dem Atem" (*GW* 1:184).

LYRIC AFTER HIROSHIMA: THE LEGIBLE LANDSCAPES OF “STRETTO” AND “LE
MENHIR”

As texts like “Chorus of Stones,” “Fleeing,” “The Archive” and “Draft of a Landscape” demonstrate, Sachs’ and Celan’s mid-twentieth century lyric poems transform given structures of significance—scientific discourse, Kabbalistic concepts, and even poetic topos like the epitaph—as they emulate legibilities of stone. As “The Archive” and “Draft of a Landscape” demonstrate in particular, these transformations intersect with the discourse of landscape in lyric. What one finds, however, is that approach to writing about landscape also witnesses a major transformation, so that notions of place, belonging, and identification are conveyed as unstable rather than secure concepts. Celan’s lyric “Stretto” (“Engführung,” *Speech-Grille* 1958), I argue, demonstrates how in the midst of these telescoping uncertainties regarding place and landscape, a meticulous reading of stone—small, particular, concrete, and tangible—can provide a different orienting point in lyric.

“Stretto,” Celan’s longest poem, is understood to follow upon his most well-known lyric, “Death Fugue” (“Todesfugue,” *Mohn und Gedächtnis / Poppy and Memory*, 1952), both thematically, as a response to the destructiveness of the Holocaust, and formally, in its adoption of motifs from musical forms.⁴⁷ The poem’s first lines, however, impart a lyric that is not musical in effect, but rather concerned with concepts of space and orientation: “Driven into the / terrain / with the unmistakable trace” (“Verbracht ins / Gelände / mit der untrüglichen Spur,” GW 1:197). Reading Celan’s texts as a poetic “terrain” is a longstanding approach, one raised in Peter Szondi’s early and groundbreaking study,

⁴⁷ The term “Stretto” refers to the close succession of musical themes, as in a fugue. “Stretto” is in many ways more typical of Celan’s *oeuvre* than “Death Fugue,” and anticipates the formal tendency toward abstraction that would increasingly come to characterize it in the late 1950s and 1960s.

“Reading ‘Engführung’” (1971).⁴⁸ Szondi’s virtuosic close reading of “Stretto” immediately connects the experience of reading the lyric to its content; its opening lines, he writes, lack a clear subject, yet seem to function as though there were one the reader is not privy to. In this sense, then, it is the reader who is “Driven into the / terrain” of the text, not because the lines are directed at a particular reader, but because their referent is obscured or withheld. This insight allows Szondi to theorize the notion of “terrain,” and the lyric possibility that “Stretto” raises: interpretations of the poem, he writes, “are precluded by the textuality of a landscape that is not merely the subject of what we are reading—it *is* what we are reading” (30-31).⁴⁹ As Szondi indicates, lines from “Stretto” draw overt attention to this: “Read no more—look! / Look no more—go!” (“Lies nicht mehr—schau! / Schau nicht mehr—geh!”). These imperatives, in other words, seem directed at the reader in the process of seeking orientation in a disorienting textual terrain.

More recently, Ulrich Baer has reconsidered Celan’s writing of terrain, distinguishing it from Romantic writing of place.⁵⁰ Whereas the latter typically positions a lyrical subject in the process of encountering itself in the contemplation of nature, “Celan’s landscape poems place the self in reference to something that is felt to be meaningful but neither reaches the clarity of a remembered experience nor readily advances an understanding of the self,” thereby addressing “the radical unavailability of

⁴⁸ On the notion of Celan’s textual terrain, see also Gadamer’s *Wer bin ich und wer bist du* for his reading of Celan’s *Atemkristall*, and of “Harnischstriemen, Faltenachsen” in particular.

⁴⁹ “Doch eine solche Interpretation scheidet wiederum an der Textualität einer Landschaft, die nicht Gegenstand des Gelesenen, sondern das Gelesene selbst ist” (51).

⁵⁰ Both Sachs’ and Celan’s works indisputably engage with their Romantic and Romantic-era predecessors, even as they depart from them. On the departure of Celan’s approach to the legibility of the earth/stone from Novalis’ interest in the hieroglyphics and ciphers of nature, for instance, see Ryan (“Die ‘Lesbarkeit der Welt,’” 16).

the very notions of a native region, of origin, and of the past itself” (218; 217-218).⁵¹ Rather than seek a language for *describing* a place—that is, for evoking a recognizable one—“Stretto” draws attention to the act of creating terrain as a text. Celan’s texts exhibit an innovative approach to geography, using the terminology of place to suggest something imaginative rather than situatable—the notion of the “meridian,” for example, or his invocation of “black earth” (*Schwarzerde*) to suggest a spatial linkage with Mandelstam, or, as Baer suggests, his highlighting of the sound patterns of words such as *Wort* and *Ort* (“word” and “place”) “in order to create links where none would appear to exist semantically” (215).⁵²

Something similar could be said of any references to a specifically German sense of place in Celan’s works. Sachs, as we have seen in “Fleeing,” occasionally evokes *Heimat* or “homeland,” though in that text, it is already presented as something transformed. For Celan as well, as he writes in his speech “The Meridian,” such places cannot be found on a map (Baer 213, 219). During and after the Nazi regime, quintessentially Germanic sites shared traditional Romantic poetry of place (chiefly, the forest) appeared tainted through their association with the attempt to construct a racialized and Germanic identity.⁵³ Instead of the pristine, primeval forest, the terrain of “Stretto,” written in abstracted language, seems fractured and destroyed; moreover, there are references to “grass written

⁵¹ The quintessential definition of the Romantic poem of place is M.H. Abrams’ “Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric.” For a creative exploration tracing Celan’s biographical self in relation to the places mentioned in his poem, see Böttiger’s *Wie man Gedichte und Landschaften liest. Celan am Meer*.

⁵² In a letter to Celan dated October 28, 1959, Sachs writes “Lieber Paul Celan wir wollen uns weiter einander die Wahrheit hinüberreichen. Zwischen Paris und Stockholm läuft der Meridian des Schmerzes und des Trostes” (*Briefwechsel*, 25). The figure of the meridian already appears in 1957 in Sachs’ “Nicht nur Land ist Israel!” from *Und niemand weiss weiter*. See also her lyric “Hinter der Tür,” which mentions an “Äquator des Leidens” (*NSW* 2:130).

⁵³ Baer, 219. For a detailed study of this topic, see parts i-iv of chapter two (“Der Holzweg: *The Track Through the Woods*) of Shama’s *Landscape and Memory* (especially 75-82, 118-120 on attempts to appropriate literary and cultural representations of *Wald* during the Third Reich, and 120-134 on Anselm Kiefer’s post-war responses to this).

asunder” (“Gras, auseinandergeschreiben”), to ashes, to hurricanes and to particle flurries. The lyric is read, like “Death Fugue,” as an implicit response to the destructiveness of Holocaust, but Celan also indicated that “Stretto” recalls the disaster of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.⁵⁴ In this sense, the “particle flurry” (*Partikelgestöber*) refers simultaneously to the nuclear fallout.⁵⁵

The destruction of material nature, implied in “Stretto” and elsewhere eradicated the possibility of seeing landscape as it *was*, while the post-Third Reich atmosphere of linguistic decay withdrew the possibility of writing a lyric subject out of or within that landscape. At one point, however, “Stretto” pauses its rapid-forward rhythm, halting not for the vista of a wide and sweeping landscape, but to examine a small and particular stone.

Ja.
 Orkane, Par-
 tikelgestörber, es blieb
 Zeit, blieb,
 es beim Stein zu versuchen – er
 war gastlich, er
 fiel nicht ins Wort. Wie
 gut wir es hatten:
 Körnig,
 körnig und faserig. Stengelig,

⁵⁴ See also the notes to “Stretto” in *Die Gedichte* (667, 669), which details Celan’s critical reactions to threats of atomic armament in China, Germany, the USSR and the USA, around the time of the lyric’s composition. In citing the destructive effects of these bombings on the terrain of the earth—as well as raising the possibility of responding to them in the terrain of the text—“Stretto” iterates an overlooked ecocritical dimension of Celan’s writings. This emerges elsewhere, as in the mention, in the lyric “Eroded by” from *Breathturn*, of a “beamwind” (*Strahlenwind*) in an icy, desolate post-nuclear-apocalyptic landscape (Pöggeler, “Mystical Elements,” 105; *Spur des Worts*, 239; see the discussion of this poem in the previous chapter). As the critical discourse on the notion of “terrain” in Celan’s texts has demonstrated, there is real reason *not* to read his lyrics in terms of the “poetics of place” and the processes by which the subject comes to self-awareness within a landscape—concepts which define much ecocritical work on poetry. Nevertheless, Celan’s quite different eco-poetics demands attention, both for the understanding of his work, and for the sake of a more nuanced ecocriticism. A highly relevant perspective on twentieth-century destructions (human and natural) and the writing of them is found in the works of W.G. Sebald, particularly his novels *Die Ringe des Saturn. Eine Englische Wahlfahrt* (1995) and *Austerlitz* (2001), and his essays “*Zwischen Geschichte und Naturgeschichte. Versuch über die literarische Beschreibung totaler Zerstörung*” (1982) and *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (1999; English title: *On the Natural History of Destruction*).

⁵⁵ As Behre has indicated, *Partikelgestöber* is also a reference to both Democritus and Dante (165).

dicht;
traubig und strahlig; nierig,
plattig und
klumpig; locker, ver-
ästelt -: er, es
fiel nicht ins Wort, es
sprach,
sprach gerne zu trockenen Augen, eh es sie schloß.

Sprach, sprach.
War, war. (*GW* 1:201-202)

Yes.
Hurricanes, par-
ticle drift, some
time left, left,
to try it on the stone – it
was hospitable, it
didn't interrupt. How
good we had it:

gritty,
gritty and stringy. Stalked,
dense;
clustery and raying; kidneyshaped,
flattish and
lumpy; loose, all
branching, it, it
didn't interrupt, it
spoke,
spoke gladly to dry eyes before it closed them.

Spoke, spoke.
Was, was. (*Selections*, 70-71)

In the midst of the “particle flurry,” which indexes the twentieth-century’s legacy of destructiveness, “there remains / time, remains, / to try it with the stone,” to become acquainted with the materiality and temporality of the earthly landscape as a model for the textual terrain the reader is “driven into” (“verbracht” not only denotes being run into the ground; it is also the past participle of the verb *verbringen*, “to spend time”). The mineral world proffers an alternative mode of reading to the legible but enigmatic

terrain/text, precisely because it lies outside of language: the stone “was hospitable, it / did not interrupt.” To be hospitable (*gastlich*) is non-applicable to and unexpected of a stone, but its silence, one might argue, is welcoming in a time of linguistic and ecological decay.⁵⁶ The stone “did not interrupt,” the lyric writes, drawing upon the idiom *ins Wort fallen* (literally “fall into the word”), which recall the first lines of “Stretto,” “Verbracht ins / Gelände,” (“Driven into / terrain”).

In fact, the text does interrupt—twice—to state that something does not interrupt. At first, it is implied to be the stone: “it / was hospitable, it / did not interrupt,” the text states, using the masculine pronoun *er* that must refer to the masculine noun, stone (*Stein*) of the preceding line. When the passage repeats the phrase a few lines down, however (“it, it / did not interrupt”), the lyric utilizes both the masculine pronoun *er* and the neutral/impersonal pronoun *es*: “it, it” (“er, es”). “Es / fiel nicht ins Wort,” the poem states in the second iteration of the phrase, “it / did not interrupt,” so that grammatically speaking it cannot refer to the aforementioned “stone.” Instead, some unrevealed or general referent is said to “not interrupt.” “Stretto” follows the second iteration of the phrase by stating “it / spoke, / spoke gladly to dry eyes before it closed them,” again utilizing an impersonal construction with the neutral pronoun, “es / sprach” (“it / spoke”). The subtle rephrasing of the expression shifts the stone from that which does not “interrupt” to that which provides language in terms that cannot be applied to a cohesive, first-person lyric persona.

Thus, the stone does in one sense interrupt—“Stretto” pauses to consider it in detail—but as a model for language that is unlike what surrounds it in the rest of the

⁵⁶ An unfortunate typographical error in the English translation of Szondi’s essay completely alters the sense of this stanza; when reproducing the German text, the line is mistakenly given as “er / war nicht gastlich” (56).

poem, and, moreover, which is distinctly un-lyrical. Since stone does not come already “shot through with explanation,” as Benjamin would say, since it is not laden with cliché lyrical language, there “remained time” for it to model an entirely different way of reading (“The Storyteller,” 89). “Stretto” turns microscopic in this section, examining stone as rubble, as the remnant of what has been destroyed, but also finding an alternative legibility within it. The lyric lists a series of adjectives attributable to stone: granular (*körnig*), fibrous (*faserig*), columnar (*stengelig*), dense (*dicht*), botryoidal (clustered like grapes, *traubig*), actinomorphic (radial, *strahlig*), reniform (kidney-shaped, *nierig*; also “drusy,” said of a surface covered in crystals, like the inside of a geode or *Druse*), laminated (said of crystals, *plattig*), lumpy (*klumpig*), loose (*locker*), and reticulate (branching, *verästelt*).⁵⁷ These adjectives anticipate the turn to geological terminology that characterizes a significant portion of Celan’s work after *Speech-Grille*, such as the *Atemkristall* poems examined in the previous chapter. These terms, in “Stretto” provide a vocabulary that is precisely illustrative, but not descriptive of any particular stone.

The lyric emulates this vocabulary by abstracting it; each of the adjectives describes a pattern of mineral formation, and many of them function metaphorically in their geological usage, as is the case for the terms integrated into “Draft of a Landscape.” For instance, a word like *körnig* means “granular” in multiple senses; it can refer both to grain (of wheat, corn, barley, etc.) and to the grittiness of stone. Likewise, *traubig* or “botryoidal” refers to clustered, grape-like formations found in various kinds of stone, which is reflected in the German (*Traube* meaning “grape”) and English terms (“botryoidal” stems from the Grecian root for “grape”). *Nierig* shares a root with the

⁵⁷ While Szondi proposes that some of the terms are mineralogical, and some of them are biological, in fact all of them are utilized in Börner’s *Welcher Stein ist das?* (1953), a text contained in Celan’s library, and which he is known to have referred to (see: *Die Gedichte*, 669).

German word for “kidney,” *Niere*, but while it can signify kidney-shaped entities (for example, leaves), its geological sense signifies a surface or cavity coated with typically small crystals (which sometimes form into lumps resembling a kidney)—for example, the inside of a geode or *Drusen*. A near-synonym for *nierig/nierförmig* is *drüsig*, or “drusy” in English.⁵⁸ “Stretto” makes the simultaneity of meaning all the more apparent in the final term of the list of adjectives, *verästelt* or “branched”/“reticulate,” for it splits the term across lines of the text, separating the prefix *ver-* from the rest of the word to emphasize the root *Ast*, “branch,” which itself has a geological as well as a botanical meaning.

In “Stretto,” these terms reflect “readings” of stone: various patterns and formations in stone are given their names because they resemble other entities (grain, grapes, kidneys, branches). In the context of the poem, these resemblances provide a certain legibility, a language of the material earth which can be drawn into lyric as something meaningful, without being laden with the structures of traditional writing of place, which, from the perspective of “Stretto,” are untenable. The legibility of stone in this case provides, for lyric, not the affective language of a persona-subject finding itself in landscape, but a detached mineralogy that nevertheless offers a depth of detail and polysemy.

Celan’s “Le Menhir,” from *The No-One’s Rose*, evokes a different type of stone as legible within landscape, one not to be examined in microscopic detail as in “Stretto,” but rather to be emulated as a model of uncertain meaning. *Le Menhir* is the French rendition of the Middle Breton term *Menhir*, a compound meaning “long stone.” The word refers to

⁵⁸ According to Grimm’s *Wörterbuch*, *Druse* is a term for soft glands in animals and humans, including kidneys, but also others, like the glans of the neck, which because of their lumpy form are also called *Mandeln*. Going full circle, *Mandel* or “almond” is shorthand for *Mandelstein*, “almond-stone” or geode. The geode is a figure alluded to in several of Celan’s texts, including “*A la pointe acérée*” and “Mandorla,” which implies even more closely the sonic (and given Celan’s and Mandelstam’s mutual fascination with stone, the conceptual) link between *Mandelstein* and Mandelstam (see chapter five).

monoliths of uncertain date, origin, and purpose, spread across the world, but primarily found in certain areas of Western Europe (Ireland, Wales, England, and Brittany). These large upright stones, also called “standing stones,” were presumably erected in the distant past by humans, though legends suggest that giants put them in place before the Biblical Flood. Some of them display engravings of unknown significance, or are placed near burial sites; some also demonstrate what might be anthropomorphic characteristics. By and large, however, the menhirs remain a mystery—stones that certainly are significant, but that significance is uncertain. Menhirs pose particular interpretive problems to anthropologists: given their unknown purpose and origin, and their unadorned form, it can be difficult to ascertain when one is looking at a menhir in the landscape, as opposed to any other large stone (particularly since many have toppled over across the years). In other words, menhirs provide complex case studies for the il/legibility of stone in landscape. In particular, the work of Christopher Tilley has used phenomenological methods to inform landscape anthropology, devoting careful attention to the senses in addition to the (abstract) analysis (of maps, graphs, photographs, texts, etc.) in order to “see” the menhirs in their surrounding landscapes, in a fresh light, and thus to find clues as to their origin and purpose.⁵⁹

For Celan’s text, however, it is precisely this tension between understanding a stone as significant and knowing what that significance is that provides a particular model

⁵⁹ See: *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, 1994; *Metaphor and Material Culture*, 1999; *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*, 2004; and *Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology 3: Interpreting Landscapes: Geologies, Topographies, Identities*, 2009. Curious, given that Tilley is explicitly interested in drawing on phenomenological methods, is his suspicion of written accounts, as opposed to seeing and experiencing stones first-hand. A discussion devoting attention to Tilley’s own production of written texts about menhirs as the product of his phenomenological study—and ultimately, the attempt to understand the stones—could prove fruitful. Working from another direction, Groves has suggested that Celan’s poetic explorations of the “(non)stoniness of stone” (i.e., his writing of stone) could inform Tilley’s and other anthropological studies (470).

for lyric emulation. “Le Menhir” approaches its referent in several ways. Typographically, for instance, one might see the text block of the lyric, printed on a page of *The No-One’s Rose*, as an icon of a menhir: its clipped lines form a rough rectangle, the ratio of its height and width approximating that of one of the stone blocks. To a greater extent, however, “Le Menhir” emulates the idea of a menhir phenomenologically, though one that is quite unlike any phenomenology that Tilley attempts. The lyric cites a “Growing stonegrey” (“Wachsendes / Steingrau,” *GW* 1:260, my translation), evoking the idea of a standing stone rising up from the earth. The phrase is more phenomenological than descriptive; it tells what the menhir is *like* rather than what it *is*—inorganic stone does not “grow,” for instance. The stone is addressed as the “Grey-form, eye- / -less you, stone-look, with which / the earth comes forward to us, humanly” (“Graugestalt, augen- / loser du, Steinblick, mit dem uns / die Erde hervortrat, menschlich”). A stone is precisely not human, but like the enigmatic jar in Wallace Steven’s famous “Anecdote” (“I placed a jar in Tennessee, / And round it was upon the hill. / It made the slovenly wilderness / Surround that hill.”), the menhir makes the landscape around it legible as a site of meaning (46). A menhir is indeed “eyeless,” but we as readers see “Le Menhir” as text. “Steingrau. // Graugestalt, augen- / loser du, Steinblick,” the lyric proceeds in German, thrice repeating the *au* sound that belongs orthographically and phonetically to both the *Grau* (“grey”) of the stone and the *Augen* (“eyes”) that would perceive it, aurally (and literally) emphasizing the connection between the two. Thus, albeit “eye- / -less,” the menhir as emulated in lyric is paradoxically a “stone-look” (*Steinblick*), insisting upon the approximation of the seen and non-seeing, observed and observer, demanding a link between that which might be legible in a landscape and that which is literalized on the page.

As an artefactual stone, one shaped by human hands, the model of the menhir is not strictly “accidental” or found, to borrow Knapp and Michaels’ terminology. Given the uncertainty of its significance, or the fact that its significance develops only phenomenologically, however, the form it models for lyric is one of indeterminate meaning. Like a menhir, Celan’s lyric can be motivated, intentional, crafted, and legible to a certain extent, while still innovative in form, challenging to the reader, and resistant to fixed structures of significance. Some studies of Celan’s works have fixated on their seeming hermeticism in terms of *interpretation*, but reading “Le Menhir,” one realizes that the text does not seek “a language sealed inside its own significations,” as Cioran said of Caillois’ writings on stone, but rather one in which significance does not arrive irrevocably sealed at the point of the possibility of *writing* (208).

“Le Menhir,” like the majority of Celan’s poems, is not overtly a post-Holocaust poem, and the same can be said of most of Sachs’ lyrics. However, the lyric mode it presents, forged by emulating the idea of a menhir’s legible uncertainty, recalls Celan’s well-known comments on the situation of writing lyric in his time. In his speech given upon accepting the Literature Prize of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen (1958), the same in which he borrows Mandelstam’s motif of poetry as a message in a bottle, Celan writes:

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

In this language I tried, during those years and the years after, to write poems: in order to speak, to orient myself, to find out where I was, where I was going, to chart my reality. (*Collected Prose*, 34)⁶⁰

Celan's comments do not doubt the possibility of writing post-Holocaust, but do admit language's "lack of answers" and "silence," and the fact that language "gave no words." Like the stone in "Stretto," which "does not fall into words," the menhir models a significance that defers becoming an answer. Emulating the mute silence of stone, lyric "went through" in such a way that one might nevertheless orient oneself in the textual terrain.⁶¹

LANGUAGE WANDERS: CELAN'S "ERRATIC"

If "Le Menhir" suggests a lyric in which meaning remains uncertain, then Celan's "Erratic" once again emulates stone in order to model one in which meaning wanders across discourses and contexts. Both poems are contained in *The No-One's Rose* (1963), although "Erratic" dates from 1961. Celan was occupied with the idea of a geological erraticism even earlier, in 1960, while writing his speech "The Meridian," delivered upon his receipt of the Büchner Prize. In a note drafted while composing the speech, Celan writes:

Who has already seen through before he perceives and looks at, to him the poem appears in all its—also to be understood in a geological sense—thickness; it fills itself with the darkness to what stands opposite it; an erratic language-block, it silences itself to you. It is the offense—even there

⁶⁰ "Erreichbar, nah und unverloren blieb inmitten der Verluste dies eine: die Sprache. Sie, die Sprache, blieb unverloren, ja, trotz allem. Aber sie mußte nun hindurchgehen durch ihre eigenen Antwortlosigkeiten, hindurchgehen durch furchtbare Verstummen, hindurchgehen durch die tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede. Sie ging hindurch und gab keine Worte her für das, was geschah; aber sie ging durch dieses Geschehen. Ging hindurch und durfte wieder zutage treten, 'angereichert' von all dem" (*GW* 3:185-186).

⁶¹ The question of locating oneself in geographic or literal terrain is a major theme in the "Bremen" speech.

it still gives you a chance. [...] The sole hope: that the poem could be there once more, erratic.⁶²

The notes to “The Meridian” are themselves quite erratic, scattered thoughts hastily typed on slips of paper, struck through and amended again and again.⁶³ The Latinate root of “erratic” carries a sense of roving and straying, of something that has departed from a given or set path, like an errant knight or a wandering mind. The inflection it has acquired over time, the meaning of “irregular” or “unpredictable,” has moved it closer to its lexical relative, “error” or *erratum*. Its consequent connotation is of something perhaps out of place, something that does not correspond to the normal order of things.

It is in this sense, however, that “erratic” belies its geological significance, something Celan’s note itself alludes to. An “erratic” stone (in German: *Erratischer Block*, “erratic block”) is one of a type not typical of the area in which it is found. Such a stone is uncommon, out of place; namely, one carried over distance and time by a creeping glacier, and ultimately deposited somewhere far from its origin.⁶⁴ A German synonym of the term, *der Findling*, evokes the plight of such a stone from an altogether estranged

⁶² Joris’ translation, modified (*The Meridian*, 97). “Wer schon durchschaut hat, ehe er wahrnimmt und anschaut, dem erscheint das Gedicht in seiner ganzen – auch im geologischen Sinne zu verstehenden – Mächtigkeit gegenüber; es füllt sich mit dem Dunkel des Dagegenstehenden; ein erratischer Sprachblock, schweigt es dich an. Es ist das Ärgernis – auch da noch gibt es dir eine Chance [...] die einzige Hoffnung: das Gedicht möchte noch einmal, erratisch, da sein” (*Die Gedichte*, 686). Compare to the following lines from the published speech: “Sondern aktualisierte Sprache, freigesetzt unter dem Zeichen einer zwar radikalen, aber gleichzeitig auch der ihr von der Sprache gezogenen Grenzen, der ihr von der Sprache erschlossenen Möglichkeiten eingedenk bleibenden Individuation” (*GW* 3:197).

⁶³ Though these notes have been as intensely catalogued and scrutinized as any of Celan’s writings, their relevance has been questioned because of their relative inconsequence. Indeed, were it not for this particular note’s use of the discourse of stone—its thickness and weight—to describe poetry, it too might seem like just another flimsy scrap soon to blow away in the winds of oblivion. Groves has rightfully questioned the legitimacy of identifying Celan’s texts as stones, given the inappropriateness “of every invocation of a ground” in his texts (469). I read these notes, and Celan’s lyrics, not as identifiable with stones, but as texts which draw on them as a model. In his own reading of “Erratic,” Groves too cites this particular note to “The Meridian.”

⁶⁴ Beringer-Murawski defines an “erratischer Block” as (synonymous with “Findling”): “großer ortsfremder Felsblock, der durch Gletscher oder Inlandeismassen von seinem Ursprungsgebiet zu seinem heutigen Fundort verfrachtet worden ist, z.B. im Pleistozän von Skandinavien nach Norddeutschland” (46).

perspective.⁶⁵ A *Findling* is something one can find (*finden*), for the stone is discoverable insofar as its status as a glacial deposit marks it as strange and notable. Yet *Findling* is also a term for an orphaned child—a foundling. By analogy, a stone carried by a glacier out of its place of origin and placed among others unlike it marks it as a type of orphaned mineral.⁶⁶ The erratic stone is thus legible within a landscape, distinguished from its surroundings by its physical characteristics, and defined by the same as something that has traveled a distance.⁶⁷

Celan's note borrows the notion of geological erraticism for a poetological purpose. The reference is strange; it remarks that the poem will appear in its geological "thickness," as an "erratic language block," to one who has already seen through before perceiving. Understanding *prior* to perception is a benefit here, in that it allows access to poem with qualities normally assigned to something as tangible as stone (density and thickness). However, what one finds is "darkness," a language that is silent, even an offence—yet this erraticism is also the "sole hope," paradoxically. Celan's note seems to describe an *almost* impossibly difficult situation, in terms that strongly echo the description of language in his Bremen speech.⁶⁸ Interpretation, as ordinarily understood, is enlightenment (the elimination of darkness), but perhaps also en-lighten-ment, a casting

⁶⁵ Günther, one of Celan's known sources of geological discourse, discusses "die Findlinge oder *erratischen Blöcke*" (132). The term *Findling* was also considered as a potential title for Celan's volume *Fadensonnen* (*Threadsunns*, 1968).

⁶⁶ For an illuminating discussion of how this polysemy is exploited in Heinrich von Kleist's aptly-named story of an adopted son, "Der Findling" (1811), see Wagner.

⁶⁷ Erratic blocks are often quite large and sometimes were deposited rather precariously, making their presence in a landscape all the more conspicuous, as is suggested by the well-known allusion to such a stone in Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence": "As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie / Couched on the bald top of an eminence; / Wonder to all who do the same espy, / By what means it could thither come, and whence" (quoted in Wyatt, 31). On Wordsworth and erratic blocks, see: Wyatt (31-32) and Heringman (30-53).

⁶⁸ Moreover, since the "Bremen" speech is highly indebted to Mandelstam and to the essay on Mandelstam that Celan was writing simultaneously, the notes to "The Meridian" and the lyrics of *The No-One's Rose* (dedicated, after all, to the Russian poet) demonstrate once again how integral Mandelstam's poetics of stone are to Celan's.

away of the heaviness of earthly confusion as one ascends toward the heights of understanding. Yet Celan's note about erraticism suggests that arriving at the text already laden with interpretation causes one to see the poem in density and darkness. Instead, he cites a hope that the poem would be willfully erratic and silent.

The notion of a poetic erraticism is carried through in Celan's works, ultimately deposited in the lyric "Erratic." An erratic stone legible within a landscape serves, in "Erratic," as the model for a wandering language within a textual terrain. Several types of what Jacques Derrida calls a "*spectral errancy of words*" are evident within "Erratic" (53).⁶⁹ *One transport of language is manifest in the poem's integration of geological discourse.* The petropoetic significance of the poem is ascertainable in its title (Lyon 313; Tobias, 48; Groves, 478). Yet fully realizing this aspect of the poem requires knowledge of geological discourse, as is the case for many of his other lyrics, although "Erratic" also alludes to its stony referent in the lines "The stone, once / close to the temples" ("Der Stein, / schläfenah einst") (*GW* 1:235). In this respect, "Erratic" again demonstrates Celan's extensive involvement with the specialized discourse of geology in his texts. A term like "erratic," which more easily bears a non-geological connotation, and which does not appear to be a neologism, is on one hand more readily understood, but on the other hand, knowledge of its geological sense also impacts the way in which the lyric is legible.

The lyric "Flickertree" ("Flimmerbaum"), which opens part two of *The No-One's Rose*, and immediately precedes "Erratic," asks "Do you know that I sang? / This – / O this Drift" "Weißt du noch, daß ich sang? / / Diese – / o diese Drift" (*GW* 1:233-234). The English term "drift" is used in the text, instead of the German equivalent, *Geschiebe*; it

⁶⁹ Derrida utilizes the phrase in his discussion of Celan's poem "And with the *Book of Tarussa* ("Und mit dem *Buch aus Tarussa*," with its epigraph from Marina Tsvetaeva, "Все поэты жи́ды" / "All poets are Jews"). See also Derrida's notion of a "planetary errancy" in relation to Celan's work (153).

refers, in geological contexts, to any material deposited by the movement of a glacier. In other words, the term drifts across languages from English to German, across discourses from science to poetry, and then the concept drifts from “Flicker Tree” to “Erratic.” Erraticism could be taken as a trope for the poetics of integrating geological discourse, for the specialized terminology is “out of place” in lyric. Brought into lyric, however, it once again indicates the utilization of the language of stone not to describe a landscape or particular stones, as geological discourse does, but to negotiate a textual terrain.

“Erratic” also implies that language becomes errant as it wanders across contexts. “The evenings bury themselves / Beneath your eye. The lyric cites syllables, “collected / by the lip” (“Mit der Lippe auf- / gesammelten Silben,” *GW* 1:235) whether from speech out in the world, or preserved in some way by the by the lips—petrified, perhaps. The lyric’s stanza elaborates on these “syllables” with an appositive, describing the collected sounds as a “beautiful, / noiseless roundness” (“schönes, / lautloses Rund”), which only underscores the identification of the syllables as erratic stones, collected in their silent roundness. These same syllables “help the creeping star into their midst” (“helfen dem Kriechstern / in ihre Mitte”). A creeping or wandering star is an archaism for planet, in reference to the—relatively erratic—movement of a planet across the night sky, as compared to a more stable star, as seen by the naked eye. The terminology in both English and German exemplifies the paradox of the at least dense and perhaps rocky planet being referred to as a star (*Stern*), the epitome of intangible light.⁷⁰ In other words, “Erratic” evidences an elision of the geological and astronomical.

⁷⁰ See also Celan’s “Allerseelen,” from *Sprachgitter*: “Findlinge, Sterne, / schwarz und voll Sprache” (*GW* 1:183). Lyon suggests that the *Kriechstern* “could be thought of as a comet, a cosmic form of rock transported far from its solar origins (*versprengten Sonnen*) just as the erratic boulders suggested but the title are conveyed great distances by ice” (313). Tobias also reads “Erratic” in terms of its figures of stars and wandering,

The wandering of language within “Erratic” occurs on the most literal of levels, as well. *Stern* is closely identified *Stein* (“stone”), phonetically, orthographically, and, in Celan’s poetics, figuratively. Just one letter separates *Stern* and *Stein*: a proximity even “close to the temples once” (“schlāfennah einst”), where *einst* (“once”) is itself a perfect anagram of *Stein*, continuing the linkage (Tobias, 53). The Biblical figure of Jacob, who dreamed of his ladder while resting his own temples on a stone pillow, later experienced his own transformation of name, becoming known as “Israel” (Genesis 28: 10-19).⁷¹ Though there is no specific reference to mysticism in these lines, one can also recognize an echo of the Kabbalistic notions of varying levels and interconnections of language made manifest in the combinations and recombination of letters; here, the emulation of an erratic stone casts a geopoetic model of wandering.⁷² These linguistic drifts are legible in the lyric insofar as it is a text—a written utterance, one embedded in a structure of references, both indigenous to Celan’s work, and to language at large.

Finally, “Erratic” demonstrates a lyric erraticism insofar as its referents are of indeterminate context(s). The poem begins in instability: “The evenings bury themselves / Beneath your eye” (“Die Abende graben sich dir / unders Aug”). “The evenings” are not locatable in any specific way, nor is the second-person addressee (there is no indication that it is the same as the second-person addressee of the eighth and eleventh lines, “my soul”). The subsequent references to “syllables,” “a creeping star,” the “stone,” and so on are both of unclear origin and of uncertain relation to one another. In

Structuralist Poetics, Culler argues that “play with personal pronouns and obscure deictic

situating it in relation to the linguistic and conceptual constellation of stones and stars (*Steine* and *Sterne*), the heavens, and mysticism, particularly Kabbalistic thought (47-55).

⁷¹ See Richard Beer-Hofmann’s play *Jaakobs Traum* (1918); its final scene portrays Jacob in the wilderness on the night of his dream, having a conversation with speaking stones.

⁷² This notion of literal wandering extends to the pseudonym Celan, an anagram that the poet formed from his given surname, Antschel (*Celan* would be pronounced *Chelan* in Romanian) (Groves, 479).

references which prevent the reader from constructing a coherent enunciative act is one of the principle ways of questioning the ordered world from which the ordinary communicative circuit assumes,” and that such devices are central to contemporary poetry (168-169). Primarily, they thwart the expectation a lyric as an organic whole, and the trend toward impersonalism correspondingly subverts the construction of “fictive personae to satisfy the demands of internal coherence and relevance” (169-170). Celan’s texts, like “Erratic,” would often seem to exemplify this trend, and his note to “The Meridian” suggests a similar concept, through its petrological comparisons. An “erratic” lyric constructed of references without clear internal coherence, one not easily situated within an imagined speech context, thwarts the expectations of how to read lyric.

READING IN AND OUT OF STONE

Sachs’ and Celan’s lyrics grapple with varying modes of the legibility and illegibility of stone, as emulated within lyric, encapsulating the tenuous yet indelible attempts to continue writing German lyric, or lyric at all. While they have this in common, the respective texts of each also evidence notable differences. Whether drawing abstracted references to geological discourse and Kabbalistic concepts, inverting established literary tropes, or exposing any of their harrowing and haunting evocations of silence, uncertainty, or compression, Celan’s texts suggest scattered mosaics that barely adhere, as it were, and only do so by the sheer force of their oblique perspectives. Certainly, any subjectivity reflected in these lyrics does not suggest a coherent lyric persona; they are written beyond the vocabulary of an individual, and beyond human frames of reference. Drawing upon various structures of meaning by which stone is figured as readable, ranging from the objective-scientific to the mystical, to the

phenomenological, Celan's texts forge their lyric vocabulary in conference with a legible minerality.

Aris Fioretos writes "only rarely is it pointed out that Celan's poems have already themselves problematized their own readability" ("Nothing," 158). While criticism often reads Sachs as a more transparent poet than Celan, as a voice of healing rather than hermeticism, I argue that her lyric poems are just as enriched by the enigmatic languages of stone as models of alternative legibilities. Sachs' texts, however, frequently build their readings out of more delineated references to stone, as in "Fleeing," "Chorus of Stones," and "The Archive," though those readings are no less estranging for it. There is a certain tangibility to these texts; though it is no easier to read Sachs' texts as the outpourings of a cohesive, singular lyric *persona* than is the case for Celan's, one might at least understand them as readings of particular stones held in the palm of an uncertain hand.

In this sense, Sachs' texts often gravitate toward *precious* stones, as we have seen in *Beryll* and "Then wrote the scribe of the Zohar"; this is far less often the case in Celan's work. Gemstones have particular cultural and symbolic values attached to them (not to mention economic ones) that in turn impact the types of legibility they exemplify. For example, Sachs' "Wordlessly she plays with an aquamarine" ("Wortlos spielt sie mit einem Aquamarin," *Noch feiert Tod das Leben*) models a reading of an aquamarine. Autobiographical readings of the poem point to lines like "a pledge of loyalty from long ago – / in this blue heaven lives a kiss of her beloved" ("aus dem Treugelöbnis ihrer Vorzeit – / dieser blaue Himmel ist von einem Kuß ihres Geliebten bewohnt") comparing them to the fact that Sachs received just such a precious stone from an admirer in her youth, and to the fact that aquamarine is an old symbol of a happy marriage (*NSW* 2:136, 334; Dinesen, 34). Yet the highly generalized "she" of the lyric is

also said to “listen to the blue language / of the years of light in myriad sparkles” (“horcht auf seine blaue Sprache / der Lichterjahre im Millionenfunkeln”). The stone offers a language that is “blue,” whereby a visual descriptor is applied to the aural, and the “Lichterjahre” propose a legible trace of deep time. In either case, notions of stone’s legibility are emulated in the lyric to provide its content, in such a way that its language is made in conference with the stone.

Similarly, Sachs’ earlier lyric poem “The Stone Collector” (“Der Steinsammler,” *In den Wohnungen des Todes*) again seems to lend itself to autobiographical readings. The text is a sort of description of a hypostatized person, not unlike some of Rilke’s lyrics from *New Poems* (for instance, “Spanish Dancer”). In a letter to Emilia Fogelklou-Norlind, Sachs writes that *the* stone collector, transformed into the lyric’s generalized figure, was an acquaintance of her father who “introduced him to the mysteries of stones” and from whom he acquired specimens, “including a rock crystal in which a bee was enclosed” (*NSW* 1:248). The lyric, in turn, would seem to reflect this reference in its first two stanzas:

Du hast der Erdenzeiten Stille
Gesammelt in den Steinen.
Wieviel Morgenröten im Berylle
Wieviel Fernen im Kristalle schienen

Mit der Biene, die auf einer Wicke
Abertausendjährgen Honig braute,
Doch Opal mit seinem Seherblicke
Längst dein Sterben dir schon anvertraute. (*NSW* 1:31)

In the stones, you have collected
The silence of earth’s ages.
How many early dawns gleam in the beryl
How much distance in the crystal

With the bee that brewed
The honey of millennia on a vetch plant,

But the opal, with its seer's look
Long since made you familiar with your death.⁷³

On the other hand, it is stone which, because of its various physical characteristics, can bear “the stillness of the earth’s ages,” or the “early dawns” that gleam in the beryl. It is stone which, as the lyric states in its final stanza, provides the “language of light out of [its] cracks” (“die Lichtersprache aus den Rissen”), recalling Caillois’ imaginative phenomenology of stone. The “language of light,” whereby the visual conveys the linguistic, echoes the “light years” of “Wordlessly she plays with an aquamarine,” and again points to the legibility of stone as an integral trope in these lyrics.

Finally, Sachs’ brief lyric “In this amethyst” (“In diesem Amethyst,” *Fahrt ins Staublose / Journey into the Dustless Realm*, 1960) likewise visits this set of ideas. Once again, there is a potential biographical referent: in her youth, Sachs was fascinated by a large amethyst geode (“almost ½ a meter and filled thick like a violet beet”) in her childhood home.⁷⁴ Yet again, the lyric suggests a reading into, and out of a stone—amethyst in this case:

In diesem Amethyst
sind die Zeitalter der Nacht gelagert
und eine frühe Lichtintelligenz
zündete die Schwermut an
die war noch flüssig
und weinte

Immer noch glänzt dein Sterben
hartes Veilchen (*NSW* 2:126)

The ages of night
are embedded in this amethyst
and an earlier intelligence of light
ignites the melancholy

⁷³ Trans. Timothy Bahti and Marilyn Sibley Fries, in West (95), slightly modified.

⁷⁴ “Besonders faszinierend war eine ungewöhnlich große Amethystdruse, ‘fast ½ Meter wie ein Veilchenbeet so dicht gefüllt’” (*NSW* 2:322-323).

which then still flowed
and wept

Your dying light still shines
hard violet (*O The Chimneys*, 203)

Amethyst, deep purple in color, does suggest both night and a hardened violet flower, in some Cailloisian way; at any rate, the lyric proposes the stone as that through which night, time, and mourning are made legible. The “ages of night,” for example, are embedded *in* the stone, while it also shines with a certain “earlier intelligence of light,” recalling the “light years” and “language of light” from Sachs’ earlier texts—a cool, detached perspective coming from within the stone.⁷⁵

Significantly, however, Sachs’ text exposes this language of stone written “in *this* amethyst,” pointing to a specific referent, one imaginable as cohesive and tangible, if nonhuman. The perspectives from which Sachs’ lyrics emulate the legibility of stone may frequently differ from the perspectives evident in Celan’s texts; the works of both, however, suggest that sites of alternative legibilities are revealed in “found” stone. Whereas ordinarily, stone is a paradigm of bare materiality and non-intentionality, Sachs’ and Celan’s poems read it as a profoundly rich model for lyric potentiality, effectively serving as a *tabula rasa* for the genre, unsullied by tainted language. The legibilities their texts emulate may depart from existing structures of significance (geology, the Kabbalah, the trope of the epitaph, etc.), or they may pursue more idiosyncratic, phenomenological readings, but in all cases these texts follow a vein of meaning-making for lyric in the wake

⁷⁵ Indeed, amethysts have a faint florescence (*NSW* 2:323). “In diesem Amethyst” might be read as a rewriting or revisitation of Sachs’ earlier lyric, “Im blauen Kristall” from *Und niemand weiß weiter*, which begins similarly, “Im blauen Kristall / die Zeit wartet,” and demonstrates comparable imagery of *Sehnsucht*, *Melancholie*, the *Nachtveilchen* and *versteinerte Träne* (*NSW* 2:59). Moreover, the immediately following poem, “Und der Perlpunkt der Ewigkeit” echoes the notion of *Lichtersprache* from “Der Steinsammler,” in its mentioning of “die Hieroglyphe des Lichtes” (*NSW* 2:59).

of the twentieth century's destructiveness that brought all possibilities of a meaningful future poetic language to the brink of eradication.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LANGUAGE OF THINGS AND THE LYRIC OF STONE (CONCLUSION)

In his seminal essay “Art as Device” (“Искусство как приём,” 1917), the Russian Formalist critic Viktor Shklovsky writes that the goal of art ought to be what he calls “estrangement” or “defamiliarization” (*остранение*). For Shklovsky, defamiliarization signifies a presentation of things as they are experienced rather than as they are assumed to be known. It “makes forms difficult,” snapping us out of our cliché understanding of things so that we encounter them anew. Art, in this sense, supplements experience, adding something to life. As Shklovsky writes, “that which is called art exists to return the sensation of life, to feel things, to make the stone stony.”¹

The preceding chapters of this dissertation have examined a range of lyric poems that defamiliarize stone, presenting it not merely as the epitome of silence, immutability, insignificance, or a crushing heaviness, but as a material that definitively impacts how language and subjectivity is formed within them. Stone, in these texts, does not impart a “sensation of life,” but rather a nonhuman, inanimate perspective that is brought to bear on lyric, leaving our understanding of *its* possibilities profoundly altered. From Rilke’s, Mandelstam’s, and Trakl’s early twentieth-century invocations of stone as mute indices of historical time and affect, to the later poetic abstractions of stone’s temporality and

¹ “И вот для того, чтобы вернуть ощущение жизни, почувствовать вещи, для того, чтобы делать камень каменным, существует то, что называется искусством” (Shklovsky, 13).

legibility in Mandelstam, Celan, and Sachs, time and again we find the most dense, intractable, and recalcitrant of things to be lifted aloft in lyric. What distinguishes the lyrics of stone—what marks them as a group of texts with deeply profound (even troubling) implications for our understanding of lyric—is that they are written, as it were, *with* the stone; it fundamentally influences how they characterize and present language. Stone, to use Shklovsky's phrase, makes lyric form difficult, defamiliarizes it, and causes us to reconsider the ideas of personhood, expression, feeling, and voice that we have traditionally attached to it. True, art may allow us to see the stoniness of the stone, but to write a language of stone astonishes us, shocking us out of entrenched notions of what we thought we knew about lyric. Studying the language of the petrological lyrics also prompts us to (re)consider how we think about things in language, about how it is that the silent and inanimate occupies our language at all. Reading these lyrics of stone with Chandos' emblematic communion with things in mind, one wonders how to define the translation of the mute language of things into the language of lyric.

Ultimately, answering this involves more than simply writing *about* stone, although as the thing-poems of Rilke in particular demonstrate, a great deal of conceptual ground is trod just in setting a thing—like a broken marble torso of Apollo—in lyric as a form worthy of intense study, thus opening up the possibility of understanding what it has to communicate back to us. Instead, one must think more about how things come to influence language, perhaps before one even reaches the point of describing them. Here is where defamiliarization enters the picture, for if the stone is silent, and its legibilities do not bear the text of any human language, then we are being asked to shift our idea of what stone is and what it can do. The recent work of political theorist Jane Bennett likewise utilizes estrangement as a tool to reconsider how we conceive of objects and their

powers. In *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010), she defines “vibrancy” and “vitality” as qualities of objects, writing that they signify

[T]he capacity of things—edibles, commodities, storms, metals—not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own. My aspiration is to articulate a vibrant materiality that runs alongside and inside humans. (viii)

I find Bennett’s concepts illuminating, because they give us a critical language with which to think about things as something more than entities imprisoned in passivity, and to articulate far more nuanced senses of the human and the nonhuman. What is missing here, however, is 1) a consideration of language’s role in mediating this newfound sense of materiality, and 2) a study of linguistic potential as one of the powers that things have “of their own.”² In analyzing the petrological lyrics in this dissertation, I propose one illustration of this possibility, by defining a series of lyric petrologies.

² Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter* largely overlooks any discussion of language (leaving a door open for further study, however), which is especially curious since some of her objects of analysis include literary texts (such as Franz Kafka’s “The Cares of a Family Man” / “Die Sorge des Hausvaters” about the creature-object known as Odradek). At times, however, Bennett does gesture toward questions regarding the writing of things: “What method could possibly be appropriate for the task of speaking a word for vibrant matter? How to describe without thereby erasing the independence of things? How to acknowledge the obscure but ubiquitous intensity of impersonal affect?” (xiii). She also raises the need to account for the position of a human writing about things: in defining vibrant materiality, she writes, “I court the charge of performative self-contradiction: is it not a human subject who, after all, is articulating this theory of vibrant matter? Yes and no, for I argue that what looks like a performative contradiction may well dissipate if one considers revisions in operative notions of matter, life, self, self-interest, will, and agency” (ix).

The theoretical perspectives of Object Oriented Ontology, related to Bennett’s ideas, similarly overlook matters of language in their focus on independent ontologies of objects and a non-relational understanding of materiality. For one articulation of an Object Oriented literary theory, see *New Literary History* 43:2 (2014), which contains articles by leading proponents of OOO, Timothy Morton and Graham Harman, as well as a response by Bennett. For a critique of OOO vis-à-vis language, see Cole’s “A Call to Things,” where he writes that while new vitalism, Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory, and object oriented ontology “all work hard not to project the human into the heart of things, in their attempt to respect the indifference of objects in themselves, they do so anyway by dint of the ancient Logos principle by which things call out to us and speak their being. This principle is, I will show, a convenient fiction in this new work, enabling the philosopher to hear the call of things and to speak to and for them, despite the new rule that we cannot think of objects as being-for-us and must reject older philosophies smacking of “presence” and traditional ontology or ontotheology” (106-107).

A PRISM OF LYRIC READINGS: MANDELSTAM'S "I SHALL PERFORM A SMOKY RITE"

The potential of stone to impact lyric language can be seen even in a text that on the surface seems to conform to the subject-persona model of lyric, in which an individualized subjectivity encounters matter to be described, such as Mandelstam's late poem, the brief "I shall perform a smoky rite" (1935):

Исполню дымчатый обряд
В опале предо мной лежат
Морского лета земляники —
Двуискренние сердолики
И муравьиный брат — агат.
Но мне милей простой солдат
Морской пучины — серый, дикий,
Которому никто не рад. (СС 3:99)

I shall perform a smoky rite
In the opal before me lie
The strawberries of a seaside's summer—
Cornelians cracked in two
And the ant-like brother, agate.
But a simple soldier is dearer to me,
one from the sea-side gulf:
Grey and wild, nothing to anyone else.

One sees from its first line that this poem deploys the first-person singular pronoun, and thus it lends itself to readings based on the persona model. Such a reading might view the short lyric as what appears to be a recollection (as Wordsworth might say) of a summertime by the sea. Comparisons mark emotional resonances between the stones and the recollection: cracked carnelians—a red, semi-precious stone—recall the "strawberries of summer." Thus, the organic and ephemeral is memorialized in the inorganic, enduring stone. An agate is said to be an "ant-like brother," a comparison that seems less obvious and more idiosyncratic. A less precious stone, one "grey and wild" is "a simple soldier," one indistinguishable from the ranks of others littering the seaside.

These comparisons couch the lyric in the language of the reflective persona-subject; research would also uncover autobiographical readings of the poem. As I discuss in chapter three, in her memoir *Second Book* (*Вторая книга*, 1974, published in English as *Hope Abandoned*), Mandelstam's wife Nadezhda recalls how Osip would gather stones (agate, cornelians, opals, etc.) from the shore of the Black Sea while they were living in Koktebel and while Osip was writing both "I shall perform a smoky rite" and his essay "Conversation about Dante" (478-479). Indeed, in the essay on Dante, which mentions the smokiness of stones, Mandelstam confesses that he "openly consulted with chalcedony, cornelians, gypsum crystals, spar, quartz, and so on," while reading the *Divine Comedy* (CPL, 438).³ An autobiographical reading of "I shall perform a smoky rite" might thus focus on how the text relates to the Mandelstams' own recollections, and contextualize it thusly.

On the other hand, one can see how stone influences the very possibility of Mandelstam's lyric. The qualities of the stones themselves—color, form, etc.—allow the comparisons to be made; the stones are tangible and lasting, existing before the time of human experience that is recollected in the text, yet at the same time enabling it. Moreover, the terminology of stone empowers the form of "I shall perform a smoky rite." The comparison of the "agate" (*agam, agat*) and "ant-like brother" (*муравьиный брат, muravyunyj brat*) is facilitated by the coincidence of their rhyme in Russian. Likewise, the closeness of the Russian for "opal" (*опал, opal*) and "disgrace" (*опала, opala*) permit the ambiguity of the phrase *в опале / в опале*, so that the recollections are either there "in the opal" or "in disgrace," depending on how the line is read. Like Bennett's consideration of

³ "Я откровенно советовался с халцедонами, сердоликами, кристаллическими гипсами, шпатами, кварцами и т.д." (CC 3:256).

how a nonhuman thing such as omega-3 fatty acids can alter human moods, the inorganic and inanimate stones in “I shall perform a smoky rite” are the basis of reflection; lyric language conforms to them, so that they have a power as essential to the text as the human language that comprises it (vii).

ON BENJAMIN AS SUCH AND ON THE BENJAMIN OF LYRIC

The lyrics by Rilke, Trakl, Mandelstam, Celan, and Sachs, as I have suggested throughout this study, forefront a range of lyric petrologies—means by which stone is written into lyric (writing *to* stone, *about* stone, *in terms of* stone, and *as* stone) in such a way that alternative modes of lyric subjectivity are formed. One can add that for lyric petrologies to be formed, there must be languages of stone that call to be written in human language.

These terms—“languages of stone” and “human language”—are an intentional response to Walter Benjamin’s theorization of language, particularly that in his essay “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” (“Über die Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen,” 1916). Abstruse as this essay is, it is an extraordinarily rich theoretical meditation on how mute, nonhuman nature communicates itself in language. To conclude this dissertation, I will discuss aspects of this text (making reference to related works by Benjamin, particularly “The Storyteller”), followed by a reading of Celan’s “Mandorla” in the light of the concept of the language of things.

“On Language as Such” defines, in part, what Benjamin terms the language of things—not an assertion that nonhuman entities actually speak in the colloquial sense of the word, but rather an account of how mute creation communicates itself to us, and is then capable of being expressed in human language. The essay is not a consideration of

poetry (nor of stone, though “The Storyteller” does turn attention to it), but in reading through it, I ask how its concept of the language of things can be transposed as the languages of stone exemplified in the lyrics of this study. In other words, I investigate what it is like to read “On Language as Such” as a work of lyric theory.

Benjamin’s writings continue to wield enormous influence on literary and cultural studies, and lyric studies are no exception. In a few substantial essays, Benjamin focuses on lyric; other writings have also indirectly shaped how lyric is understood in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, through their influence on other theorists, among them Adorno. “Two Poems by Hölderlin: ‘The Poet’s Courage’ and ‘Timidity’” (“Zwei Gedichte von Hölderlin. ‘Dichtermut’ und ‘Blödigkeit,’” 1914) and “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” (“Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire,” 1939), for example, exemplify Benjamin’s method in thinking through and about lyric, whereby close readings of specific texts provide occasions for developing critical concepts, which are then turned back upon the texts as a way of understanding them.⁴ I propose that the same method arises out of “On Language as Such,” if one brings Benjamin’s concept of the language of things to bear on lyric.

⁴ “Two Poems by Hölderlin” attempts to define *das Gedichtete* or “the poetized,” a concept that gestures toward the indivisibility of form and content and is a necessity for both poetic creation and critical analysis. As Hanssen indicates in her detailed study of Benjamin’s essay, the concept of “the poetized” reemerges in Adorno’s own remarkable essay on Hölderlin, “Parataxis” (1963) (“‘Dichtermut’ and ‘Blödigkeit,’” 787). “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” discusses Baudelaire’s work critically in relation to a critical analysis of particular aspects of life in the era of modern capitalism, such as the urban crowd, the economics of book selling and book reading, and the figure of the *flâneur*. At the same time, it seeks to distinguish two terms for experience, *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, and to develop a notion of *correspondences* based on Baudelaire’s poem of the that name.

Benjamin’s essay “The Task of the Translator” (“Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers,” 1923) is recognized as a foundational work in modern translation studies, yet it is worth remembering that it too is connected to considerations of lyric. The essay was first published as the introduction to Benjamin’s own translation into German of Baudelaire’s *Tableaux Parisiens* from *Les fleurs du Mal*. One might wonder if the text would have the same force were it not written about lyric texts—that is, if it had not developed out of Benjamin’s task to elucidate Baudelaire’s “poetized” through a consideration of translation.

“On Language as Such” originated in a letter to Benjamin’s friend Gershom Scholem, at a time when both were students, stemming from their mutual interest in what was originally conceived as an exploration of the relationship between mathematics and language (Ng, 436; Fenves, 131). The text foreshadows the mystical interests that would become amplified in the later works of both authors; in the end, mysticism dominated the writing of “On Language as Such” as well, which became, for Benjamin, a “little treatise” on language (Fenves, 131).⁵ The essay is structured around a reading of the first chapters of Genesis, although, as Benjamin states emphatically, it is not meant as an explication of the text; rather, he thinks *with* the Biblical text, drawing upon it as an occasion for his meditations on language. Working with the Genesis creation story, “On Language as Such” defines several types of language: the originary, divine word which named creation into being (which would be of primary importance in Scholem’s later Kabbalistic studies), human language, which gives names to what is created (exemplified by the figure of Adam), and the language of things, according to which nature communicates itself. Consequently, the language *about* things as developed in human language is a mediation or translation of the language of things.

The distinctions between these types of language are a major aspect of Benjamin’s argument, for they stake the implicit claim that language is not solely a human domain. The text begins by declaring that “[e]very expression of human mental life can be understood as a kind of language,” and thus, one can speak of distinct languages of music, technology, law, etc. (62).⁶ A few lines down, however, Benjamin broadens this statement:

⁵ Other studies of the essay have focused on its mystical aspects, and its relation to figures like Scholem, Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, etc. See: Beaver, Düttmann, and Handelman.

⁶ “Jede Äußerung menschlichen Geisteslebens kann als eine Art der Sprache aufgefasst werden” (GS 2.1: 140).

The existence of language, however, is coextensive not only with all the areas of human mental expression in which language is always in one sense or another inherent, but with absolutely everything. There is no event or thing in either animate or inanimate nature that does not in some way partake of language, for it is in the nature of each one to communicate its mental contents. This use of the word “language” is in no way metaphorical. (62)⁷

This extension of language beyond the colloquial sense of human speech and writing is the bold assertion of Benjamin’s essay. In the course of the text, he comes to explain how “mental expression” (*Geistesäußerung*) and “mental content” (*geistiger Inhalt*) refer to how both animate and inanimate nature communicate themselves; for nonhuman nature, this involves the way in which things are communicated through human language.⁸

As a first stage in this explanation, “On Language as Such” clarifies its assertion that all things partake in language. The essay’s argument is not that things such as mountains, lamps, and foxes actually *speak* to us, in the sense of verbal communication. Rather, things communicate to humans in the sense that human language is called to name them; as a corollary, the way in which things are named is the expression of the human itself (64/*GS* 2.1: 143). In our need to think, speak, and write about things, as they are brought into our sphere of language, we experience and witness how they are communicated to us.

For “On Language as Such,” Genesis provides the most compelling account of this process, by ascribing the originary, creative word to God, and the task of naming

⁷ “Das Dasein der Sprache erstreckt sich aber nicht nur über alle Gebiete menschlicher Geistesäußerung, der in irgendeinem Sinn immer Sprache innewohnt, sondern es erstreckt sich auf schlechthin alles. Es gibt kein Geschehen oder Ding weder in der belebten noch in der unbelebten Natur, das nicht in gewisser Weise an der Sprache teilhätte, denn es ist jedem wesentlich, seinen geistigen Inhalt mitzuteilen. Eine Metapher aber ist das Wort ‘Sprache’ in solchem Gebrauche durchaus nicht” (*GS* 2.1: 140-141).

⁸ In a “universe” she describes as “psychotopographic,” Nelson writes in response to Benjamin’s “On Language as Such,” “language is also subject to transformation, and its disintegration from a vehicle for recognizable human communication into something ‘other’—both divine and demonic—also signals the shift into the transcendental world of merged subject and object”; this recalls Buber’s experience with the mica chip, I would add (193).

creation to Adam (metonymically, humankind). Benjamin writes that the Biblical text considers that the latter “is invested with the *gift* of language and is elevated above nature” (68/*GS* 2.1: 148).⁹ Benjamin conceives of the Adamic confrontation of the material world explicitly in terms of translation: “The translation of the language of things into that of man is not only a translation of the mute into the sonic; it is also the translation of the nameless into name” (70).¹⁰ The “gift” (*Gabe*) of language thus becomes the means of completing the “task” (*Aufgabe*) of naming, as Benjamin describes it: writing of “the task that God expressly assigns to man himself: that of naming things,” he states that “[i]n receiving the unspoken nameless language of things and converting it by name into sounds, man performs this task” (70/*GS* 2.1: 151). In its terminology and concepts, then, “On Language as Such” foreshadows his later essay “The Task of the Translator” (“Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers”).

As Benjamin asserts, the essay is more than an explication of Genesis; spurred by its ideas about naming, translation, and the communication of mute nature, he proceeds to a more general account of the language of things, and considers more specific examples of what it might look like. At the beginning of the essay, Benjamin writes that “It is possible to talk about a language of music and sculpture, about a language of justice,” and so on (62).¹¹ After the essay’s lengthy explanation of how this is not meant to signify a language *about* music, sculpture, justice, and so on, but rather specific content

⁹ “Es ist in dieser zweiten Schöpfungsgeschichte die Erschaffung des Menschen nicht durch das Wort geschehen: Gott sprach – und es geschah –, sondern diesem nicht aus dem Worte geschaffenen Menschen wird nun die Gabe der Sprache beigelegt, und er wird über die Natur erhoben” (*GS* 2.1: 148). For a study that explicitly examines this idea of the “gift of language” and translation, see Düttmann (for example, 35-38).

¹⁰ “Die Übersetzung der Sprache der Dinge in die des Menschen ist nicht nur Übersetzung des Stummen in das Lauthafte, sie ist die Übersetzung des Namenlosen in den Namen” (*GS* 2.1: 151).

¹¹ “Man kann von einer Sprache der Musik und der Plastik reden, von einer Sprache der Justiz” (*GS* 2.1: 140).

communicated by these things, Benjamin returns to such examples shortly before closing the essay:

There is a language of sculpture, of painting, of poetry. Just as the language of poetry is partly, if not solely, founded on the name language of man, it is very conceivable that the language of sculpture or painting is founded on certain kinds of thing-language, that in them we find a translation of the language of things into an infinitely higher language, which may still be of the same sphere. We are concerned here with nameless, nonacoustic languages, languages issuing from matter; here we should recall the material community of things in their communication. (73).¹²

Benjamin's examples here of languages of things—sculpture, painting, and poetry (*Poesie*)—are instructive, as two are categorically nonverbal. Sculpture and painting, he contends, are founded on kinds of thing-language (*Dingsprache*) and are then translated into “higher language” in such a way that we can verbalize them, can speak and write about them. As for the verbal art of poetry, Benjamin suggests that it is founded on human “name language” (*Namensprache*), though perhaps only partially (“[...] wenn nicht allein, so doch jedenfalls mit fundiert ist [...]”). The argument in “On Language as Such” leaves open the possibility that the “nameless, nonacoustic languages, languages issuing from matter,” might be translated into poetry, and thus poetry would be partially founded on the language of things.

BENJAMIN'S STONES

Were one to replace “poetry” in the passage above with “human language,” one

¹² „Es gibt eine Sprache der Plastik, der Malerei, der Poesie. So wie die Sprache der Poesie in der Namensprache des Menschen, wenn nicht allein, so doch jedenfalls mit fundiert ist, ebenso ist es sehr wohl denkbar, daß die Sprache der Plastik oder Malerei etwa in gewissen Arten von Dingsprachen fundiert sei, daß in ihnen eine Übersetzung der Sprache der Dinge in eine unendlich viel höhere Sprache, aber doch vielleicht derselben Sphäre, vorliegt. Es handelt sich hier um namenlose, unakustische Sprachen, um Sprachen aus dem Material; dabei ist an die materiale Gemeinsamkeit der Dinge in ihrer Mitteilung zu denken” (*GS* 2.1: 156).

could consider how Benjamin's suggestion would imply that language in general could be, or ought to be, or simply *is* beholden to the language of things. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, "On Language as Such" helps to characterize the operations by which stone so diversely and definitively impacts the writing of lyric by Rilke, Trakl, Mandelstam, Celan, and Sachs. While Benjamin's essay does not discuss the specific possibility of a language of stone as an instance of the language of things, the works of these poets suggest different forms it could take: the absorption of ideas about how stone communicates alternative temporalities, legibilities, and modes of address.

Moreover, Benjamin is highly attentive to the communicative possibilities of stone in other writings, including his rejected *Habilitationschrift*, later published as *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (*Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 1924/1928), and the essay "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Work of Nikolai Leskov" ("Der Erzähler: Betrachtungen zum Werk Nikolai Lesskows," 1936). In the text on Baroque-era tragic drama, Benjamin examines stone as one of three distinctive figures of melancholia in the period, together with the dog and the sphere. Greatly influenced by the iconic representation of all three figures in Albrecht Dürer's engraving *Melancholia I* (1519), Benjamin understood stone to signify *gravitas*, the virtue of seriousness, substance, and depth, through its qualities of recalcitrance, heaviness, and density.¹³ The figure of stone is significant in this sense for not only symbolizing "the darker, earthbound side of melancholic disposition," but because the very legibility of stone as such a sign also implies that human mental and linguistic being could be drawn closer toward the mute and recalcitrant stone (Hanssen,

¹³ The discussion of the stone and other emblems of melancholy is found at the end of the second section of *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. As Hanssen points out, Benjamin was influenced by Panofsky and Saxl's readings of Dürer's *Melancholia I* (*Benjamin's Other History*, 159). Benjamin was perhaps also influenced in his study of these figures of melancholy by the related works *St. Jerome in his Study* (*Der heilige Hieronymus im Gehäus*, 1519) and *Knight, Death, and the Devil* (*Ritter, Tod und Teufel*, 1513).

Benjamin's Other History, 158).

In “The Storyteller,” Benjamin moves closer to thinking about a language of stone, and to concepts first explored in “On Language as Such.” The essay meditates on the confrontation of the storytelling-chronicle tradition and modern technologized narrative. It originally appeared as the introduction to a German translation of tales by the iconoclastic nineteenth-century Russian author Leskov, whose own work, influenced by the fable and folktale, stands distinctly apart from the psychological realism of his contemporaries like Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky. Twice within “The Storyteller,” Benjamin turns attention to Leskov’s story “The Alexandrite: A Natural Fact in a Mystic Light” (“Александрит: Натуральный факт в мистическом освещении,” 1884). Alexandrite is a type of chrysoberyl known for changing its color depending upon whether it is seen in natural or artificial light. It was discovered in Russia during the reign of Tsar Alexander II (1818-1881), and named in his honor. The story tells of a German jeweler, Wenzel, who is asked by the narrator to work with a piece of alexandrite he had purchased. Wenzel obsesses over the narrator’s stone, convinced that it has a consciousness of its own, and that it is even prophetic. Benjamin’s essay quotes Wenzel’s ecstatic response to the alexandrite:

Look, here it is, the prophetic Russian stone! O crafty Siberian. It was always green as hope and only toward evening it was suffused with blood. It was that way from the beginning of the world, but concealed itself for a long time, lay hidden in the earth, and permitted itself to be found only on the day when Czar Alexander was declared of age [...]. Just look; what a stone! A green morning is in it and a bloody evening... This is fate, the fate of noble Czar Alexander! (107)¹⁴

¹⁴ “Schaut her, hier ist er, der prophetische russische Stein...! Oh, verschlagener Sibirier! immer war er grün wie die Hoffnung und erst gegen Abend überströmte ihn das Blut. Vom Ursprung der Welt ab war er so, aber er versteckte sich lange und lag verborgen in der Erde und erlaubte erst, daß man ihn am Tage der Volljährigkeitserklärung des Zaren Alexander finde [...]. Schauen Sie doch nur, was für ein Stein! Ein grüner Morgen ist in ihm und ein blutiger Abend... Dies ist das Schicksal, das Schicksal des edlen Zaren Alexander!” (GS 2.2: 463).

The fate of Tsar Alexander that Wenzel refers to is the assassination of the emperor in 1881, a few years before Leskov's story was written, and just prior to the time in which the text is set. Much like the red cornelians compared to strawberries in Mandelstam's "I shall perform a smoky rite," the physical aspect of the stone's coloration is taken as a legible sign; the fact that the alexandrite appears greenish in daylight and reddish in artificial light at night is taken by Wenzel to be a prophetic sign of the Tsar's bloody death. The alexandrite, in other words, is made legible to Wenzel, communicating a prophesy that was evident "from the beginning of the world," in the deepnes of geological time, but only revealed within the scope of human history at the time of Alexander II.

Benjamin remarks that "The Alexandrite" "transports the reader" to a different temporality, and to a mode of being in which the human and the mineral would be conjoined. Again quoting from Leskov's story, Benjamin's essay characterizes this sense of time as one "when the stones in the womb of the earth and the planets at celestial heights were still concerned with the fate of men, and not today when both in the heavens and beneath the earth everything has grown indifferent to the fates of the sons of men and no voice speaks to them from anywhere, let alone does their bidding" (96).¹⁵ Recalling "On Language as Such," Benjamin's later essay becomes interested in the idea that mute nature—here, the stone—would communicate to humans. However, "The Storyteller" reads this possibility in the light of its argument about the modern decay of the art of storytelling and its attendant type of experience, highlighting the passage from "The Alexandrite" which states that in modernity, "there are a lot of new stones, all measured

¹⁵ "Jene Zeit' [...] 'da noch die Steine im Schoße der Erde und die Planeten in Himmelshöhen sich um das Schicksal der Menschen kümmerten, und nicht etwa heutzutage, da sowohl in den Himmeln als auch unter der Erde alles gegen das Schicksal der Menschensöhne gleichgültig geworden ist und ihnen von nirgendwoher mehr eine Stimme spricht oder gar Gehorsam wird'" (GS 2.2; 453).

and weighed and examined for their specific weight and density, but they no longer proclaim anything to us, nor do they bring us any benefit. Their time for speaking with men is past” (96).¹⁶ In other words, the imposition of a factual, information-based way of seeing the world (rather than a mystical one) impedes the mute communication that stone would have with humans.¹⁷

Later in “The Storyteller,” Benjamin returns to “The Alexandrite,” now clarifying his reading of the tale as one that raises the possibility of communication with nonhuman nature. He writes:

The lower Leskov descends on the scale of created things the more obviously does his way of viewing things approach the mystical. [...] To be sure, only a few have ventured into the depths of inanimate nature, and in modern narrative literature there is not much in which the voice of the anonymous storyteller, who was prior to all literature, resounds so clearly as it does in Leskov’s story “The Alexandrite.” (106-107)¹⁸

Then, referring to the way in which “The Alexandrite” reads the titular stone as one communicating a prophesy, Benjamin remarks: “The mineral is the lowest strata of created things. For the storyteller, however, it is directly joined to the highest. To him it is granted to see in this chrysoberyl a natural prophecy of petrified, lifeless nature concerning the historical world in which he himself lives” (107).¹⁹ Hanssen writes of Benjamin’s treatment of Leskov’s story that it proposes “a form of ethical contemplation

¹⁶ “[...] es gibt auch eine Menge neuer Steine, alle gemessen und gewogen und auf ihr spezifisches Gewicht und ihre Dichte hin geprüft, aber sie verkünden uns nichts mehr und bringen auch keinerlei Nutzen. Ihre Zeit mit den Menschen zu sprechen ist vorüber” (GS 2.2: 453).

¹⁷ Hanssen describes this as “nature before it was named and overnamed (*übernennen*) by human language” (*Benjamin’s Other History*, 158).

¹⁸ “Je tiefer Lesskow auf der kreatürlichen Stufenreihe herniedersteigt, desto offenkundiger nähert sich seine Anschauungsweise der mystischen. [...] Freilich haben nur wenige sich in die Tiefe der unbelebten Natur gewagt, und es gibt in der neueren Erzählungsliteratur nicht vieles, in dem die Stimme des namenlosen Erzählers, der vor allem Schrifttum gewesen ist, so vernehmbar nachklingt, wie in der Lesskowschen Geschichte ‘Der Alexandrit’” (GS 2.2: 462-462).

¹⁹ “Die steinerne ist die unterste Schicht der Kreatur. Dem Erzähler ist sie jedoch an die oberste unmittelbar angeschlossen. Ihm ist es gegeben, in diesem Halbedelstein, dem Pyrop, eine natürliche Prophezeiung der versteinerten, unbelebten Natur auf die geschichtliche Welt zu erblicken, in der er selber lebt” (GS 2.2: 463).

that ultimately was meant to transcend the self-absorption of melancholia,” which was represented by stone in Benjamin’s study of the Baroque German tragic drama, “and, with it, the restrictive confines of a subjectivity turned inward” (*Benjamin’s Other History*, 5). This stepping out of the confines of the strictly demarcated subject hinges upon the ability of a figure like Wenzel to “listen” for the communicative potential of nonhuman nature, but also upon the fact that that potential would exist in the first place—thus, to hearken back to “On Language as Such,” that there would be a recognizable language of things, and in “The Alexandrite,” one of stone.

While the essay on Leskov is concerned with narrative prose, it speaks meaningfully to the possibility of a lyric subjectivity intimately familiar with stone, in its consideration of a subjectivity opened and attuned to the “mental being” of matter. In “On Language as Such,” Benjamin writes that “[i]t is fundamental that this mental being communicates itself in language and not through language. Languages, therefore, have no speaker, if this means someone who communicates through these languages” (63).²⁰ To graft this onto a theory of lyric, if the language of lyric has no speaker, then models of reading lyric texts as the voice of a real or imagined speaker do no service to the uncanniness of that language.

In exemplifying the way that stone communicates in language, the petrological lyrics by Rilke, Trakl, Mandelstam, Celan, and Sachs deemphasize the individual subject. Texts like Mandelstam’s “Notre Dame,” Rilke’s “Archaic Torso of Apollo,” and Trakl’s “Bright Spring,” demonstrate that even when writing about works of stone that bear

²⁰ “Es ist fundamental zu wissen, dass dieses geistige Wesen sich in der Sprache mitteilt und nicht durch die Sprache. Es gibt also keinen Sprecher der Sprachen, wenn man damit den meint, der durch diese Sprachen sich mitteilt” (*GS* 2.2: 142).

recognizable traits of human history and form, their lyric subjectivity is formed in confrontation with stone's resistance, with the recognition of these crafted forms' eventual erosion and return to their underlying materiality, and an awareness of how stone will vastly outlast the human. Writing *in terms of* stone, poetic and poetological texts by Celan and Mandelstam draw upon geological discourse to explore stone as a model for alternative lyric temporalities. In Celan's case in particular, the abstract, impersonal, and highly specialized terminology of the earth sciences suggests a lyric vocabulary that exceeds any conceivable singular subject. In Celan's and Sachs' texts of the 1950s and 1960s, stone models alternative legibilities, according to the domains of geology, mysticism, and phenomenology. In emulating these, their lyrics write *as* stone, producing a language simulating modes of signification that likewise cannot be ascribed to an expressive persona.

A WORD IN THE HOLLOW: CELAN'S "MANDORLA"

No text highlights the strange line between a language which communicates stone and a language in which stone communicates (as Benjamin would put it) so strikingly as Celan's "Mandorla." The lyric is like a riddle; it is simultaneously informed by stone and evokes the absence of stone as such in the text itself, evoking the sheer strangeness of writing the thing that is not *there* in the poem, yet nevertheless occupies its language. The poem contains three stanzas of parallel structure along with two verbal counterpoints.

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 Auge?
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. (GW 1:244)

In the almond — what stands in the almond?
Nothingness.
What stands in the almond is nothingness.
There it stands and stands.

In nothingness — who stands there? The King.
There stands the King, the King.
There he stands and stands.

Jew's curl, you'll not turn grey.

And your eye — whither stands your eye?
Your eye stands before the almond.
Your eye, it stands before nothingness.
It stands king.
So it stands and stands.

Human curl, you'll not turn grey.
Empty almond, royal-blue.

Mandorla alludes to religious and mystical traditions, to the geode (or *mandelstein*, “almond-stone”), and to Celan’s poetic brother Mandelstam, to whom he dedicated *The No-One’s Rose*.²¹ *Mandorla* is Italian for “almond,” and in Christian symbolism of the Middle Ages, the mandorla is an almond-shaped enclosure that would surround a representation of a saint or other religious figure, like full-body halo. The frame of reference in “Mandorla,”

²¹ “Mandorla” may also reflect on a previous poem by Celan, as is often the case in his works; in this instance, to his “Zähle die Mandeln” from *Mohn und Gedächtnis*, written before scholars are certain that he had read Mandelstam.

however, is not Christian iconography of the Middle ages, but Jewish symbolism and the context of post-Holocaust writing. The almond, for instance, brings to mind the staff of Moses' brother Aaron, which in Numbers 17:8 is said to miraculously blossom almond buds as a sign of the right of the tribe of Levi to assume priesthood.²² Alternatively, the first counterpoint line, appearing after the second stanza, states “Jew’s curl, you’ll not turn gray,” calling to mind the “ashen hair” of “Shulamith” from Celan’s well-known “Death Fugue” (“Dein aschenes Haar Sulamith,” *GW* 1:39), his lyric that most overtly responds to the Holocaust. In the second lyrical counterpoint, the line is reiterated as “Human curl, you’ll not turn gray,” and the act of explicitly stating *human* lock of hair turns the phrase towards the uncanny—having to call it human at all signals the encroachment of inhumanity in the twentieth century. In the image of hair of those who would die before their time, before it would turn grey, one finds a stark contrast to the notion of *mandorla* as almond, a seed of life and growth. It is also a refutation of the notion of *mandorla* as the icon of an immortalized saint, or of the blossoming affirmation of Aaron’s staff; what is found in the almond is here said to be “nothingness.”

Such refutation is thoroughly present in “Mandorla.” “What stands in the almond?,” the lyric asks in its first stanza, and answers its own question, reiterating it for confirmation: “Nothingness. / What stands in the almond is nothingness. / There it stands and stands.” Finding nothing in what are traditionally symbols of religious affirmation suggests theological doubt. The second stanza probes this apparent void: “In nothingness — who stands there? The King.” Moreover, “Mandorla” indexes the

²² In “Eine Gauner- und Ganovenweise gesungen zu Paris Emprès Pontoise von Paul Celan aus Czernowitz bei Sadagora,” Celan alludes to the blooming almonds as well as to related word-play: “Denn es blühte der Mandelbaum. / Mandelbaum, Bandelmaum. / Mandeltraum, Trandelmaum. / Und auch der Machandelbaum. / Chandelbaum. // Heia. / Aum” (*GW* 1: 229-230).

negation that is an aspect of *The No-One's Rose* as a whole, gestured toward in the collection's title and reflected in many of its lyrics, like "Radix, Matrix," which states: "as one speaks to stone, as / you / with my hands grope into there, / and into nothing, such / is what is here" (*Poems of Paul Celan*, 165).²³

The latter echo is hardly coincidental, and directs attention to the petrological connotations evident in "Mandorla." *Mandelstein* or "almond-stone" is another term for the geode or *Druse*, because the stones, although typically rough and dull on the outside, are hollow and covered in crystals on their interiors, and often resemble almonds in their shape, especially when cracked open to expose their hollows. Already hinted at in "Radix, Matrix," with its lines about speaking to stone and reaching into its nothingness [*das Nichts*], "Mandorla" evokes the hollow geode, within which one finds nothingness [*das Nichts*]. Just as the named absence, "nothingness," of "Mandorla" indexes *The No-One's Rose* as a whole, the *Mandelstein*/almond-stone indexes the collection's addressee, Mandelstam, whose own name forms the German compound "almond trunk" or "almond stem" (*Mandel-stamm*). It is not certain that Mandelstam was aware of the close link between his own name and the *Mandelstein*/almond stone, although Pollak has suggested that geological sources he must have consulted do elaborate on this particular etymology (20-21).²⁴ As Pollak deems him, "Mandelstam the Reader" *might* have come across the connection between his own name and the *Mandelstein*; Celan, the avid reader of geological literature, certainly did.

²³ "Ja / wie man zum Stein spricht, wie / du / mit meinen Händen dorthin / und ins Nichts greifst, so / ist, was hier ist"; *GW I*: 239-240). The title of *Die Niemandrose* is also a reference to the epigraph on Rilke's gravestone, which reads: "Rose, you pure contradiction, desire / to be no-one's sleep among so many / eyelids" ("Rose, du reiner Widerspruch, Lust / Niemandes Schlaf zu sein unter soviel / Lidern"). See: Lyon, "Rilke und Celan" (205).

²⁴ Mandelstam alludes to geodes in "Conversation about Dante" and in his essay in the essay "Around the Naturalists" ("Вокруг натуралистов"), where he comments on the German naturalist Peter Simon Pallas, who conducted expeditions in Russia.

“Mandorla” synthesizes the imagined seeing of an almond-stone, its mandorla-shaped hollow, and the organ by which this is seen—the eye: “And your eye —whither stands your eye? / Your eye stands before the almond.” The eye encounters the almond-stone, insofar as it is confronted by the text of the lyric. The “almondness” of the stone is not “there,” not evident in the stone, but rather the phenomenological eye finds a visual metaphor—it reads a form in the stone—that is linguistically encapsulated. This is both almond and eye, a shape which the mandorla and geode can both approximate, and a visual pun which Mandelstam alludes to in his essay “About the Naturalists,” where he writes of a Persian miniature that “squints its frightened, almond eye” (*Noise of Time*, 217). Celan also seems to allude to “an aural Hebrew pun on *ayin* meaning both ‘nothing’ and ‘eye,’” thereby again returning to the structure of negation in *The No-One’s Rose* (Robertson, 300). The linguistic trace of this visual encounter, left in the discourse that surrounds the stone (i.e., *Mandelstein*), is then integrated into & deconstructed in the lyric texts.²⁵ This is encountered by the “reading eye” which confronts the literalization of *Mandel*, a connection that emerges out of the serendipities of naming language as well as the form of the stone and how it communicates itself, calling for the almond comparison.²⁶

²⁵ “[W]hat stands in the almond? / Nothingness. / What stands in the almond is nothingness” (“Was steht in der Mandel? / Das Nichts. / Es steht das Nichts in der Mandel”) the lyric states, echoing language that is used to refer to printed texts: *Es steht in der Zeitung* (“The newspaper says”) or *Es steht in den Sternen geschrieben* (“it is written in the stars”), for instance, or perhaps more aptly, “Es steht in der (Heiligen) Schrift” (“It is written in the [holy] scriptures”), or simply “Es steht geschrieben” (“It is written”), a phrase found in numerous places in the Bible. The final connotation returns to the theological concerns of “Mandorla.” The various forms of the phrase “es steht geschrieben” are indexes to evidence, the text of the scriptures hold truths that can be referred to. For “Mandorla,” on the other hand, the nothingness that is found in the almond-stone is the evidence, a proof by negation—an apophatic theology, that is.

²⁶ Compare the *lesendes Aug* from “A la pointe acérée” (*The No-one’s Rose*) which begins “The ores are laid bare, the crystals, / the geodes. / Unwritten things, hardened / into language” (“Es liegen die Erze bloß, die Kristalle, / die Drusen. Ungeschriebenes, zu / Sprache verhärtet,” *Poems of Paul Celan*, 171/ *GW* 1: 251).

Thus, “Mandorla” collides language on many levels. It evidences the language of things, insofar as the *form* of the geode communicates the space of nothingness (*das Nichts*) in its own concealed hollow.²⁷ “Mandorla,” like “I shall perform a smoky rite,” also demonstrates how the *discourse* of stone also enables new petrological connections when it is recontextualized in lyric. Mineralogy, which deems the geode a *mandelstein*, buttresses the theological connections, and reiterates the almond shape of the stone, which in turn allows it to be seen as the shape of an observing eye. Moreover, the language of mineralogy enables stone to speak to literary connections as well. Since this is a lyric by Celan, in the midst of his collection *The No-One’s Rose*, the terminology of the *mandelstein* allows the found, “wild” stone to be an accidental portal to the poetics of Mandelstam, a rewriting of his name, with the aid of stone, signaling his profoundly petrological poetics.

“Mandorla” collapses the distinction between stone and not-stone, between what is communicated by the stone in lyric, and what the lyric writes about stone. It is the form of the geode that allows the *mandorla* to signal an almond-shaped stone, and a hollow of nothingness; but it is the word-play which allows the stone to be read in the light of this terminology. Geode, *mandelstein*, and Mandelstam: the language of stone, the language about stone, and the lyricization of stone all collide in this lyric.

A lesson is implied by “Mandorla,” in the “outer poverty” of the dull and ugly geode that conceals an “inner wealth” of crystal and connotations (Ronen, quoted in Pollak, 21). Stone, seemingly the dullest and mutest of materials, nevertheless holds the potential to inform an altogether other lyric, one trading in the expressive outpourings of the persona-subject for a language that builds upon the petrological potential of stone.

²⁷ The same might be said of the reference in “Mandorla” to “royal-blue” (*königsblau*), as the crystals in some varieties of geodes bear colors (sometimes fluorescent), including blue.

There is something of Shklovsky's estrangement about this, an uncanny sense that language need not be, or might no longer be as we imagined it. In "The Meridian," Celan gestures toward this possibility:

Perhaps – I am only speculating – perhaps poetry, like art, moves with the oblivious self [*selbstvergessenes Ich*] into the uncanny and strange to free itself. Through where? in which place? how? as what? This would mean art is the distance poetry must cover, no less and no more. (*Collected Prose*, 44-45)²⁸

The notion of the "self-forgetting I" recalls Nietzsche's characterization of lyric subjectivity in *The Birth of Tragedy*, calling for us to reflect on the rich range of ways it can be figured, as this dissertation seeks in part to do. "Mandorla," like the petrological lyrics by Rilke, Trakl, Mandelstam, Celan, and Sachs, asks that the self be dissolved—if only momentarily—so that an alternative subjectivity can emerge. None doubt the strangeness of this proposition; indeed, there is a great "distance" (*zurückzulegender Weg*) between the human (and its art of lyric) and the nonhuman stone, as Chando's list noted early on.

The strangeness of writing the nonhuman in these texts is more than a matter of mimesis, or verisimilitude, or the psychology of the subject. No, it points to something more fundamental than that: that lyric language, often characterized as human, can owe a greater debt to the material and nonhuman world. The idea that lyric language can be so immaterial, ephemeral, and definitively human is crushed by its junction with the paradigm of thingishness, deep time, and the quintessentially nonhuman, stone. This ought to refocus our perspectives on lyric, showing just how dynamic the strangeness of this can be.

²⁸ "Vielleicht – ich frage nur –, vielleicht geht die Dichtung, wie die Kunst, mit einem selbstvergessenen Ich zu jenem Unheimlichen und Fremden, und setzt sich – doch wo? doch an welchem Ort? doch womit? doch als was? – wieder frei? Dann wäre die Kunst der von der Dichtung zurückzulegende Weg – nicht weniger, nicht mehr" (*GW III*: 193-194)

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