Eidos volume 7 no. 2 (2023)

A JOURNAL FOR PHILOSOPHY OF CULTURE

DOI: 10.14394/eidos.jpc.2023.0017

Adam Lipszyc
Institute of Philosophy and Sociology
Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6425-7812
adamlipszyc@gmail.com

Häm on the Wall: Hamacher, Celan, and Two Simple Questions

Abstract:
The paper is a modest attempt at a careful assessment of Werner Hamacher's version of deconstruction as a reading strategy which centers upon the idea of the affortative caesura. In order to probe the potential and the possible limits of Hamacher's strategy, the author presents a Hamacherian reading of one of Paul Celan's poems, titled "Mauerspruch," a poem brimming with references to Walter Benjamin's work. In the first part of the paper the author shows the effectiveness of Hamacherian perspective. In the second part, however, following suggestions of the poem itself, the author shows that the perspective should be extended in order to include two crucial categories: the category of the image and the category of memory. Thus, ultimately, the assessment of Werner Hamacher's strategy results in a praise and a modest proposal of its amendment.

Keywords:
Werner Hamacher, Paul Celan, Walter Benjamin, memory, image, translation

By any standards, Werner Hamacher was one of the most interesting thinkers working within the tradition of deconstruction. His dazzling essays, which combined meticulous readings with deepest reflection on the very nature of language, sprung from a most fortunate encounter between the strategy first defined by Jacques Derrida and a masterful command of German letters. As a result, Hamacher offered, on the one hand, a deconstruc-

tive version of German literary tradition of the last two centuries and, on the other hand, a peculiar version of deconstruction marked to the very core by German literature and thought. His thinking centered upon the idea of "caesura," of the deconstructive, vertiginous moment he called the "affirmative," in which language ceases to "work" and encounters itself at the point of non-action where meaning and reference are suspended. It is this very moment which is to be brought to the fore by the act of critical reading.

One of the ways to appreciate Hamacher's powers is to look at his essay "Häm" which offers a breath-taking reading of a short poem by Paul Celan titled "Aus dem Moorboden" [From the Boggy Ground].[1] The poem appeared posthumously in the volume titled *Schneepart* and just like a few other texts in that volume, plays with some words and phrases borrowed from Walter Benjamin, in this case: from his essay on Franz Kafka.[2] The detailed analysis of the linguistic elements of the poem and their complex mutual relationships explicitly or implicitly refers to some of the most important of Hamacher's earlier essays. Among them, one should mention not only his earlier interpretation of Celan which can be found in the seminal essay on "The Second of Inversion,"[3] but perhaps even more importantly the two ground-breaking essays on Benjamin's own work. One of them is "The Gesture in the Name," a reading of Benjamin's discussion of gesture in Kafka, which establishes the key relationship between gesture, language, and non-action; the other is "The Affirmative, Strike," a reading of Benjamin's essay on violence, which introduces the key idea of the affirmative moment in language and links it to the idea of strike and justice.[4] These references being so clearly present in the close reading of "Aus dem Moorboden," the "Häm" essay can be seen as one of the points were many of the most important paths of Hamacher's own thinking meet.

In his analysis of Celan's poem, Hamacher relates the enigmatic non-word *häm* to the gesture which inhibits, breaks, and reopens language in the act of *Entsprechen* (un-speaking). The latter can be seen as equivalent to the gesture of *Entsetzen* (dis-establishing), the just, revolutionary non-act of de-positing discussed by Benjamin in his violence essay and analyzed by Hamacher as the affirmative. As such, the *häm*-gesture, a moment of linguistic vertigo, also breaks and reopens history – or opens another history in the hopeful act of exposure and promise. This gesture could be called messianic if it were not for the fact that, as a linguistic moment which breaks the regular structures of positing, it cannot posit anything itself, and thus it must be also internally broken. Therefore, the messianic can be truly messianic only in its broken form, and only the inhibited messianism, the *häm*messianism, can be a real messianism indeed. Finally, being apparently deeply private, it is also an eminently political, revolutionary non-act. It is comparable to the general strike in and against language coextensive with the law which is to be disestablished in the gesture of divine violence. As such, it would also – as Hamacher argues – form a perfect slogan to be written on the wall in a moment of political protest.

Having made this only partly playful suggestion, Hamacher refers in a footnote to a slightly earlier poem by Celan, published in the same volume. The poem bears the title "Mauerspruch" [Words on the Wall] and it was written during the '68 student revolution.[5] In fact, there is a whole sequence of Celan's poems written at that time. Many of them reflect Celan's sympathy for the student movement, but – Celan being Celan – they

---

1) Hamacher, "HÄM," 13–56. I would like to thank Ilit Ferber of the Franz Kafka University of Muri (and Tel Aviv University, to boot), for her insightful remarks that helped me improve the present paper and for a swift rescue operation which saved it from utter disappearance.

2) Celan, *Die Gedichte*, 335.

3) Hamacher, "The Second of Inversion," 337–88.

4) Hamacher, "The Gesture in the Name," 294–336; Hamacher, "Affirmative, Strike," 155–82.

5) Celan, *Die Gedichte*, 329.

do it in a very complex way. Thus, if one of the poems ends with the words "komm mit dem Leseschimmer, / es ist / die Barrikade" ("Come with the reading-shimmer, / it is / the barricade"), then the relation between the reading process and the political action established by this conclusion is far from being unequivocal.[6] On the one hand, the barricade may be watched from a window by someone who has just stopped reading and pushed his book away – and so the poem may be pointing to a tension between reading and acting, without clearly opting for any side of the dilemma. On the other hand, the poem itself, in its enigmatic nature, may be perceived as the barricade which inhibits the process of reading, but – by this very gesture of affirmative inhibition or break – releases from it the actual revolutionary shimmering.[7]

In this context it is worth remembering that when in the seminal *Meridian* speech Celan develops his central idea of the *Atemwende* (the breath-turn), the caesura, the crucial breaking point in the poem, his key example is Georg Büchner's Lucile crying absurdly "Long live the King" in the very midst of the French Revolution. By referring to this strange and seemingly antirevolutionary cry, Celan – who in this very speech proudly reminds us of having grown up on the anarchist writings of Kropotkin and Landauer – is as far as he can be from linking the crucial moment of poetic action to any reactionary gesture.[8] Rather, his example is to show that the poetic revolutionary act may be forced to break even the political discourse of revolution which is supposedly based on the very idea of the break. That, in other words, poetry may be about looking for the true revolutionary, truly radical – or rather abysmal and absurd – gesture of inhibition, break, and reopening of history.

Be that as it may, I would like to focus here on the poem "Mauerspruch" to which Hamacher refers to his "Häm" essay, but which (at least to my knowledge), he never discusses more fully. Concentrating on this particular poem in the context of Hamacher's work is worthwhile for two reasons. On the one hand, it can be shown how Hamacher's categories – or at least a reading strategy inspired by his work – prove extremely helpful for a reading of this poem which, in turn, helps to elucidate their anatomy. On the other hand, such a hemi-Hamacherian reading is also an occasion for asking two simple questions about this cluster of categories, questions which may result either in further elucidation or in a modest broadening of the cluster – or both. Here is the poem in German original:

MAUERSPRUCH
Enstellt – ein Engel, erneut, hört auf –
kommt ein Gesicht zu sich selber,

die Astral-
waffe mit
dem Gedächtnisschaft:
aufmerksam grüsst sie
ihre
denkenden Löwen.

6) Ibid., 326–27.

7) In a discussion on an earlier version of this paper, Werner Hamacher himself pointed out that Celan might be alluding here to Kafka again, namely to the famous ending of his parable on the New Attorney who studies the books of the law without applying them, a non-action which thanks to the readings offered by Benjamin, Giorgio Agamben, and Hamacher himself is often perceived today as one of the figurations of the true revolutionary violence which deposits the law.

8) Celan, *The Meridian*, 3.

And here is an English translation by Casimir Rapatzky:

WORDS ON THE WALL
Distorted – an angel, again, breaks –
a face comes to itself,

the astral-
weapon with
the memory-handle:
attentively it greets
its
thinking lions.

It is not difficult to see that also this poem is full of allusions to Benjamin's work. They are not as numerous as in the poem analyzed by Hamacher in the "Häm" essay, but they are more differentiated as far as their sources are concerned. More precisely, one can point to three such sources. The first and most obvious one is related to the famous image of Paul Klee's "new angel," which – as the wording suggests – was most immediately borrowed by Celan either from Benjamin's essay on Karl Kraus or from his announcement of the planned journal *Angelus Novus*. For it is in these two pieces that the actual description of the Talmudic new angel which breaks his singing appears explicitly.[9] In both texts the angel is the emblem of the critical gesture, the figure of the caesura which comes in the moment of the higher Now, and combines the aspect of the ephemeral with the aspect of absolute *Aktualität* (topicality). It is always new and hence it must stop and disappear.

It is equally well known that in the Kraus essay this aggressive gesture is turned against the journalistic prattle and it is linked to the practice of critical quotation. Thus, we can observe Celan making use of Benjamin's argument, but also modifying and radicalizing it. Firstly, it may be claimed that if Benjamin locates the caesura in the activity of the literary and cultural critic like Kraus or himself, Celan may be speaking about the very poetic practice itself. From this perspective, the poem reads like a commentary to other Celan's poems written during the '68 turmoil. Some of these poems are utterly filled with words and phrases taken straight from daily newspapers which are again and again cut out, broken, and quoted in the poems, thus forming estranging constellations that extract from them new tones and meanings.[10]

Secondly, and more importantly, the very possibilities of the poetic discourse enable Celan to push Benjamin's argument to extremes and reveal its necessary – if paradoxical – consequences. It is also here that Hamacher's work may be a crucial inspiration. As we have seen, in his analysis of the poem "Aus dem Moorboden," Hamacher suggested that if the curious non-word *häm* is to be effective as a gesture which results in the revolutionary breaking of discourse and the reopening of history, it must be broken or cut in itself, for otherwise it would turn into one more act of positing. The cut must be cut. Now, Benjamin does not arrive at this conclusion in his reading of Kraus, but we may suggest that Celan – who links this reading to his own politico-poetic practice – does. For let us notice that the very first line of the poem is broken, interrupted by the interjection. In other words, it seems that in order to become a caesura in discourse, in order to act as an interruption, the poem must interrupt itself. Not only does the angel sing only for a brief moment, but this very

9) Benjamin, "Announcement *Angelus Novus*," 296; Benjamin, "Karl Kraus," 457.

10) See for example the poem *Dein Blondschatten* which juxtaposes quotes taken from a newspaper article on of the student leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit with some phrases borrowed from an article on horse riding. Celan, *Die Gedichte*, 331.

brief moment is internally interrupted or cut as the angel itself breaks the clause which tries to speak about its own face. Thus, ultimately, the poem would be a broken and breaking, ever-renewed and ephemeral gesture of *Aktualität*, a true affortative, a strike in language. In particular: in the language of the press, but maybe also in the discourse of the revolution as such.

Fair enough. However, the title of the poem refers not to the press, but to street graffitto. Apart from the immediate historical context of the poem's composition – as noted by Hamacher, Celan was interested in this kind of street writing during the '68 revolt[11] – the title may be a reference the second Benjaminian source, namely to Benjamin's commentaries to a few poems by Bertolt Brecht. When discussing fragments of the *Deutsche Kriegsfibel* ("German War Primer"), Benjamin points out that the poems are "lapidary."[12] If the etymology of the word directs us toward the difficulty of engraving anything on the surface of a hard stone, then, according to Benjamin, the succinct nature of Brecht's poems has precisely the opposite cause: they are "lapidary" because it is as if they were written on the wall with a piece of chalk by a fleeing revolutionary. In this context Benjamin quotes a revealing fragment:

> Auf der Mauer stand mit Kreide:
> Sie wollen den Krieg.
> Der es geschrieben hat
> Ist schon gefallen.
>
> [On the wall was written in chalk: / They want war. / The man who wrote it / Has already fallen.]

If the ancient lapidary stone-engravings were to be eternal, the poems which are lapidary in the new sense of the word are also eternal in a new way. They are eternal in the fleeting moment of the constant reopening and breaking. This seems to be most relevant in the context of Celan's poem on the "words on the wall" which may be claiming for itself the same type of lapidary eternity. Moreover, due to the very ambiguity of the relationship between the title and the poem itself (does the title declare the poem to be a *Mauerspruch* or to be "about" a *Mauerspruch*?), the poem is both a graffitto in itself and a reflective commentary on the actual graffitti in the streets of the revolutionary Paris. It is a commentary in which a highly sophisticated poet turns into an exegete of fleeting remarks on the city walls, not unlike Benjamin who tried to apply the approach of a commentator of the classical, authoritative texts to the poems of Bertolt Brecht.[13] It may be argued that it is ultimately due to its own double character – as a graffitto and as a commentary – that the poem participates in the continuum of historical events and transcends it at the same time, enters history, and leaves it, thus reopening it in the critical gesture. On the one hand, the poem shares the revolutionary quality of the fleeting graffito which, as universally accessible "words on the wall," refuses to limit the practice of writing to paper and interrupts public discourse with subversive intervention. On the other hand, it also interrupts this very interruption with the gesture of poetical/critical commentary – and so it turns into a true act of *Entsetzung* and brings the continuum of events to an astonishing halt.

The third Benjaminian source of Celan's poem is also rather clear. It is the essay on Franz Kafka which was the main point of reference for the poem "Aus dem Moorboden" that Hamacher comments upon in his "Häm" essay. There are at least three moments in the poem that seem to be referring to this essay, not to mention the

11) See Celan and Wurm, *Briefwechsel*, 149–51.

12) Benjamin, "Poems by Brecht," 240.

13) Ibid., 215–16.

direct reference to the Czech coat of arms, to Kafka's mother's original name Löwy and to Celan's father's first name Leo – all present in the "thinking lions" of the last line of the poem.[14] Leaving aside this rather explicit reference and – for the time being – the two allusions to the Kafka essay which appear in the second stanza of the poem, let us focus only on the one which appears in the first stanza. It can be found in the very first word of the poem, that is *entstellt* [distorted]. For apart from being a crucial term in Benjamin's book on his *Berlin Childhood around 1900* which, however, does not seem to be relevant in our context, "distortion" forms one of the key categories in Benjamin's analysis of Kafka's work – and perhaps even more so in Hamacher's reading of this analysis. Here, again, Hamacher's take turns out to be most helpful. Benjamin stressed the importance of the category of distortion for the proper understanding of Kafka's world and pointed to all the distorted figures appearing in his world, with famous Mr. Odradek as their bizarre leader. For Benjamin, the distorted figures are the inhabitants of the unredeemed world of oblivion and they will disappear when the redemption comes.[15] In his reading, however, Hamacher has stressed the fact that the distorted creatures themselves, in their very distortion, should be seen as playing a crucial messianic – or rather *häm*messianic – role. For the disestablishing affortative, the "cloudy spot" of gesture, can be presented only as misrepresented, its *Darstellung* is possible only in *Enstellung*.[16]

Hamacher's insight proves to be extremely instructive in the context of Celan's "Mauerspruch." The second line of the poem speaks of a face coming to itself. Thus, it would seem that something that has been alienated overcomes its *Entfremdung* and – having made a full circle – reaches itself. In the context of this poem, it would seem that the name for this *Entfremdung* is *Entstellung*, and that the face finally gets rid of its distortion. But as Hamacher has shown both in "The Second of Inversion" and in "Häm" itself, in Celan's later work the movement of homecoming or coming-to-oneself is usually broken in a paradoxical, yet precise way. As the first line of the poem is broken and distorted by the interjection of the ever-new, breaking and broken angel, it would rather seem that the face comes to itself precisely as distorted, by the very process of distortion. Thus, the poem – a graffitto and a commentary to graffitto at the same time – a gesture introducing a critical, revolutionary caesura in the discourse, the strike in language, may be ultimately identified with the distorted face of the angel, which can be presented only as distorted, which must distort, disfigure itself in order to come to itself, that is, to be effective in its non-work of *Entsetzung*.

And yet this reading does not seem to be fully satisfactory – not only because so far, we have not even touched upon the second stanza of the poem. For it is hard to forget that in "Mauerspruch" the distorting and distorted, breaking and broken affortative, the gestural moment of *Atemwende* crystallizes itself in the form of an image: the image of the distorted face of the angel. This leads me to my first question concerning Hamacher's categories or perspective, a question which is raised not so much by myself, as it is by Celan's poem. This question – concerning *the very idea of the image* and how it fits, if it does, into the cluster of Hamacherian categories – can draw our attention to an apparently marginal moment which Hamacher, however, does seem to acknowledge.

It would seem rather clear that in his sympathies and reading strategies Hamacher follows a radically iconoclastic tradition. Thus, for example, in the final passages of "The Gesture in the Name" he links the gesture and the affortative, the broken non-name of Odradek, to Benjamin's dictum that Kafka was the most faithful follower of the second commandment. Moreover, as Hamacher points out, Kafka goes even beyond

14) Concerning the Czech coat of arms and "greeting" see Celan and Wurm, *Briefwechsel*, 145 and 147.

15) Benjamin, "Franz Kafka," 811.

16) Hamacher, "The Gesture in The Name," 327–36.

that, for his version of the prohibition is broken in itself: *Ihr sollt euch kein Bild* – [Thou shalt not – unto thee any graven image]. As Hamacher notes, this is not so much a performative actualization of the prohibition, as it is a break in the very linguistic mechanism of the law-positing.[17] In other words, it is a manifestation of the fact that this fundamental law cannot be a law at all, for it de-posits rather than posits, and so it cannot be posited in itself. It also shows how Kafka – and Hamacher with him – are all too clearly aware of the fact that the stable formulation of the iconoclastic principle would go against the ultimate motive of this very principle which questions all posited presence as the ultimate ground. And yet, this awareness does not yet lead to a rehabilitation of the image in any form.

However, in the "Häm" essay one may find some hints of such a rehabilitation, even if certainly a highly paradoxical one. When discussing the first two lines of the poem (*Aus dem Moorboden ins / Ohnebild steigen*, or "From the boggy ground into / Without-Image rising"), Hamacher suggests that this *Ohnebild*, this non-image or without-image, is both an iconoclastic moment of absence of any image and an image of "without."[18] Agata Bielik-Robson has suggested to me that this *Ohnebild* may be a truly monstrous translation of the Russian *безобразие*, which literally would mean, indeed, something like *without-image*, but which in fact means precisely "monstrosity." This is most fitting in the context of Hamacher's reading, as here and there Hamacher seems to suggest that Celan's strange linguistic gestures can be indeed seen as translations, as the moments of *entsetzende* and *aussetzende Übersetzung*. This path, which I cannot enter here, would necessarily lead us toward "Intensive Sprachen," Hamacher's fundamental study on the question of translation in Benjamin.[19]

However this may be, this monstrous image, this non-image, is still – or rather again, after all the iconoclastic criticism has been duly performed – an image indeed, which intervenes into and appears within language. It is as if the radicalization of iconoclasm lead to a paradoxical restitution of the image, although only as the image-in-language and only in its monstrous, distorted form. Indeed, both Benjamin and Celan themselves seem to offer support for such a view. Benjamin's dialectical image – an image in language which does not revoke iconoclasm, but which is precisely the moment of caesura intervening within the fabric of historical discourse – would certainly be a case in point.[20] But so would be the discussion of image in Celan's *Meridian* speech and his notes to it. For if for Celan the moment of *Atemwende*, of the caesura in the poem, is the point where all the tropes of language are driven *ad absurdum*, then it is also identified as the unique moment of the image.[21]

These two sources, however inspiring as they are, would still need a bit of a healthy Hamacherian deconstruction. They both seem to present the breaking moment of the image as all too stable in itself. When looking for a more fitting notion of the image that would serve our purposes, we could turn to the early notes by Benjamin devoted to the non-phenomenon of horror (*das Grauen*).[22] For it is in these notes that Benjamin discusses the moment of the terrifying awakening from sleep or meditation when someone's face suddenly looks me in the eye. It is the moment of awakening and thus of opening, but it is also the moment when both my formed body and the face of the one who wakes me up both get deformed. It is also the moment when I am thrown into speechlessness, when I get literally gagged. If we take this Benjaminian phenomenology of horror as our inspiration and model, we can arrive at the preliminary conclusion that within Celan's poem it is the

17) Ibid., 335–36.

18) Hamacher, "HÄM," 18–21.

19) Hamacher, "Intensive Languages," 485–541.

20) Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 462–63 and 475 (fragments N 2a, 3; N 3, 1; N 10a, 3).

21) Celan, *The Meridian*, 10, 87, 101 and 125.

22) Benjamin, "Über das Grauen I" and "Über das Grauen II," 75–77. It was Ilit Ferber who first drew my attention to these important notes.

image one cannot look at – the monstrous, distorted face of the angel – that truly does the terrifying non-work of *Entsetzen*. Thus, the poem itself would urge us to supplement Hamacher's perspective and vocabulary with such a notion of the monstrous image which, appearing in language and bringing it to a crisis, marks the spot of the affirmative caesura.

In order to touch upon the second question – that Celan's poem can be seen as urging us to ask Hamacher's texts – we finally need to discuss the second stanza of the poem. Here the distorted and distorting face is perhaps identified with an enigmatic "astral-weapon." This identification is uncertain, suspended, and broken, for the sequence divided by the comma at the end of the first stanza and by the break between the two stanzas as such does not have to be necessarily read as establishing an equation. However this may be, this weapon is perhaps a weapon of resistance, of the revolution which just like the barricade mentioned above may be identical either with an extra-poetic gesture – say, an actual graffitto on the wall written by one of the protesters – or with the poem itself *as* a graffitto and a revolutionary gesture proper. In the context of Hamacher's reading of "Aus dem Moorboden" in the "Häm" essay, we may also link this weapon to the *Flinte* from that poem, the hopeful gun which fires in the *häm*messianic moment. That the weapon is "astral" and interrupted in itself by the hyphen at the end of the first line of the second stanza may be – in the Benjaminian context – linked to the idea of constellation as a dispersing and dispersed conceptual weapon of grasping the truth of the historical moment.

Even if the latter point may not be fully convincing, Benjaminian context is crucial for a proper reading of what comes after the colon which breaks the second stanza. More precisely, it is the Benjamin's Kafka essay that needs to be evoked again. For dangerous as the weapon may be, it greets the thinking lions of Prague – and it does it "attentively," attention having been famously defined as the natural prayer of the soul. As Celan quotes in the *Meridian* speech this Malebranchian definition after Benjamin's Kafka essay, the use of the word in a poem so rich with Benjaminian references is hardly accidental.[23] But it is also in the *Meridian* speech that Celan links this attentiveness not to the work of the eye – it will be remembered that if there is a return of image here, it is a monstrous image-in-language – but to the work of memory which records the unique dates. Hence it does not come as a surprise to see memory mentioned in the third line of the second stanza. This may be also one more (third) reference to Benjamin's Kafka essay where memory is rather explicitly presented as a messianic medium. In his poem, Celan speaks of a "memory-handle" which I would suggest to read as the memory as a handle. In other words, it is memory that forms the handle or shaft of the astral-weapon of the revolutionary *Entsetzung*, of the hopeful *Flinte* and, perhaps, of the hammers doing their depositing job – the hammers that Hamacher speaks of in his "Häm" essay. Perhaps it would be too playful to speak of the hammer graphically formed by the memory-handle of the second stanza and the flat first stanza which speaks of the face and the angel as the hammer's *Kopf* or head. In English, incidentally, hammers also have faces (with which they strike!), and even eyes – which is where the handle shows itself on the top of the head. Leaving this playfulness aside, however, the second simple question that I would like to raise in the context of Celan's poem concerns precisely *the function of memory* and its possible place in the Hamacherian universe.

Now, Hamacher's moments of caesura seem to be defined preeminently by their relation to futurity. This is the case not only because they are the true moments of opening on the unexpected, the opening of history on another history, of breaking the mythical *Schuldgeschichte*, the history of guilt and debt.[24] Moreover, as Hamacher's impressive study on guilt- or debt-history itself suggests, the moments of *Entsetzen*, which break both the causal chain of events and the chain of retribution, can be seen as the moments of intervention of something that comes from the future, of something that is always coming. Only such an intervention forms

23) Celan, *The Meridian*, 9; and Benjamin, "Franz Kafka," 812.

24) Hamacher, "Schuldgeschichte," 77–119.

the proper non-present presence of justice beyond the law of language, the Now of the higher, ephemeral *Aktualität*. This seems to be most relevant in the context of "Mauerspruch," if one only thinks of the fact that in one more text where Benjamin discusses the new angel, the famous and mysterious "Agesilaus Santander," the angel actually does come from the future.[25]

However, the angel in "Agesilaus Santander" is also turned toward the past, perhaps in an act of memory. And if one thinks in this context of Benjamin's discussion of the revolutionary potential of historical cognition in the *Arcades Project* and in the theses "On the Concept of History," as well as of Celan's association between the poetic act and attentiveness as an act of memory, then one may come up with the following, rather simple suggestion concerning the very structure of the moment of caesura. This suggestion can be seen as the second, modest supplement to the imposing edifice of Hamacher's conceptual world, an extension which springs rather naturally from my hemi-Hamacherian reading of Celan's poem. Namely, the very text of "Mauerspruch" seems to point to the fact that the hammer with the distorted head of the angel works only together with the handle of memory. The simple Benjaminian-Celanian suggestion would be, then, that the depositing caesura which opens and exposes history to futurity is possible only due to the act of memory directed towards something lost, something silenced in the past. This act of memory does not really sublate the oblivion, for it can remember things only as distorted – and this is how it does its *häm*messianic job. This act of attention results in a splitting of the present discourse by marking it with strange hemi-words like *häm* and distorted images like the angel's face – "the words in the image of silence," to use Celan's phrase which Hamacher discusses in "The Second of Inversion" – and only thus opening it to the future.[26]

Finally, then, it should be noted that the poem itself suggests a complex interplay between *the moment of the image* and *the moment of memory*. For if we look at the words *Gesicht* and *Gedächtnis*, separated by the break between the two stanzas of the poem, we can see that there is a third, unspoken word, which forms a sort of a silenced, middle term: a missing link between them. This word is simply *Gedicht*, or "poem." The poem forms itself, gains its shape in the tension, in the astral constellation which appears between *Gesicht* and *Gedächtnis*, between the image and memory. But, again, it forms itself as deformed and its shape is a non-shape. Or, we may say, it is the moment of memory, the handle of *Gedächtnis*, which deforms, distorts the angel's *Gesicht* into a poem, *Gedicht*; and thus, in this distorted form, lets it truly come to itself. It may well be, then, that it is only for the sake of the silenced ones that need to be attentively remembered that we are given the right to write down the word that deposits our language, law, and history and thus exposes them to the future, the breaking and broken word which is the affirmative, distorted, monstrous image-in-language, the image of the angel's face. It may well be that it is only on this very condition that we are given the right to write Werner Hamacher's *häm* – on the wall.

25) Benjamin, "Agesilaus Santander (First Version)" and "Agesilaus Santander (Second Version)," 712–16.

26) Celan, *Die Gedichte*, 66.

Bibliography:

Benjamin, Walter. "Announcement of the Journal *Angelus Novus,*" translated by Rodney Livingstone. In *Selected Writings*, Vol. 1. 292–96. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996.

—. "Karl Kraus," translated by Edmund Jephcott. In *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2. 433–58. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999.

—. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002.

—. "Franz Kafka," translated by Harry Zohn. In *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2. 794–818. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999.

—. "Commentary on Poems by Brecht," translated by Edmund Jephcott. In *Selected Writings*, Vol. 4. 215–50. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003.

—. "Agesilaus Santander," translated by Rodney Livingstone. In *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2. 712–16. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999.

—. "Über das Grauen." In *Gesammelte Schriften*. Vol. 6. 75–77. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991.

Celan, Paul, and Franz Wurm. *Briefwechsel*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2003.

Celan, Paul. *Die Gedichte. Kommentierte Gesamtausgabe*. Edited by Barbara Wiedemann. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2005.

—. *The Meridian*. Translated Pierre Joris. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.

Hamacher, Werner. "Affortative, Strike," translated by Dana Hollander. In *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*. Edited by Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne, 155–82. London: Routledge, 1993.

—. "HÄM. Ein Gedicht Celans mit Motiven Benjamins." In *Keinmaleins. Texte zu Celan*. 13–56. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2019.

—. "Intensive Languages." Translated by Ira Allen and Steven Tester. *Modern Language Notes* 127, no. 3 (2012): 485–541.

—. "The Second of Inversion." In *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan*. Translated by Peter Fenves, 337–88. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

—. "Schuldgeschichte." In *Kapitalismus als Religion*. Edited by Dirk Baecker. 77–119. Berlin: Kadmos Kulturverlag, 2003.