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ABSTRACT

Taking its points of departure from Alain Badiou's readings of Paul Celan, this paper explores Badiou's philosophical departure from Heidegger and its consequences for the relationship between philosophy and poetry. For Badiou, Celan both takes part in and heralds the closure of a sequence in which, guided by "the question of Being," poetry constructs "the space of thinking which defines philosophy." More, in ending this sequence, Celan "completes Heidegger." The theoretical knot comprised by Badiou, Heidegger and Celan invites us to explore the relationship between poetic language, thought and Being. This paper asserts the centrality of a radical nothingness to any poetic "thought of Being," and approaches this ontologically efficacious "nothing" via the privilege afforded to "silence" in both Celan's poetry and Badiou's imperatives for "the modern poem." It does this in order to sharpen our understanding of both Badiou's movement away from Heidegger, and the privileged role Celan plays in this departure. Following an opening discussion concerning the role of silence in Badiou and Celan, this paper then clarifies the relationship between poetic language, silence and Being in Heidegger and Badiou.

KEYWORDS

Badiou, Heidegger, Celan, being, poetry, inaesthetics, ontology, presence, subtraction

Silence Being Thought: Badiou, Heidegger, Celan

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In an endnote to *Logics of Worlds*, Alain Badiou declares his philosophical debts to Samuel Beckett and Stéphane Mallarmé. He asserts that concepts fundamental to his philosophy – “generic truth” and “subtractive ontology” respectively – continue to be shifted, modified, “sharpened” by his readings of these writers. Badiou’s thought, it is claimed, is “under condition” of Beckett’s prose and Mallarmé’s poetry.¹ Further, without irony, Badiou declares that understanding the “stories” produced by Beckett’s *How It Is* and Mallarmé’s poem “*À la nue accablante tu...*” is “Perhaps the only goal of [his] philosophy.”² Badiou’s writings on these two figures comprise an entire book – *On Beckett* (2003) – and many prolonged engagements with Mallarmé spread out over the course of thirty years, from *Theory of the Subject* (1982/2009) to *Being and Event* (1988/2005) and *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (1998/2005), and continuing through the philosophical shift marked by *Logics of Worlds* (2007/2010) and *Second Manifesto for Philosophy* (2009/2011).³ In stark contrast, the page-time afforded to the German-Jewish poet Paul Celan over this writing period consists in about twenty pages, disparately placed among multiple publications. And, this is to be

further contrasted with the time dedicated to Celan by certain of Badiou's philosophical contemporaries, namely Jacques Derrida, both in his posthumously published *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan* (2005) and at a distance through his friendship with Celan's close friend and interpreter Peter Szondi. As well, Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe has dedicated a book – *Poetry as Experience* (1999) – to Celan and his relationship with Heidegger. Despite Badiou's relatively modest engagement with Celan, he retains a privileged position in Badiou's writings on the relationship between philosophy and poetry. It is always with deep reverence that Badiou cites fragments from Celan's poetry, and it is the more esoteric (and compelling) aspects of Badiou's philosophy that "thinking under condition" of Celan might "sharpen." That Badiou, more often than not, cites Celan's poems in order to colour conclusive points is not arbitrary. At stake throughout this essay, then, is the precise nature of this conclusiveness (what does Celan conclude?), and its consequences for the relationship between philosophy and poetry.

Badiou's most thorough investigations of Celan's poetry take place in *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (1998/2005) and *The Century* (2005/2007). It is more useful to begin however, with the importance afforded to Celan in the complementary treatise to *Being and Event*, Badiou's *Manifesto for Philosophy* (1989/1999). Badiou claims therein, following Hegel, the willingness of philosophy to subsume itself under the imperatives of science or politics, which Peter Hallward describes as a preoccupation with "the sterile hypotheses of scientific positivism and historical materialism," forced philosophical speculation to take refuge in poetry, inaugurating an "age of poets" throughout which poetry took on a philosophical role.⁴ This "age" is deemed to begin with Hölderlin, continues in the work of Mallarmé and Rimbaud, Trakl, Mandelstam and Pessoa, and finishes, crucially, with Celan. These poets, Badiou claims, in opposition to the poverty of thought emitted by philosophical sutures to science and politics, were those most able to think the real of their epoch, to think *Being* in all its disorientation and inconsistency:

The fact is that there really was an *Age of Poets*, in the time of the sutured escheat of philosophers. There was a time between Hölderlin and Paul Celan when the quavering sense of what that time itself was, the most open approach to the question of Being, the space of compossibility least caught-up in brutal sutures and the most informed formulation of modern Man's experience were all unsealed and possessed by the poem. A time when the enigma of Time was caught up in the enigma of the poetic metaphor, wherein the process of unbinding

was itself bound within the “like” of the image. An entire epoch was represented in short philosophies as a consistent and especially *oriented* one. There was progress, the sense of History, the millenarian foundation, the approach of another world and other men. But the real of this epoch was on the contrary inconsistency and disorientation. Poetry alone, or at least “metaphysical” poetry, the most concentrated poetry, the most intellectually strained poetry, the most obscure also, designated and articulated this essential disorientation.⁵

These poets “submitted to a kind of intellectual pressure” to take on the role of philosophy itself. Badiou recognises their poems as works of “thought...at the very locus where philosophy falters, a locus of language wherein a proposition about Being and about time is enacted.”⁶ Further, such poetry constructs “the space of thinking which defines philosophy.”⁷ Concerning Celan, then, Badiou’s general claim is that his poetry “thinks” and that this poetic thought, through “the art of binding Word and experience,” is guided by “the question of Being,” by the real of the epoch – inconsistency and disorientation.⁸ However, a further claim specific to Celan’s poetry is that it closes the age of poets, and this is a claim inextricably bound to the philosophy of Heidegger; Celan’s poetry “completes Heidegger.”⁹

There is tension to unravel, then, concerning Celan’s relation to “Being,” for his poetry is at once included in the age of poets, this philosophical exploration of “Being,” and yet significantly departs from this exploration insofar as it heralds its closure or saturation. With Celan the exclusive relationship between philosophy and poetry – philosophy’s refuge in poetry – is broken. And this untying of philosophy and poetry bends philosophy, insofar as it *thinks*, away from the influence of Heidegger, the overseer of philosophy’s “suture” to poetry. Badiou recognises Heidegger’s success in “philosophically *touching* an unnoticed point of thought detained in poetic language.”¹⁰ However, in order to go beyond the “power of Heideggerian philosophy,” it is imperative to reconsider the “couple formed by the saying of poets and the thought of thinkers” profuse in Heidegger.¹¹ That is, following a period of near-exclusive intimacy between poetry and thought in the age of poets, it is once more necessary to distinguish the one from the other; thought is no longer to be bound to poetry. It seems clear that, for Badiou, the poetry of Celan embodies this movement through and beyond Heidegger, both in its departure from the “*indistinction*” between the “poet” and the “thinker” and in its ultimately disjunctive relation to the exploration of Being pervasive

throughout the age of poets; Celan breaks the poet/thinker couple, and in the process recasts the thinking of Being beyond the particular remit of the poet and language.

The unravelling of the knot – Badiou/Heidegger/Celan – is a project that exceeds the limits of any one paper. However, it is in exploring one facet at the heart of the knot – the importance of a radical nothingness to any thought of Being – that we may begin to plot this tension's coordinates. If Celan emits a "thought of Being" which at once reckons with and departs from the poetico-philosophical schema of thought evinced by Heidegger, he must contend as well with a radical nothingness at the heart of Being, the correlates of which we find in "the Nothing" in Heidegger, and in "the void" in Badiou. This paper approaches this ontologically efficacious "nothing" via the privilege afforded to "silence" in both Celan's poetry and Badiou's imperatives for "the modern poem." It does so in order to sharpen both our understanding of Badiou's movement away from Heidegger, and the privileged role Celan plays in this departure. Our first section, then, concerns silence in Badiou and Celan, and is followed by a second section clarifying the knot between silence, ontology and poetic language in Heidegger and Badiou.

• Toward Silence •

Critical debates surrounding Celan's poetics have often presented his probing of silence as the means by which he attempts to reach a lost "other" – a *silenced* other.¹² In Michael Hamburger's *The Truth of Poetry*, for example, Celan's *Todesfugue* is claimed to offer "perhaps the only decisive proof that poems could be written not only after Auschwitz but about the cold horrors perpetrated there"; and further, "[s]uch a theme can be taken up only with a reticence that leaves the unspeakable unspoken... Ordinary language will not serve him."¹³ However, we aim to approach the idea of an *originary* silence too, beyond the plane of language; a silence which – as a constituent of any "thought of Being" – must be reckoned with in any analysis of Badiou's account of the relationship between philosophy and poetry. In what follows, questions of language and Being are approached through an examination of Celan's poetics. We take our point of departure from Badiou's comparison of Celan to Saint-John Perse in *The Century*.

Therein, Celan's poetics are extrapolated under the signifier "Anabasis." Drawing at first on Xenophon's narrative of the same name, Badiou infuses the movement of anabasis with three main features: a principle of "lostness," the invention of a destiny and the creation of a new path, a new "return."¹⁴ From a comparative reading of Saint-John Perse's "Anabasis" (1924) and Celan's "Anabasis" (1963), Badiou seeks to draw out how the twentieth century thought such a "movement," how its poetry engaged the celebrated search for a "new man," a "re-ascent towards a properly human home."¹⁵ The "hard core" of the century thus framed – the nineteen thirties and forties – are crucial to the distinction made between the poetries of Perse and Celan, and correlatively between vastly different attitudes towards Being, language and truth.

It is with undisguised disdain that Badiou draws out details of Perse's career in the French State, his position as "a man who belongs to the era of tranquil imperialism" following a childhood in the West Indies, an "obscene and more than succulent colonial nirvana."¹⁶ Perse's "Anabasis" was written many years prior to his becoming the "official poet of the Republic" in the fifties, yet even this poem is cast by Badiou as the work of a pompous reactionary in the service of a dying State. Following this attack, Badiou presents Section VIII of Perse's poem, in T.S. Eliot's translation, and claims it to bear the disjunctive synthesis of epic affirmation and spiritual vacancy. That is, Perse's poetry merely represents what is already deemed to exist, using the triumphant resources of epic poetry. We can apply the language of Badiou's "Third Sketch of a Manifesto for Affirmationist Art" (2003) retrospectively to understand this further: his fifteenth axiom for affirmationist art states that "It is better to do nothing than work formally toward making visible what the West declares to exist."¹⁷ The claim is that Perse's poetry reinforces what is already deemed visible and is guilty of nihilism in its lack of penetrative critique, its refusal to grant existence to anything beyond what is already deemed to be. Already existing "Roads of the world" are to be followed, already existing "signs of the earth" course with authoritative power:

Cavaliers, across such human families, in whom hatreds sang now and then like tomtits, shall we raise our whip over the gelded words of happiness?...Roads of the world, we follow you. Authority over all the signs of the earth.¹⁸

Badiou declares that Perse “will praise precisely what there is precisely to the extent that it is, without attempting to link it to any meaning whatsoever,” and this corresponds to his particular anabasis, a movement of nihilistic force in the form of the epic.¹⁹ This nihilistic claim – the assumption that there is nothing beyond what is already visible, or more precisely, that what is visible *is* everything – denies Being, denies truth. An earlier comment in *Manifesto for Philosophy* serves to tie nihilism with this denial: “nihilism,” Badiou claims, “must signify that which declares that the access to Being and truth is impossible.”²⁰ Perse’s poetics, in their triumphant imaging of reality, are nihilistic insofar as they deny the possibility of any *beyond*, and correlatively of any access to “the truth of the century.”

In *The Century*, Badiou continues: “We are on the other side of the century. The only thing that epic nihilism, in its Nazi figure, has been able to create is a slaughterhouse. From now on it is impossible to dwell *naturally* in the epic element, as if nothing had happened.”²¹ That is, following the Holocaust, the tautness of the tie between epic language and Being loosens – a new path towards Being must be developed, a “signal, a call,” a “moment of peril and beauty” must be emitted; for this, language must plumb its own depths. Thus:

If Celan’s poem is not eloquent, it is because it exposes an uncertainty concerning language itself – to the extent of presenting language only in its cut, in its section, in its perilous reparation, and practically never in the shared glory of its resource. The truth is that, for Celan, although the forties in no way made poetry impossible, they did render eloquence obscene.²²

The question becomes one of crafting a poetry without eloquence. And this would mean dispelling the cooperative relationship thought to be implicit in the language/Being couple inherent to “eloquent” poetry. Language is deemed incapable of approaching the “truth of the century” – its real – as long as it is considered the vehicle for the triumphant rendering and imaging of reality. We find in Celan, then, a lapidary carving of language, a cold sparseness in which layers of language are pared away towards a silent kernel. “Anabasis,” for example, shows Celanian tropes – hyphenated neologisms, line-breaks across hyphens, enjambement, metaphors concerning the very process of speaking *of* – reaching their

apex in the third stanza, stretched as if on a rack, line and image disintegrating into polyglottal stutter:

Then:
buoys,
espalier of sorrow-buoys
with those
breath reflexes leaping and
lovely for seconds only -: light-
bellsounds (dum-
dun-, un-,
unde suspirat
cor),
re-
leased, re-
deemed, ours.²³

Badiou's contention that Celan presents language in its "cut" is echoed by Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe in *Poetry as Experience*, when he refers to "the abruptness of language as handled by Celan. Or rather, the language that held him, ran through him. Especially in his late work prosody and syntax do violence to language: they chop, dislocate, truncate or cut it."²⁴ Celan's final collection of poetry, *Schneepart* (1971), published posthumously, carries this poetic imperative to cut language, to explore its mute points, beyond the forties toward the events of 1968:

The darkened splinterecho
in the brainwave
current,

the buttress above the me-
ander where it is stayed.²⁵

The verbose triumphalism of Perse's poetry is eschewed by Celan in favour of the crystalline and paring effects of prosody and syntax, his poetry always orientated by contraction, reduction and the splintered energy of the broken line.

Under the sign of “anabasis,” Badiou is able to place the question of language’s relation to Being – cast in terms of language’s capacity to grasp the “truth of the century” in this case – under the imperative to push against the boundaries of experience, of language, of what is deemed existent. In so doing, Badiou places an emphasis on approaching an “outside” not yet given to experience, asserting a radical split between language and Being. Badiou’s assertion is that “the truth of the century is linguistically impassable” as long as one remains on the schema of “eloquence”; truth remains impassable as long as the poetic imperative to use language’s abundant resources persists.²⁶ A poetry capable of navigating this impassability must be radically distinct from eloquent discourse, from “the obscenity of ‘all seeing’ and ‘all saying’ – of showing, sounding out and commenting everything...”²⁷ And this is to place the poem, insofar as it rejects eloquence, outside the sphere of commentary and babble; the poem is to be isolated, a space of comparative quiet – or silence, even. For Badiou: “the poem says the opposite of what Wittgenstein says about silence. It says: ‘This thing that cannot be spoken of in the language of consensus; I create silence in order to say it. I isolate this speech from the world.’”²⁸ The poetic imperative is not to *pass over* what we cannot speak about in silence, but to draw out and construct what cannot be spoken, through the creation of silence, and through the isolation of poetic language. But this *creation* of silence is complicated by the way in which Badiou refers to silence in the following.

In a paper delivered in Brazil, entitled “Language, Thought, Poetry” (1993) (an allusion to Heidegger’s influential collection of essays *Poetry, Language, Thought*), Badiou demands that the poem encapsulate silence: “Folded and reserved, the modern poem harbours a central silence.”²⁹ “Central” offers two paths: is there a silence borne *in* the poem, at its centre, or is the silence itself *central*, the foci from which language is drawn, the source of the poem, too? I suggest both at once: the *creation* of silence testifies to an originary silence beyond language. The poem opens a space for nothingness, a silent alcove which operates as the mediation between language and its silent beyond. For Badiou, the poem itself is a space set apart from communication: “The poem does not consist in communication. The poem has nothing to communicate. It is only a saying, a declaration that draws authority from itself alone.”³⁰ Subtracted from the language of communication, the poem harbours *itself* from the noise and bluster of discourse. At the same time, in its “operation of silence,” the poem provides a space for that *central* silence beyond language which “interrupts the ambient cacophony.”³¹ Of course, that this

silence be “harboured,” protected, returns us to Heidegger’s dictum that “Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells.”³² Our earlier contention that a “thought of Being” must reckon with nothingness, with a *central* silence, is complicated by Heidegger, as we shall see later when we compare his account of silence and nothingness with Badiou’s.

Celan’s poetry intensifies the tension between a localised silence on the plane of language – that towards which the poem retreats – and a foundational silence at the source of language. In his Meridian speech, Celan speaks of certain expectations borne by the poem, “to speak also on behalf of the *strange...on behalf of the other* – who knows, perhaps of an *altogether other*.”³³ This seems to be another way of characterising our two silences: “an other,” that particular which does not speak, the silence of those victims of the Shoah who “dig a grave in the breezes” for example; as well as an “altogether other,” the grounding silence or nothingness with which the poem must engage, the central silence that the modern poem harbours.³⁴ In seeking these others, Celan claims, the poem must “take its position at the edge of itself,” and show a “strong inclination toward falling silent”; poetic language is crafted at its own edge, probing a silent source.³⁵

Celan’s preoccupation with silence then goes beyond the “paring” highlighted by Badiou and Lacoue-Labarthe; his poetry, as well as comprising a formal response to the impact of the Holocaust, also seeks an originary questioning beyond language’s plane. And one of the ways his poetry does this is to invite this questioning at the level of sense through various recurring tropes. That is, Celan invites philosophical analysis – concerning Being, truth, language – through the explicit rendering of philosophical concepts in his poems; as well as syntactic paring, there is semantic questioning. It is in James K. Lyon’s analysis of Celan’s “With a Changing Key” from *Von Schwelle Zu Schwelle* (1955), that we find one such example of poetico-philosophical questioning. Lyon traces the explicit influence of Heidegger on Celan through an analysis of Celan’s personal copies of Heidegger’s philosophical works. Lyon is keen to emphasise that directly prior to the writing of this poem in 1953, Celan was embroiled in intensive reading of both Heidegger’s *Wrong Paths* and his *A Letter on Humanism*.³⁶ In both of these works, language is consistently referred to as the house or the temple of Being (to which we referred earlier), and it is this image that figures in Celan’s poem from the same year, the first three lines of which, in Michael Hamburger’s translation, read as follows:

With a variable key
you unlock the house in which
drifts the snow of that left unspoken.³⁷

In this translation, it is the “snow of that left unspoken” that is drifting (and has drifted) in the house; and this is to be contrasted with John Felstiner’s rendering in which it is “the snow of what’s silenced.”³⁸ The contrast is important, for although we must acknowledge that Celan’s poetry is orientated by singular experiences – “snow,” as Felstiner points out, is a mark of Celan’s parents’ deaths, for example – we are also seeking answers to questions concerning a “thought of Being” in his poems. By attesting to the “snow of what’s silenced,” Felstiner closes off this silence to questions that go beyond real, concrete loss; the Heideggerian influence on the poetry and its explicit engagement with questions of language and Being are effaced. The poet’s key here unlocks the house in which silence’s snow drifts, but this snow drifts in from outside. This silence from outside language provides a mark of Being within – it drifts inside. We are left with two silences marking Being: within and without, the latter providing the origin of the former.

Both silences – the localised silence of the lost and the central silence beyond language – are invoked too in Celan’s poem “Below” from *Sprachgitter* (1959):

Led home into oblivion
the sociable talk of
our slow eyes.³⁹

The poem begins with the waning of a conversation, its end point forced upon it somehow, by “our eyes” being “slow” or otherwise. The “*Gast*” of “*Gast-Gespräch*” – “sociable talk” – is usually translated as “guest” in English, suggesting that the conversation invoked in the poem is fleeting – a visiting conversation. This literal translation does more to imply the particular nature of the “other” involved than the more general “sociable talk.” The “sociable talk” of conversation finds its “home” in “oblivion,” is forgotten, becomes nothing. But “home” implies a point of origin, as if the

very possibility of dialogue is non-existent. An *originary* nothingness from which language emanates and must always return is suggested, but so is the housing or encapsulation of a particular discursive difficulty, the particular difficulty of addressing those lost in the Shoah, of speaking to their silence, for example. Their lack of expression forces the “slowness” of conversation, of sociable talk. Where “eyes” are slow there is an implied muffling of speech; “our eyes” are slow to pick out “that which is seen through discourse”; they see only dimly.⁴⁰ The power of speech to mean wilts under the pressure of the inexpressible. The housing of this discursive difficulty protects the problematic to which Celan’s poetry is directed: how to speak to silence, and more specifically, how to speak to the lost.

In the second stanza, language falls away:

Led now, syllable after syllable, shared
out among the dayblind dice, for which
the playing hand reaches out, large,
awakening.⁴¹

Here we find the rudiments of language disintegrating, falling back into the dark, revealing nothing to our “eyes” unless they should happen to be activated by chance, awoken by “the playing hand.” Further, language is “led” to its disintegration, dissected and distributed syllable by syllable “now.” But the “now” is ambiguous: there is on the one hand the now of the poem’s writing, as if poetic language itself serves to elide the “sociable talk” of the previous stanza, leading it into oblivion, scrapping it for parts; and on the other hand the fact that “Led” floats in both stanzas without a subject, suggesting that the disintegration of language is due to a larger force, is simply inevitable, that spoken language is always already failing in its task. “Now” is at once the present of the poem’s writing and its broader sense, the eternal present in which language is always caught between darkening and awakening. We may take “playing hand,” then, to mean the hand of the poet, awakening silent language, making it visible, and perhaps also the origin of the destruction to which “sociable talk” must be subject, if we take it to invoke language more generally rather than the visiting conversation which comprises every poem. At stake is how to approach the silence beyond the cacophony of speech using poetic language.

The third stanza bisects the "our" of the first stanza into a "me" and a "you":

And the too much of my speaking:
heaped up round the little
crystal dressed in the style of your silence.⁴²

It is interesting that "speaking" fails here. The "too much of my speaking" is perhaps an instance in which, as Badiou observes, "all-seeing" and "all-saying" are "obscene." This excess of speech from a speaker, attempting somehow to approach the other, falls around "the little crystal dressed in the style of your silence," muffling it, preventing dialogue. Fragments of speech fall around this crystal like leaves, dead, unable to penetrate it, but also eliding any light it may give off, preventing it from Being seen, from "showing" anything to "our eyes." The "dressing" of this crystal only occurs following "the too much of my speaking" always already heaped against it; it is this "too much" which obscures. As well, "too much" is subsumed under "my speaking" as if speech itself is conditioned by an excess, saturated from within. The task of the poet is to "undress" this crystal shrouded in saturated spoken language.

In line with Badiou's imperatives – that modern poetry should harbour an originary silence, and that poetic language should oppose itself to "ambient cacophony" – Celan in "Below" calls for this crystal's undressing to be guided by the disintegration of speech, its cutting and pruning towards an originary silent point. We have on the one hand, then, the formal "paring" attested to by Badiou, but also in the poetic rendering of the crystal, the grounds for this prosodic and syntactical experimentation. Further, the excess of speech alluded to in the final stanza of "Below" serves to reinforce the split between Being and language to which we have referred throughout: *too much* speaking prevents silence from Being heard. It is telling perhaps that in Heidegger's "What is Metaphysics?" (1929), despite the assertion that "anxiety reveals the nothing," we find that "in the malaise of anxiety we often try to shatter the vacant stillness with compulsive talk"; speech or chatter is a natural response to the anxiety caused by "the nothing," a response that both hides the presence of the nothing but also "proves" its existence.⁴³

However, Celan's relationship with Heidegger's philosophy is complicated by the account Anthony Mellors offers in his *Late Modernist Poetics: from Pound to Prynne*. There, in a reading of Celan's "The Meridian," Mellors claims that when Celan refers to poetry as "*einsam und dunterwegs* ('lonely and on the way', *en route*)" he is making a clear allusion to "Heidegger's pastoral lore of the path, the way...to language and being."⁴⁴ Further, the poem, for Celan, "takes us towards a clearing, to 'an open question 'without resolution,' a question which points towards open, empty, free spaces – we have ventured far out."⁴⁵ However, for Mellors the word "empty" allows us to form an important point of difference between Celan and Heidegger: "Only the word 'empty' in Celan's account keeps it from being identified with the positivity of Heidegger's 'open.'"⁴⁶ Mellors invites us to make the contrast between positive (that is, assertive) openness – "Truth is the openness of beings" for Heidegger⁴⁷ – and a conception of poetic Truth tainted by emptiness, by negativity.⁴⁸ On the one hand we find beings unfolding into truth, into openness, and on the other truth's alignment with open free spaces divested of such content – empty spaces. It is in this difference, borne by the assertion of an *empty* space, that we can anticipate the departure that Badiou takes from Heidegger through Celan. For the emptiness to which Celan points is a seemingly negative space beyond the plane upon which Heidegger's considerations of Being and language operate. Thus Celan effects a radical subversion of the relation between language and Being postulated by Heidegger. With Badiou, as we shall see, we move beyond the entire plane of philosophy on which Heidegger operates: we move from a "thought of Being" arising in poetic language, to a "thought of Being" that is *able* to arise in poetic language, but that also escapes the strictures of such language, testifying to an empty "outside" beyond language.

At the heart of this movement is a radical distinction between the ontological approaches of Heidegger and Badiou. In the former, it is poetic language which is privileged with regard to ontology; in the latter, it is mathematics. But although Badiou privileges mathematics, he does not forsake poetry altogether. Rather, the "philosophical form" for Badiou "combines resources borrowed from those procedures of truth that are most clearly disjointed from sense (if 'sense' means description of a state of affairs): mathematics... and poetry..."⁴⁹ Further, in Badiou's preface to the English translation of *Being and Event*, we find his commitment to maintaining an approach to philosophy informed by both mathematics and poetry, in the wake of Plato, Descartes, Leibniz and Hegel. Badiou's goal, in his words, is "To know how to make thought pass through

demonstrations as through plainsong, and thus to steep an unprecedented thinking in disparate springs."⁵⁰ That thinking Being in Badiou requires the transgression of the boundaries of poetic language, privileging as he does mathematics *as* ontology, invites a comparison between this assertion and Heidegger's "poetic ontology." In the following section, then, we plot the coordinates of Badiou's departure from Heidegger via the analysis of their respective ontologies. Our privileged mediating force between these ontologies is what we have hitherto referred to as an "originary silence," the "central silence" harboured by the "modern poem," a silence harboured too in the poetry of Paul Celan.

• The Nothing and the Void •

In a contemporary account of issues facing the thinking of ontology, Quentin Meillassoux helps to colour Badiou's ontological departure from Heidegger. The key distinction here is between Being conceived as something "given" through poetic language's disclosure, and Being as something that refuses knowledge, subtracts itself from knowledge. This distinction is borne of Badiou's innovative claim that mathematics equals ontology, that the discourse of set-theory is also the discourse of ontology. Badiou's set-theoretical ontology is a "subtractive" one in which Being is never "given"; Being eludes our grasp. Where Heidegger, in a criticism of the rise of the Platonic *idea*, refers to "The chasm, *khōrismos*...torn open between the merely apparent Beings here below and the real Being somewhere up there," Badiou contrastingly places "real Being" far "below" and beyond the appearance of reality in a subtracted realm beyond knowledge.⁵¹ In Meillassoux's *After Finitude* (2009), he proposes that contemporary philosophy attempt to present an ontology in which "*Being* is not co-extensive with *manifestation*."⁵² That is, to present ontology which, by correlation, does not depend on appearance, an assertion of Being that does not depend on its disclosure. This distinction between Being in its givenness, its encapsulation in the word, and Being-qua-Being's subtraction from presence to a realm beyond language is at the heart of Badiou's relationship with Heidegger.⁵³ Once we have coloured this distinction between presence and subtraction, we can proceed towards a discussion of poetic language and the central silence we determined above.

For the young Heidegger, "*Ontology is possible only as phenomenology*."⁵⁴ This maxim is intended to overcome the forgetting of Being enacted via the development of dogmatic metaphysical systems aiming to approach the figure of objective "true" reality, often using the resources of mathematics.⁵⁵ For Heidegger, mathematics partakes in the elision of phenomena, lending itself to knowledge of mere objective presence, the enduring substantiality of Descartes' *res extensa*; Descartes "not only goes amiss ontologically in his definition of the world, [but his] interpretation and its foundations lead him to *pass over* the phenomenon of world."⁵⁶ Further, according to Badiou in *Being and Event*, mathematics for Heidegger contributes to our blindness towards Being: "mathematics...is not, for Heidegger, a path which opens onto the original question [of Being]...mathematics is rather blindness itself...the foreclosure of thought by knowledge."⁵⁷ For Heidegger, fields of knowledge grounded in the objective presence of beings fail to take into account Being itself; the radical efficacy of thought, insofar as it can approach Being, is elided.

This antipathy towards mathematics is decisive for the relationship between Heidegger and Badiou. Quoting from Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Badiou writes:

If "with the interpretation of being as *ιδέα* there is a rupture with regard to the authentic beginning," it is because what gave an indication, under the name of *φύσις*, of an originary link between being and appearing – presentation's guise of presence – is reduced to the rank of subtracted, impure, inconsistent given, whose sole opening forth is the cut-out of the Idea, and particularly, from Plato to Galileo – and Cantor – the mathematical Idea.⁵⁸

Badiou is faithful to this Platonic interpretation of Being as *idea*, declining the intimate tie between Being and appearance affected in Heidegger's interpretation of Being as *φύσις* – *phusis*. Being *comes to Presence* for Heidegger. For Heidegger, the word *phusis* expresses an understanding of the Being of beings, where this Being refers at once to the emergence, the persistent presence, and to the autonomous unfolding of each being *in itself*:

Now what does the word *phusis* say? It says what emerges from itself (for example, the emergence, the blossoming, of a rose), the unfolding that opens up, the coming-into-appearance in such unfolding, and holding itself and persisting in appearance – in short, the emerging-abiding sway.⁵⁹

The etymology of *phusis* lies in *phuō*, meaning “I grow.” In *phusis*, however, there is not only this character of growth, emergence and becoming “from itself” – of “the rising of the sun,” the “surging of the sea” or “the growth of plants.”⁶⁰ There is also the “holding sway,” the persistence in presence of what appears. *Phusis* is both emergence and holding sway at once – “emerging sway.” We may observe the key distinction to bear in mind throughout what follows, then: for Heidegger Being and appearance are originally linked – Being *comes to Presence* – whereas Badiou interprets Being qua Being following the advent of the mathematical *idea* in Plato, forcing a radical separation of Being from appearance; Being is radically subtracted from Presence. All that can be exhibited of Being is its radical lack, and this is the central silence to which the “modern poem” must attest.⁶¹

For Heidegger, Being as *phusis* is veiled, forgotten: “it is precisely Being *as such* that remains concealed, remains in oblivion.”⁶² Poetic language, however, can emit a thought of Being. In his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger asserts language’s originary access to Being: “In the word, in language, things first come to be and are.”⁶³ That is, it is only via the foundation language provides that Being arises. He then claims the following:

Even if we had a thousand eyes and a thousand ears, a thousand hands and many other senses and organs, if our essence did not stand within the power of language, then all Beings would remain closed off to us – the Beings that we ourselves are, no less than the Beings we are not.⁶⁴

For Heidegger, language is not merely *used* to access our “essence” or the Being of beings, it is *necessary* in Being’s disclosure. Crucially, it is poetic language specifically which offers this access. For Heidegger, poetic language is the archetypal living language and should be treated as prior to the everyday communicative languages we speak; it is fundamental, “the elementary emergence into words, the becoming-uncovered, of existence as Being-in-the-world.”⁶⁵ More, our everyday language serves to obscure

the poetic word's originary access to Being, especially when reduced to what, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger refers to as "idle-talk." In idle-talk our "understanding" fails to "come to a being toward" what is talked about – a "primordial understanding" is forsaken: "One understands not so much the beings talked about; rather, one already only listens to what is spoken about as such."⁶⁶ Idle-talk is the amplification of this "listening" to the detriment of "being toward," such that Being-in-the-world becomes closed off, "covering over innerworldly beings."⁶⁷ However, beyond idle-talk, the language of consensus and dead language, we may still maintain that Being is disclosed to us through language, that "those who create with words are the guardians of this [house of Being]."⁶⁸

For Heidegger, then, poetic language is capable of primordial access to Being. However, this is by necessity access to an originary silence too. In Heidegger's writings, this silence, this ontological negative space, figures as "the Nothing." Heidegger begins "What is Metaphysics?" (1929) by supposing that science, which "determines our existence," takes "solely Beings and beyond that – nothing" as its object of study, failing in the process to account for the "nothing" thus invoked.⁶⁹ Science, it is claimed, "wishes to know nothing of the nothing."⁷⁰ Yet in expressing what it deems to be its essence – its investigation of Beings themselves and nothing more – it calls on the nothing for help.⁷¹ This nothingness is revealed to Dasein via a specific mood or "attunement," that of anxiety.⁷² Heidegger provides a topology of thinking the Nothing in *Being and Time* and "What is Metaphysics?" In the latter, the Nothing is taken as an entity in itself; that is, "the Nothing" is to be distinguished from simply "not." In the Nothing, then, we find the always present power of "nihilation": not the potential destruction of all things, but the immanent possibility that all things might not have come to be as they are; a grounding nothing which when experienced through anxiety belies the fact that, on a basic level, there is a difference between "something" and "nothing." For, if one is anxious, one's experience of Being-in-the-world, one's feeling of the totality of all things (mode or attunement revealing Dasein's "Being in the midst of things as a whole") forces that whole into meaninglessness, insignificance and irrelevance.⁷³ Then, from the standpoint of the Nothing, from an experience of anxiety, Beings once again arise: "In the clear night of the nothing of anxiety the original openness of Beings as such arises: that they are Beings – and not nothing."⁷⁴

The Nothing is conceivable as the limit of the meaning of Being, a horizon from which we may turn back and reassess our Being-in-the-

world. It is also conceivable, however, as the always-present source of the "light" or openness of Being, the dark shadow that accompanies all disclosure. The topology of the Nothing is comprised, then, of both the fact that it results from a particular mood (rather than Being the mood itself) which is revealed in a certain mode of Being of Dasein, and its ontological privilege as ground or source, as always present in and constitutive of Being. There is evidence to suggest that Celan was aware of the philosophical issues surrounding Being and the Nothing, not least in his poem "Speak, You Also" from the 1955 collection *Von Schwelle Zu Schwelle*. Celan's second stanza reads:

Speak –
But keep yes and no unsplit.
And give your say this meaning:
give it the shade.⁷⁵

To keep "yes and no unsplit" requires that we think them non-disjunctively. Rather, the assertion of one is always already to include the other; they are mutually implicated. For, one can only speak of the Nothing in relation to the Being of what is, and in turn, the Nothing is the source of Being, the source of presence. The final line of the fourth stanza – "He speaks truly who speaks the shade" – demands the poet breach language from within in order to approach "truth," that which lies beyond the intelligible light cast by everyday speech; the "real darkness" produced in the twentieth century demands its reflection in the poet's language, demands that poetics shifts to reassess its own relation to Being and truth, and by correlation, the Nothing too.⁷⁶

Heidegger continues in "What is Metaphysics":

For human existence, the nothing makes possible the openedness of Beings as such. The nothing does not merely serve as the counterconcept of Beings; rather, it originally belongs to their essential unfolding as such.⁷⁷

In any poetic "thought of Being," "the Nothing" is always already invoked. The Nothing is afforded an even more "fixed" place in the phenomenological ontology developed through *Being and Time*. Therein, "the

Nothing" is equated precisely with "the world": "What crowds in upon us is not this or that, nor is it everything objectively present together as a sum, but the *possibility* of things, at hand in general, that is, the world itself...what anxiety is about exposes nothing, that is, the world as such..."⁷⁸ The Nothing, as ground, figures as the empty structure of "world," and it is on the basis of "world" that the Being of Beings can unfold. The limits of Heidegger's "thought of Being" are marked by the limits of specifically human Being, for the question of Being arises via Dasein. "The Nothing" as "world," which "ontologically belongs essentially to the Being of Dasein as Being-in-the-world," occupies a fundamental position in Heidegger's thought, then; it is constitutive of the entire plane through which and on which his philosophy is enacted.⁷⁹ And this is a plane that Badiou's ontological reversal can interrogate from the outside.

In Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe's *Poetry as Experience* (1999), the relationship between veiled Being and the Nothing is complicated further. For Lacoue-Labarthe,

the poem's "wanting-not-to-say" does not *want* not to say. A poem wants to say; indeed, it is nothing but pure wanting-to-say. But pure wanting-to-say nothing, nothingness, that against which and through which there is presence, what is.⁸⁰

These lines follow the delineation of a key difficulty in thinking poetry's capacity to approach or grasp Being. The poem, Lacoue-Labarthe contends, always seeks to indicate or show its own source, that from which it has "sprung." Celan makes a similar point in his Meridian speech: the poem takes its position at the edge of itself, but it also "calls and fetches itself from its now-no-longer back into its as-always."⁸¹ There are two crucial points to be drawn from the Lacoue-Labarthe quotation above. First, Being – the poem's source – is aligned, as we have seen, with nothingness. Second, in attempting to approach its own source, in its "wanting-to-say," the poem cannot push beyond its own edge, its source is precisely a nothingness that the poem cannot reach. The poem is only capable of presenting what *is*, having come up against this nothingness; for presence (Being-present) can only arise "against" and "through" this (originary) nothingness. The question of Being is permeated by the question of access to Being. Lacoue-Labarthe presents the crux of this question following a reading of Hölderlin's "The Rhine." The source," the

pure sprung forth," is characterised by Hölderlin as an "enigma"; "the song can hardly reveal it."⁸² Lacoue-Labarthe concludes his reading by stating that the poem, having testified to the source's inaccessibility, also stands as the "stark reminder that *in this place*, it was revealed to so many visitors that the source (of the poem, the song) had dried up. And that previously it had indeed been an enigma that sprang forth."⁸³ The aura of Being is covered over, the source has dried up. The Nothing through which Being unfolds can only be gestured towards via the metaphorical ecstasy of poetic language.

It is this veiling, this aura, which Badiou aims to reverse. The thought of Being produced by the poem in Badiou's philosophy testifies to something far more solid, universal, determined. In *Being and Event*, the distinction between subtracted Being and the Heideggerian "oblivion" or withdrawal of Being is determined as follows:

The "subtractive" is opposed here, as we shall see, to the Heideggerian thesis of a withdrawal of being. It is not in the withdrawal-of-its-presence that being foments the forgetting of its original disposition to the point of assigning us – us at the extreme point of nihilism – to a poetic "over-turning." No, the ontological truth is both more restrictive and less prophetic: it is in being foreclosed from presentation that being as such is constrained to be sayable, for humanity, within the imperative effect of a law, the most rigid of all conceivable laws, the law of demonstrative and formalizable inference.⁸⁴

The Heideggerian thesis that Badiou rejects here is the melancholy "withdrawal-of-being," the assertion that the "truth of Being," as Heidegger remarks in his *Letter on Humanism* and his earlier writings, has been consigned to "oblivion."⁸⁵ However, whereas Heidegger continues to assert the primacy of language in being able to produce a thought of obscured, veiled Being through the workings of poetic metaphor, Badiou overturns this melancholy vision – the "end" of Being, effaced by the modern age – by maintaining fidelity to Being's complete *foreclosure* from presentation. Being qua Being is no longer an "enigma" that "springs forth" but is instead radically subtracted, lacking.

Badiou nonetheless is clear that "the poem" itself "never ceased."⁸⁶ Further, the poem remains fundamentally an exploration in language of presence. However, for Badiou, following the Platonic turn, the poem now figures as (in its "immemorial nature") the "temptation" of a return to

"presence and rest."⁸⁷ This nostalgia for presence enacted in poetry is not due to a loss or a forgetting of Being as Heidegger would have it, but rather to the "interruption" caused by the advent of mathematics: "This nostalgia, latent thereafter in every great poetic enterprise, is not woven from the forgetting of being: on the contrary, it is woven from the pronunciation of being in its subtraction by mathematics in its effort of thought."⁸⁸ There is a reversal of Heidegger's thought here, for the melancholy "forgetting of being" to which he testifies, is replaced by the very precise "pronunciation" of Being following in reaction to the subtraction of Being from presence. This overturning of melancholy is reflected in Badiou's discussion of Being and the void in the early pages of *Being and Event*. Therein, he claims that "being qua being does not in any manner let itself be approached, but solely allows itself to be *sutured* in its void to the brutality of a deductive consistency without aura."⁸⁹ The enigmatic aura of Being, approached in Heidegger by the metaphoric uniqueness of the poem, is overturned here. Inconsistent Being qua Being, for Badiou, is radically subtracted from presence, and is only presentable insofar as it is brutally counted, made consistent, by set-theoretical discourse. The void, insofar as it testifies to Being qua Being's inconsistency beyond the discourse it is written in, is the emblem of the nothing of Being, its inconsistency, its radical subtraction.

In its nostalgia for that "Being," subtracted from presence, the poem pursues "the impossible *filling in* of the void"; in its attempts to once more reveal Being in presence, the poem stumbles against Being's subtraction, revealing the primacy of the void of Being instead.⁹⁰ Badiou declares that the epoch in which poetry is conceivable as the abundant representation of Being "bursting forth" within nature, in which poetry's saying is deemed the necessary conduit in re-approaching Being – which has been foreclosed and concealed since Plato – is now over.

In his appraisal of Celan in *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, Badiou writes that, following Celan's poetry, "the thinking of our epoch cannot come from an open space, from a grasp of the Whole."⁹¹ Badiou's surreptitious uses of "open space" and "Whole" mark his departure from Heidegger specifically. To reiterate two key findings in our investigation above: in "What is Metaphysics?" Heidegger claims both that we "certainly do find ourselves stationed in the midst of beings that are somehow revealed as a whole," and that "No matter how fragmented our everyday existence appears to be...it always deals with beings in a unity of the 'whole'."⁹² Further, the Nothing, as we have seen, "makes itself known with beings

and in beings expressly as a slipping away of the whole"; beyond the whole, nothing.⁹³ We must conceive the Nothing here as the ground of the Whole, the empty "world as such" through which presence arises and in which presence endures. However, the Nothing is merely the plot from which presence grows, it does not lie outside the world of things, but rather grounds them; there is no outside, "even Nothing 'belongs' to 'Being.'"⁹⁴ We in effect burrow through what is already made available to us from within; there is no outside point. This is reflected in Heidegger's apprehension of the Nothing in anxiety, for upon returning from the Nothing, what *already* existed is viewed anew as meaningful. Badiou's reading of Celan, however, invites us to go beyond this Whole and its grounding Nothing. Another way to put this is to say that we must overcome a thinking of the Whole contingent upon a certain interpretation of Being; in order to understand what Badiou is writing, we must replace Heidegger's interpretation of Being as *phusis* with Badiou's alternative conception of Being in which mathematics comprises the "ontological text."

The crux of the movement that Badiou charts away from Heidegger through Celan is revealed here, then, for the first "lesson" Badiou learns from Celan is the following:

contrary to the declarations of the modern sophists, there is indeed a fixed point. Not everything is caught in the slippage of language games or the immaterial variability of their occurrences. Being and truth, even if now stripped of any grasp upon the Whole, have not vanished. One will find that they are precariously rooted at the point where the Whole offers up its own nothingness.⁹⁵

We can characterise one of the tasks that Badiou sets himself as the attempt to find an outside point from which what already exists – what is deemed *to be* – can be interrogated, its spaces re-designated. This "fixed point" beyond language refers specifically to mathematics. When Badiou implores us to "listen to Celan" bear witness to "what is fixed (...what remains and endures),"⁹⁶ he is referring to what in *Being and Event* he calls the "infinite possibility of an ontological text" opened up by the Greeks following the advent of the mathematical *idea*.⁹⁷ In poetry, then, for Badiou, thought is projected *in* language to a fixed destination *beyond* language; "Only the poem accumulates the means of thinking outside-place, or beyond all place, 'on some vacant or superior surface.'"⁹⁸

Thought attempts to get outside the myth-making, metaphorical exigencies of language – in other words thought no longer simply provides the conduit between language and Being – because, for Badiou, modern poetic language can only testify to a radical “lack” of Being in presence, the emblem of which is “the void.” For Badiou, this void, the empty set (\emptyset), is the central silence to which the poem’s thought of Being attests. The crucial sentence in Badiou’s writing on Celan, concerning Being, truth, and the void, appears in *Handbook of Inaesthetics*: “One will find that [Being and truth] are precariously rooted at the point where the Whole offers up its own Nothingness.”⁹⁹ This rooting dispels any aura or mystery surrounding Being; it is fixed at a point beyond the limits of language, subjected to the rigour of the matheme. For Badiou: “the Age of Poets is completed, it is also necessary to de-suture philosophy from its poetic condition. Which means that it is no longer required today that disobjectivation and disorientation be stated in the poetic metaphor. Disorientation can be *conceptualized*.”¹⁰⁰ The conceptualisation of Being in the matheme interrupts the poem, and for Badiou, this is to allow a “thought of Being.”¹⁰¹

We conclude with a brief consideration of “truth,” towards which we have only gestured so far. In his reading of Celan’s *Es Kommt* (from *Zeitgehört: Spät Gedichte aus dem Nachlass*, 1976), Badiou invokes the nature of truth and ties it to the void. He writes: “A truth is unbound, and it is toward this unbound, toward this local point where the binding is undone, that the poem operates – in the direction of presence.”¹⁰² The emblem of the void, which is precisely the “local point” attested to above, binds together the inconsistency of Being – the unbound – and truth itself; truth derives from inconsistency, from subtracted Being. Not only does the void qua emblem stand in for the Heideggerian Nothing following the subtraction of Being, it also marks the point from which truth derives; it is from inconsistent Being, from the unbound, and this is the crux of Celan’s closure of the Age of Poets. Celan testifies to the fixed point of this inconsistency, and therefore, for Badiou, to the removal of the philosophical burden placed on the poem.

Badiou invokes Celan’s “I have cut bamboo...” from *Die Niemandrose* (1963) to conclude his reading:

The cane that roots here, tomorrow
will still be standing, wherever your
soul plays you in un-
boundedness¹⁰³

In testifying to truth's connection to inconsistency, Celan, in Badiou's reading, rescinds the burden placed upon the poem by philosophy throughout the Age of Poets. For Badiou, through its invocation of a radically charged nothingness from which both thought and truths spring – this "local point where the binding is undone" – Celan's poetry points beyond itself in order to "free the poem from its speculative parasites, to restore it to the fraternity of its time, where it will thereafter have to dwell side by side in thought with the matheme, love and political invention."¹⁰⁴

Badiou incisively places Paul Celan at the threshold between Being as *phusis* and Being as radical subtraction and inconsistency. Further, it is in the "central silence" of any poetic thought of Being that we find the means to begin unravelling the tension between these two approaches to Being, for this silence allows us to force key parallels between the nature of poetic isolation and the nature of thought Being. So far we have only plotted the coordinates that the knot Badiou/Heidegger/Celan comprises – *phusis*, *idea*, Presence, subtraction, the Nothing, the void. These coordinates, however, ground further discussion concerning Badiou and the poem, "a negative machinery, which utters being, or the idea, at the very point where the object has vanished."¹⁰⁵ The specific nature of this poetic idea, an idea of subtracted being, of pure nothingness, demands further engagement. And this is to state the importance too of the relationship between philosophy and poetry attested to by Badiou, problematized via Celan's embodiment of philosophy's suture with poetry and this suture's disintegration. Badiou's reading of Celan, more than his protracted engagement with Mallarmé, for example, opens up the questions surrounding this suture – the intimacy of poetic thought and philosophy, the capacity for other discourses besides poetry to "think Being" or to produce truths, the distance between language and Being, the interruption of the matheme. Further, by emphasising the importance of his encounter with Celan, we become immersed in Badiou's departures not only from Heidegger, but also from contemporary Heideggerian interlocutors like Jean-Luc Nancy and Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe.

By privileging Badiou's reading of Celan, we also privilege the roles of silence and subtractive being in any attempt to approach the above

questions. And this is to place the knot comprised by Badiou/ Heidegger/ Celan at the centre of continuing discussion surrounding Badiou's contemporary writing on subtraction and negation.¹⁰⁶ By invoking departures from Heidegger, Badiou's encounter with Celan also opens up contemporary discussions concerning philosophical approaches to Romanticism, or the "romantic glorification" of art described in *Handbook of Inaesthetics*.¹⁰⁷ Questions inherent to the study of Romanticism – concerning infinity, incarnation and transcendence in artistic practice – can be traced from the mid-twentieth-century philosophical-poetical considerations we have encountered here, all the way up to Badiou's 2006 manifesto for contemporary artistic practice – "Third Sketch of A Manifesto of Affirmationist Art" – which takes "art as a suffering and radiant exhibition of the flesh, that is, art as the carnal installation of finitude" as its point of departure.¹⁰⁸ Heidegger, as the key figure Badiou associates with philosophical Romanticism, is crucial to any understanding of Badiou's contemporary engagements with the poem and artistic practice; and it is through Celan that the relationship between Badiou and Heidegger is brought into focus.

• Notes •

¹ That philosophy is "conditioned" from without is a key tenet of Badiou's philosophical system. Producing no truths of its own, philosophy thinks the truth procedures produced in art, politics, love and science. See Alain Badiou, *Conditions*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2008), 23: "Philosophy is prescribed by conditions that constitute types of truth or generic-procedure. These types are science (more precisely, the matheme), art (more precisely, the poem), politics (more precisely, politics in interiority, or a politics of emancipation) and love (more precisely the procedure that makes truth of the disjunction of sexuated positions). Philosophy is the place of thought where the 'there is' (*il y a*) of these truths, and their compossibility, is stated."

² Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event*, 2, trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum, 2009), 548.

³ Jean Jacques Lecercle's *Badiou & Deleuze Read Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) contains one of the more thorough investigations into how, if at all, Badiou (and Deleuze) can justify privileging the artists and writers they do. See also Badiou's essay "Art and Philosophy" in *Handbook of Inaesthetics* trans. Alberto Toscano (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005) for more on the "inaesthetic" relationship he postulates between philosophy and art.

⁴ Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 200.

⁵ Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. Norman Madarasz (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 70-71. Emphasis original.

⁶ *Ibid*, 69.

⁷ *Ibid*, 77.

- ⁸ Ibid, 70.
- ⁹ Ibid, 70
- ¹⁰ Badiou, *Conditions*, 36. Emphasis original.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² See, for example, *Argumentum E Silentio: International Paul Celan Symposium*, ed. Amy D. Colin (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986)
- ¹³ Michael Hamburger, *The Truth of Poetry* (London: Anvil, 1968), 290.
- ¹⁴ Badiou, *The Century*, trans. Alberto Toscano (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 82.
- ¹⁵ Ibid, 83.
- ¹⁶ Ibid, 84-5.
- ¹⁷ Badiou, "Third Sketch of A Manifesto of Affirmationist Art" in *Polemics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Verso, 2006), 148.
- ¹⁸ Cited in Badiou, *The Century*, 86.
- ¹⁹ Ibid, 85.
- ²⁰ Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, 56.
- ²¹ Badiou, *The Century*, 94. Emphasis original.
- ²² Ibid, 89.
- ²³ Ibid, 88.
- ²⁴ Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe. *Poetry as Experience*, trans. Andrea Tarnowski (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 12.
- ²⁵ Paul Celan, "The darkened splinterecho...", in *Snow Part/Schneepart*, trans. Ian Fairley (Manchester: Carcanet, 2007), 153.
- ²⁶ Badiou, *The Century*, 89.
- ²⁷ Badiou, "Language, Thought, Poetry," in *Theoretical Writings*, ed. and trans. Ray Brassier & Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum, 2006), 241.
- ²⁸ Ibid, 240.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Ibid, 239.
- ³¹ Ibid, 240.
- ³² Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (Abingdon: Routledge Ltd., 2008), 147.
- ³³ Celan, "The Meridian," in *Paul Celan: Selections*, ed. Pierre Joris (London: University of California Press, 2005), 163. Emphasis original.
- ³⁴ See "Todesfugue", in Paul Celan, *Selected Poems*, trans. Michael Hamburger (London: Penguin, 1995), 62-63.
- ³⁵ Celan, "The Meridian," 180.
- ³⁶ See J.K. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger: An Unresolved Conversation, (1951-1970)* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 32-4.
- ³⁷ Celan, "With a Variable Key," in *Selected Poems*, trans. Michael Hamburger (London: Penguin, 1995), 91.
- ³⁸ John Felstiner, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* (London: Yale University Press, 1995), 73.
- ³⁹ Celan, "Below," in *Selected Poems*, 113.
- ⁴⁰ The "eyes" of this first stanza require some excavation. In Lyon's *Paul Celan & Martin Heidegger* we find a brief reference to Celan's use of the image of the eye. His usage follows, Lyon claims, the conflation of the optical – "that which is seen through discourse" – with speech found in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, reflecting the use of synaesthesia in poetry. According to Lyon "Celan took this notion a step farther in his poetry by relating human communication normally found in spoken language in the image of communicating through the eye" (See Lyon, 16). Language operates as something which uncovers or makes apparent, presents things to be "seen."
- ⁴¹ Celan, "Below."
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 51.
- ⁴⁴ Anthony Mellors, *Late Modernist Poetics: from Pound to Prynne* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 190.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 23.

- ⁴⁸ For an important discussion of Badiou's response to Heidegger's "Open" in terms of finitude/infinity and "the God of the Poets" see Christopher Watkin's *Difficult Atheism: Post-theological Thinking in Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Nancy and Quentin Meillassoux* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 60-72.
- ⁴⁹ Badiou, *Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy*, trans. Bruno Bosteels (London: Verso, 2011), 117.
- ⁵⁰ Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005), xiv.
- ⁵¹ Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried & Richard Polt (London: Yale University Press, 2000), 111. For further discussion of the Platonic *idea* see Badiou, "Nature: poem or matheme?" in *Being and Event*, as well as his *Handbook of Inaesthetics* and Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics*.
- ⁵² Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008), 14. Emphasis original.
- ⁵³ See Badiou, "Nature: Poem or matheme?" in *Being and Event*.
- ⁵⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 33. Emphasis original.
- ⁵⁵ In *Being and Time*, in a discussion of Cartesian ontology, Heidegger claims the following, revealing the confusion that results when the traditional adoption of mathematics as relating to ontology is left unchallenged: "Descartes does not allow the kind of being of innerworldly beings to present itself, but rather prescribes to the world... its 'true' being on the basis of an idea of being (being = constant presence) the source of which has not been revealed and the justification of which has not been demonstrated... This ontology is determined by a basic ontological orientation toward being as constant objective presence, which mathematical knowledge is exceptionally well suited to grasp." Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 94.
- ⁵⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 93-4.
- ⁵⁷ Badiou, *Being and Event*, 9.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 125.
- ⁵⁹ Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 15.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid*.
- ⁶¹ Badiou's essay "The Philosophical Recourse to the Poem," in *Conditions*, develops this notion with reference specifically to the poetic "Idea".
- ⁶² Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 20.
- ⁶³ *Ibid*, 15.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 86.
- ⁶⁵ Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, cited in Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge Ltd., 1999), 177.
- ⁶⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 162.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 163.
- ⁶⁸ Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 147.
- ⁶⁹ Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," in *Ibid*, 47.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid*.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid*.
- ⁷² See Heidegger, *Being and Time* §40.
- ⁷³ See *ibid*.
- ⁷⁴ Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," in *Basic Writings*, 52.
- ⁷⁵ Celan, "Speak you also," in *Selected Poems*, 101.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid*.
- ⁷⁷ Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," in *Basic Writings*, 53.
- ⁷⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 181. Emphasis original.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid*.
- ⁸⁰ Lacoue-Labarthe, *Poetry as Experience*, trans. Andrea Tarnowski (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 20.
- ⁸¹ Celan, "The Meridian," in *Paul Celan: Selections*, 181.
- ⁸² In Michael Hamburger's translation, "A mystery are those of pure origin. / Even song may hardly unveil it." See Friedrich Hölderlin, *Selected Poems and Fragments*, trans. Michael Hamburger (London: Penguin, 1998).

- ⁸³ Lacoue-Labarthe, 19. Emphasis original.
- ⁸⁴ Badiou, *Being and Event*, 27.
- ⁸⁵ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Basic Writings*, 166.
- ⁸⁶ Badiou, *Being and Event*, 126.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid, 10. Emphasis original.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid, 127. Emphasis original.
- ⁹¹ Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, trans. Alberto Toscano (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 32.
- ⁹² Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" in *Basic Writings*, 49-50.
- ⁹³ Ibid, 52.
- ⁹⁴ Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 89.
- ⁹⁵ Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 33.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid.
- ⁹⁷ Badiou, *Being and Event*, 126.
- ⁹⁸ Badiou, *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Justin Clemens and Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005), 99.
- ⁹⁹ Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics* 33.
- ¹⁰⁰ Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, 74.
- ¹⁰¹ See Badiou, *Being and Event* 126-7.
- ¹⁰² Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 33.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁴ Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, 87.
- ¹⁰⁵ Badiou, "Language, Thought, Poetry" in *Theoretical Writings*, 242.
- ¹⁰⁶ See especially Benjamin Noys' *The Persistence of the Negative: A Critique of Contemporary Continental Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).
- ¹⁰⁷ Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 3.
- ¹⁰⁸ Badiou, "A Manifesto for Affirmationist Art," 139. See also Watkin's *Difficult Atheism* for a key contemporary intervention on these issues.

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