

**studi
germanici**



3-4
English **2013**

Paul Celan and Jacques Dupin in the journal “L’Éphémère”*

Michela Lo Feudo

In an essay written some years ago, Yves Bonnefoy wonders about his friend the poet Paul Celan.¹ The text is an invitation to reconsider an underexplored aspect of studies based on the author of ‘Todesfuge’: the relationship between the German-language poet and his contemporaries in France, where, as is well known, he lived from 1948 until the end of his days.

Bonnefoy chooses to deal with the unstable ground surrounding a comparison between a biographical and a critical approach to the text,² relating the experience of the *Goll-Affäre* to some aspects connected to Celan’s reception in his country of exile. The memory of the vehemence with which he reacted to Claire Goll’s infamous accusations of plagiarism – in particular after 1960 – with notable damage to his state of mind and interpersonal relationships, gave rise, the author maintains, to a condition of voluntary and conscious isolation, of marginalization sought and obtained. A passage from the correspondence between Celan and Adorno, cited in the epigraph, indeed shows a poet lucidly expressing his own solitude, oscillating between condemnation and pride.³ Considering Celan’s *oeuvre* to be an extreme expression of the fusion between man and poet, poet and poetry, Bonnefoy seeks to read beyond the intrigue of the me-

*Translation by Alexander Booth.

¹ Yves Bonnefoy, *Ce qui alarma Paul Celan* (Paris: Galilée, 2007). In 1972 the author had already published a work entitled Paul Celan (in “Revue de Belles-Lettres”, 1972, n. 2-3, pp. 91-97) which was then inserted in the collection *Nuage rouge: essais sur la poétique* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1977, pp. 323-330) and *La Vérité de parole et autres essais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995, pp. 545-552).

² The question was considered in the volume edited by Camilla Miglio and Irene Fantappiè: *L’Opera e la vita. Paul Celan e gli studi comparatistici*, Conference proceedings, Naples, January 22-23, 2007 (Naples: Il Torcoliere, 2008).

³ In particular a letter dated March 17, 1961. Celan and Adorno’s correspondence, recently translated into Italian, is concentrated on this “singularity” of the Jewish poet’s condition. The question emerges already within the title: *Solo, con me stesso e le mie poesie: lettere 1960-1968*, edited by Joachim Seng, trans. by Roberto Di Vanni (Milan:



dia plot hatched in Germany and sees, in his friend, an attitude of constant closure towards those who he believed could be a threat to his person and to his writing.

According to Bonnefoy, the primary reason behind Celan's concern is to be found in the clear awareness with which his friend looked at the situation of contemporary poetry; that is, through the lens of his own experience. He, in fact, saw his own literary project under attack from the specter of widespread anti-Semitism, Claire Goll's accusations of plagiarism being only the tip of the iceberg. And that very event, Bonnefoy continues, was the result of an instrumentalized reading of the text done with the clear intention of diminishing Celan's work. From this perspective, the interpretive process was placed at the center of an operation aimed at diverting the reader's attention away from the understanding of pain elaborated within the writing:

Pourquoi Paul Celan ne parvint-il jamais à se défaire du souvenir de la calomnie? Assurément il savait le lien qui, par en dessous l'explicité, unissait ces diffamations à un antisémitisme dont le nombre de manifestations sournaises, et à Paris même dans son quartier, l'inquiétaient grandement et bien naturellement. [...] Ce que d'étranges passants lui glissaient dans les mains voulaient le chasser de France si ce n'est le faire périr. [...] Et même il avait constaté, à quelques reprises, que cet antisémitisme s'accompagnait d'une lecture de sa poésie aussi erronée que réductrice mais parfaitement explicable par des intérêts inavoués. Des critiques, si c'est le mot qui convient, se plaisaient à trouver dans Sa poésie trop d'art et même de l'esthétisme, et c'est évidemment parce qu'ils espéraient détourner ainsi le lecteur vers l'aspect littéraire de ces poèmes certes complexes aux dépens de leur apport essentiel qui était souffrance, mémoire et témoignage. Ils détestaient la lucidité dont Paul Celan faisait preuve, et surtout qu'à travers ses mots allemands remis en ques-

Archinto, 2011). Celan's position towards Adorno – the author of the well-known verdict “nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch” – manifests here in all of its dramatic complexity. Cfr. AA.VV., *Lyrik nach Auschwitz? Adorno und die Dichter* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2006), pp. 27-72 for Adorno's contribution.



tion, déchirés, mais tout autant préservés, elle fût la preuve de cette foi dans la parole qu'avait persécutée le nazisme.⁴

According to this reading, the poet perfectly understood both the superficiality and the ominousness of the widow's attacks. However, if in Celan's eyes the accusations of having used Yvan Goll's work as a model bordered on the ridiculous, they nevertheless triggered a process of unraveling within the symbolic fabric of the text by extracting images from their original linguistic framework. Distancing the thick weave of meanings from their context, the poetry underwent a process of coarse and dangerous deformation, or even worse, cancellation. Bonnefoy's analysis depicts an internally corroded and distorted writing: lived as an experience in which the word, freed from its ordinary meaning, was re-created by the conscience and by the tongue which transmitted it, Claire's attack negated the work's value of being simultaneously an individual and collective bearing of witness.

Put in these terms, the analyses shift the *Affäre* from a stylistic and personal plane to a much more complex hermeneutical and sociological one. The Celan affair demonstrates in an exemplary fashion how the poet cannot be reduced to a mere *bricoleur des mots* (Bonnefoy's term) who takes images from others without elaborating them through his own experience. If the accusations put forth by Claire Goll's supporters had meant to highlight the excessive linguistic refinement of Celan's poems with the intention of reshaping the message,⁵ Bonnefoy's criticism underlines that Celan considered the worst blow, on the contrary, to have come not from his detractors, but, paradoxically, from the community of intellectuals who had proclaimed themselves his supporters and had negated the existence of "loans" from Goll's work. In refusing to offer a different key to the reading of the work that would have brought its originality and importance to light,⁶ Celan's supporters instead constructed their defense in exactly the same way as their adversaries. And it is

⁴ Yves Bonnefoy, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Furthermore, within a panorama of this type, it is important to conduct an epistemological comparison with Peter Szondi. Associated with Celan, Szondi, as is known,



precisely this wrongheadedness that is at the origin of the poet and man's closing up and isolation.

However, Bonnefoy not only points his finger at the German-speaking intellectual community that should have adequately examined Celan's work and preserved its integrity: on the one hand, in France as in Germany, the cultural *élites* oriented their examinations elsewhere; but, on the other, Celan himself had no interest in participating in Parisian intellectual life. *Goll-Affäre* aside, the author points out, Paris in the 1960s was animated by "spéculations structuralistes et textualistes, sur le fonctionnement du langage [et] sur les pouvoirs de la parole".⁷

[La vie de Paul Celan en France] frappe d'abord par une curieuse abstention. Paul vivait donc à Paris mais assez souvent à la campagne, lieu de rencontre de choses de la nature offertes dans des mots et des noms français auxquels il était attentif – il m'en parla à plusieurs reprises – et qui nourrissaient son rapport à l'intimité de la langue. Il parlait tout à fait bien le français de la société intellectuelle et aurait pu, non certes considérer d'écrire dans notre langue – la poésie ne permet pas de rompre avec la langue natale –, mais se risquer à quelques essais, se prêter à des entretiens avec des critiques, participer à des discussions où se fussent exprimés son souci de la poésie et sa façon de la vivre. N'avait-il pas un savoir de l'histoire récente, et de l'effet de ce drame sur la parole, aussi bien sinon mieux que beaucoup d'autres, à ceux qui ne l'avaient pas comme lui obtenu de façon directe? Et des amis, en France, il en avait tout de même, il fit partie, par exemple, du comité de rédaction de *L'éphémère* où l'amitié, fût-elle parfois orageuse, était ce qui décidait de tout. Paul s'abstint pourtant de participer aux débats français, et même il ne voulait pas vraiment, et longtemps ce fut même pas du tout, que ses poèmes fussent traduits. Certes, les difficultés de ceux-ci sont grandes, de ce point de vue de la traduction, et il était bien placé

was among the first to approach Celan's output with critical intelligence. Cfr. Paul Celan – Peter Szondi, *Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005).

⁷ Yves Bonnefoy, *op. cit.*, p. 32.



pour s'en rendre compte. Reste qu'en France on n'avait rien de son oeuvre. Paul Celan ne fut ainsi à Paris, en France, sa vie durant, poète que par ouï-dire. Ce qu'il savait qu'il était, il ne pouvait le vivre qu'avec très peu de personnes.⁸

A poet "only by hearsay", Bonnefoy maintains that Celan remained on the margins of French social life in spite of his intellectual vivacity and optimal knowledge of French. In this fashion, the author not only failed to participate in the vivacious cultural ferment that characterized France from the 1940s through 1968, but deprived the country of his presence as well as his testimony.

The history of Celan's reception in France reconstructed by Dirk Weissmann⁹ nevertheless demonstrates how complex and unstable the author's behavior was throughout his years in Paris. Weissmann in fact sees the author as having had a dual purpose. On the one hand, he wanted to implement a personal "literary strategy" through a system of *habitus* and choices aimed at establishing a network of relationships useful to his legitimization within the literary field.¹⁰ On the other, he promulgated an out-and-out "ethos of refusal", an ever greater closure toward the protagonists of the literary scene. Dictated by an intermittent logic, that behavior tended to follow the fluctuations of the psychological and emotional effects of the *Goll-Affäre*.¹¹ This closure, together with the intrinsic complexity of an already rather inaccessible poetry, pushed Celan to block a large part of his French translations and to refuse to authorize the distribution of complete editions, even though numerous publication projects in collaboration with the most eminent

⁸ *Ivi*, pp. 30-31.

⁹ Dirk Weissmann, *Poésie, judaïsme, philosophie. Une histoire de la réception de Paul Celan en France es débuts jusqu'à 1991*, doctoral thesis in German Studies, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris III 2003.

¹⁰ The concepts "literary strategy" and "habitus" are at the basis of theories developed by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in his studies on the birth of the literary field in France in the second half of the 19th century. See above all: Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'art: genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1998).

¹¹ The dossier edited by Barbara Wiedemann, *Paul Celan – Die Goll- Affäre. Dokumente zu einer Infamie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2000) gathers essential sources on the matter.



publishers and the most important national journals had already been begun.¹²

The first translation proposal had been from *Le Seuil* in the summer of 1962. They were interested in publishing either a complete edition or an anthology. Most likely due to the suspicions he harbored toward his translator, the poet Philippe Jacottet, Celan, however, decided to abandon the project. The following year Yves Bonnefoy, who collaborated with the “*Mercur de France*”, expressed his intention to publish a presentation of the author along with the translation of *Meridian* and a selection of poems in the journal. This time, on the contrary, it was the journal that interrupted the work. Then, in 1966, the “*Nouvelle Revue Française*” decided to entrust the translation of a *corpus* of texts to the young poet Jean-Claude Schneider. That project turned out well: eight poems from *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* and *Sprachgitter* were published in a bilingual edition. Thereafter, a volume edited by Gallimard containing Celan’s most recent poems was supposed to appear; however, Celan himself blocked its realization in January of 1967 and it was not to be completed until ten years later.¹³

In those years, the poet accepted other collaborations with writers and intellectuals present in the French capital. Though sporadic, these exchanges had a specific weight that bears mentioning: an example is Celan’s participation with the notebooks of “*Éphémère*” (1967-1972), a journal of art and poetry he had endorsed – first indirectly, and later in person – from the very beginning. The periodical’s editorial policy was regularly discussed by the editorial board, and the collective meetings in turn became occasions for private collaboration among the members of the group.

It is upon this backdrop that Paul Celan’s meeting with Jacques Dupin (1927-2012) took place. Having met in the journal’s *entourage*, the two then worked closely together. In the present study, we will attempt to understand how their poetic *Begegnung* took form by allowing their respective contributions to the pages of “*Éphémère*” to

¹² Dirk Weissmann, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 158-165.

¹³ *Ibid.*



speak for themselves. After connecting Celan to the editorial project, we will offer a reflection of a comparative nature, comparing his German language texts to those of Dupin. Employing Jauss's terminology, we will attempt to understand which questions were raised by Celan's poetics within the debate surrounding the journal – and, eventually, the questions to which it responded.¹⁴

The *Cahiers* of "Éphémère" and Celan's contribution

Founded in 1967, the journal began as a true cultural showcase that intended to welcome and promote the international avant-garde. Celan was included in just such an ambitious milieu from the very first issue, and soon became its most translated foreign author. Beginning in the autumn of 1968, the poet began to work as a member of the editorial board, the only one of the group who was not French.¹⁵ If, as Bonnefoy recalls, solid ties of friendship united most of the members of the *équipe*, it would be reductive to maintain that the poet had been introduced to an organization connected by emotional ties alone. The intellectual stature of the journal's founding core – made up of the poets André du Bouchet, Jacques Dupin, and Michael Leiris (who had begun to participate starting with Issue Number 10 in 1969); and the critics and writers Louis-René Des Forêts,

¹⁴ Hans Robert Jauss has demonstrated how the word "poetics", inserted into the dialogic structure that characterizes it, instigates a long-distance exchange of questions and answers that guide the interpreter in his or her understanding of the text. Moved by a preliminary interest on the reader's behalf, by his or her *curiositas* toward the literary fiction transmitted by the text, this interaction is at the base of a truly gnoseological course capable of breaking up our preconceived ideas and of questioning the darkest and most hostile aspects of reality. Cfr. Hans Robert Jauss, *Esperienza estetica ed ermeneutica letteraria. II. Domanda e risposta: studi di ermeneutica letteraria* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1988). I am referring primarily to the first chapter: *Breve storia della funzione di domanda e risposta* (*ivi*, pp. 53-120).

¹⁵ Celan's work takes up eighty pages, thirty of which are in the original language, and is distributed over six issues (about one third of the publication's run). Most of the texts had been translated by André Du Bouchet, but translations by John E. Jackson and Jean Daive were also published, along with texts from the critics Jean and Mayotte Bollack. Alain Mascarou, *Les Cahiers de "l'Éphémère"* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998), p. 19.



and Gaëton Picon¹⁶ – is an indication of the need it felt it had to create a wide ranging space of aesthetic debate on contemporary art. It was, in any event, a project as vast as it was temporary – as the journal's very name suggested, it was a project that, no matter how brief, was not without friction and desertions. Nevertheless, “l'Éphémère” left to posterity intense studies that are still worthy of attention.

The initial project was developed in the autumn of 1965 when the editor and modern and contemporary art collector Aimé Maeght brought together a group of poets and writers in his Paris office in the rue de Téhéran¹⁷ with idea of entrusting them with the leadership of a quarterly journal that was to fill the void left in the literary panorama of the time by the closing of the “Mercure de France”.¹⁸ On Jacques Dupin's recommendation (director of Maeght Editions since 1955), the gallerist called André du Bouchet, Yves Bonnefoy, Gaëton Picon, and Louis-René Des Forêts, all of whom had worked at the “Mercure”. The participants agreed upon the founding of a quarterly journal of literature and figurative arts.¹⁹ The idea became reality two years later in January of 1967. It was the beginning of a great period of work that was to last up until 1972: nineteen quarterly illustrated *Cahiers*, filled with multiple intersections between the figurative arts, music, and literature forged in a climate of openness and debate with foreign creative endeavors.

¹⁶ Picon had been *Directeur des Arts et des Lettres* at the Ministry of Culture from 1959 to 1966.

¹⁷ The gallery in the rue de Téhéran from 1945 on showed Maeght's private collection and became a reference point for numerous French post-war artists. Maeght had in fact launched a flurry of promotional activity and artistic distribution, supported by his eponymous publishing house starting and, in the following year, the creation of the Fondation Maeght, a Saint-Paul de Vence. *Le intenzioni di una rivista e il ruolo di André du Bouchet*, in “L'Éphémère”. *Pagine d'arte e di poesia 1967-1972* (from then on FMD), edited by Francesca Melzi d'Eril (Florence: Alinea Editrice, 2001), pp. 7-17; Alain Mascarou, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

¹⁸ The final issue (1221-1222) is dated July-August 1965. The eponymous publishing house had been acquired by Gaston Gallimard in 1958, which had partially resolved its financial difficulties by interrupting the publication of the periodical whose editorial policy had been deemed too close to that of the “Nouvelle Revue Française”.

¹⁹ Jacques Dupin, *L'univers d'Aimé et Margurite Maeght* (Saint-Paul de Vence: Fondation Maeght, 1982), p. 202.



Alain Mascarou isolates two particular moments within the life of the journal. The first so-called "liberal" phase was announced by the events of May 1968 – which were to become an ideological and cultural watershed – and ran from Issue Number 1 through 7 (January 1967 – October 1968); it was characterized by the collective and synergistic work of the collaborators as well as Paul Celan's entrance and Jacques Dupin's formal membership (Number 7 of October 1968). This was followed by a "radical" period. The issues published between January 1969 and June 1970 (Numbers 8-13) echo with the divergent opinions that were present within the protest movement, so much so that successive issues were published even though the decision to dissolve the reading committee had already been made. The notebooks from this period assumed a rather composite aspect. From that point on, the appearance of a *corpus* of coherent texts that seemed to have something in common with one another slowly disappeared. The abrupt departure of Gaëtan Picon, in the spring of 1969, brought about the real break: the ex-director of the "Mercure de France" had published the article *Contestation et culture* in "Le Monde" (8/6/1968) in which he expressed his perplexity with the student movement. His positions, in direct contrast to the enthusiasm displayed by Jean-Louis des Forêts, André du Bouchet, and Jacques Dupin in the pages of "Éphémère", were restated in the article that had been previously rejected by the reading committee, *Les jardins de Luxembourg en mai 1968*.²⁰ A similar act of censure provoked Bonnefoy – who already believed the prerequisites of dialogue and collaboration were missing – to gradually distance himself from the journal as well.²¹

Paul Celan entered into contact with the journal's editorial board thanks to André du Bouchet who, in addition to being a poet, painter, and translator himself, was also one of the journal's core founding members and a good friend of Celan's. The two had met each other around 1955 and, especially from 1967 onward, du Bouchet was to be one of the people closest to Celan during the latter's convalescence

²⁰ Published in *La vérité et les mythes* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1979), pp. 95-137.

²¹ Alain Mascarou, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-86.



after a turn for the worse in his health. Though their letters between 1964-1969 are still unedited, Celan's correspondence with his wife Gisèle Lestrange highlights du Bouchet's solid presence as well as his help in the poet's final, difficult years.²² Celan's connection to the French author gave him the opportunity to be a part of the project, and thus transcend the mistrust that in those years had made his social interactions ever more difficult. The accusations of plagiarism and Celan's closed-off behavior, however, would have repercussions in this area as well. In 1968 there was a misunderstanding destined to upset the relationships between all the members of the journal: during a period of Celan's absence the editorial staff decided to publish – unbeknownst to Celan – some of his poems in a bilingual edition. The poet reacted brusquely by recalling his texts and threatening to leave the journal. It was Bonnefoy's turn to clear up the whole affair.²³ As a result, du Bouchet suggested that Celan publish some of the texts, and in particular *Der Meridian*.

“[C]e qui c'était le plus important pour nous” – Dupin reaffirmed many years later – “c'était de traduire pour la première fois et étudier ce qui était complètement inconnu en France”.²⁴ This is the reason why in a letter to Paul Celan in 1966 du Bouchet wrote:

Voici longtemps, cher Paul Celan, que je souhaitais vous écrire. Je le fais aujourd'hui pour vous dire que la revue ou le cahier trimestriel projetée avec Yves Bonnefoy, Louis-René des Forêts et Gaëtan Picon a, cette fois, pris corps – [...] – et doit sortir dès octobre prochain sous le titre «L'éphémère». Pour durer quelque mois, j'espère... À tous, il nous paraît *essentiel* que quelque texte de vous y figure dès l'un des premiers numéros – en français. Et je

²² Paul Celan - Gisèle Celan-Lestrange, *Correspondance (1951-1970)*, 2 vol. (Paris: Le Seuil, 2001).

²³ See in particular the letter to Paul Celan dated June 20, 1968, cit. in Axel Gelhaus et al., *Fremde Nähe, Celan als Übersetzer. Eine Ausstellung des Deutschen Literaturarchivs in Verbindung mit dem Präsidialdepartement der Stadt Zürich im Schiller-Nationalmuseum Marbach am Neckar und im Stadthaus Zürich* (Marbach am Neckar: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 1997), p. 536.

²⁴ Franco Buffoni, *Intervista con Jacques Dupin*, in FMD, p. 39.



songe, de nouveau, à votre admirable *Méridian*, auquel peut-être pouvait s'adjoindre une traduction de quelques poèmes.²⁵
[emphasis added]

Meridian's insertion into the new scenario under preparation with the founding of "Éphémère" assumed a precise meaning: the text, especially if it were to be published in the first issues, would take on a programmatic value in the context of a project that was still seeking its own editorial policy. *Meridian's* translation into French saw Celan's direct participation and thereby established a bridge between the author and the foreign audience. Camilla Miglio has demonstrated the degree to which Celan saw the practice of translation as being an essential part of his work: "Gesto dell'ascoltare, del comprendere e rimandare indietro la comprensione di qualcosa che resterà sempre diverso, che non verrà mai inglobato dal proprio sistema linguistico in modo assoluto, definitivo, totalizzante".²⁶ Translation (and poetry) was understood to be a kind of mental and verbal "leap" that corresponded to the poet's cognitive and creative outburst, he who was capable of both perceiving foreignness as such and forcing himself to understand it while aware of its very elusiveness.²⁷ From this point of view, diverse scholars have noted the presence of points of contact between the aesthetic-ethics of Celanian translation and that of du Bouchet, as one might assume based on their experience of reciprocal translation.²⁸ Confident of having been

²⁵ Letter dated March 14, 1966, cit. in Axel Gellhaus, *op. cit.*, p. 527. Dupin employs the same terminology to remember Celan's contribution to "Éphémère": "Aux côtés d'André Du Bouchet, d'Yves Bonnefoy, de Louis-René Des Forêts, de Michel Leiris et de moi, la présence de Paul Celan, ses contributions, sa vigilance ont été essentielles". Jacques Dupin, *Un appel. Paul Celan*, in *M'introduire dans ton bistro* (Paris: P.O.L., 2007), p. 163. The text was published for the first time in Castilian in the journal «Rosa cubica» (Winter 1995-1996).

²⁶ Camilla Miglio, *Vita a fronte. Saggio su Paul Celan* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2005), pp. 65 and 67 ("It is a gesture of listening, of understanding, and of postponing the comprehension of something that will always remain different, something that will never be absorbed by the linguistic system in a complete, definitive, or totalizing manner").

²⁷ *Ivi*, pp. 61-64.

²⁸ As regards this point, see John E. Jackson's essay entitled *L'Étranger dans sa langue* and that of Bernard Böschenstein on André Du Bouchet traducteur de Hölderlin et de Celan,



“understood” correctly from the human and poetic point of view of his friend – and in the hope that the operation would create favorable conditions for his reception in France – Celan demonstrated a never-before-seen flexibility toward du Bouchet. The French translations took shape through a process of true rewriting in a foreign language.²⁹ Allowing his own texts to be published in “*Éphémère*” meant, for Celan, exposing himself to the process of recreating the poetry in a social and cultural context different from the German-speaking one; and in this new context, the poetry could meet with incomprehension or misunderstandings in a historical moment in which memory of the Vichy government was still alive in the minds of the formerly occupied populace.

Let us return, however, to the suggestion of publishing the translations of *Meridian* in “*Éphémère*”. The “essential” importance attributed to Celan’s contribution was sanctioned in an unequivocal manner by the launch of the publication. The text, translated by du Bouchet, was included at the beginning of the first issue.³⁰ Furthermore, the editorial committee had preferred not to compose a manifesto that would have limited them to illustrating the research group’s intentions. Only a *prière d’insérer*,³¹ printed on flimsy stock, had been inserted discretely between the periodical’s pages:

L’éphémère a pour origine le sentiment qu’il existe une approche du réel dont l’œuvre poétique est seulement le moyen. En d’autres mots: il ne faut pas consentir à réduire l’œuvre – acte, dépassement, devenir – à la nature d’un objet, où cet au-delà se dérobe. Le but de *L’éphémère*, c’est de créer un lieu où ce souci de la vraie fin poétique, d’être le seul accepté, pourrait se retrouver plus intense. Et ce sera

contained in the volume *Autour d’André Du Bouchet*, edited by Michel Collot. Actes du colloque des 8, 9, 10 décembre 1983 (Paris: Presses de l’École Normale Supérieure, 2003), pp. 109-117.

²⁹ On the work undertaken by Celan and du Bouchet in the field of Translation Studies see again Dirk Weissman’s reconstruction, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 188.

³⁰ “*L’Éphémère*” (from now on to be referred to as EPHE), (1967), n. 1, pp. 3-20.

³¹ In publishing, the term indicates a little piece of paper attached to the copies that are to be sent to the critics. *Dictionnaires Le Robert* (Paris: Le Robert, 2004), p. 2068.



aussi d'élucider à plusieurs et les diverses conditions de l'acte de poésie et les notions, les mots, que chacun de nous emplit pour les dire. Il s'ensuit que L'éphémère, ce ne sera que quelques personnes, mais ensemble, et durablement, pour une recherche en commun par leurs voies certes fort différentes. Et on le voit: aucune critique, au sens appréciatif ou descriptif ou analytique de ce mot, n'a place dans L'éphémère. Pour les œuvres de la poésie et les arts y seront interrogées, mais sous le signe toujours de cette instauration d'absolu où l'extériorité se dérobe.

The group strategically set poetic creation at the heart of their literary investigations. This is perceived, *in primis*, as an experience. Such a perspective is critically established in regard to how many, in Mallarmé's wake, looked to the structure of the literary text as an end in itself, as the ultimate end of lyric writing: "Il ne faut pas consentir à réduire l'œuvre d'art" – one reads in the first paragraph – "[...] à la nature d'un objet". Understood as a key to accessing reality, for the members of "Éphémère" poetry was an instrument of understanding the world, of crossing-through life in all of its physicality and mutability. Poetry penetrated the phenomenal substance of things while seeking an "au-delà"; the text's surface was nothing other than a cognitive impetus toward a more profound excavation of existence. This is a position that also seeks to distance itself from another aesthetic experience important to the history of art and French literature: Surrealism. As one can read in the *prière d'insérer's* final paragraph, it is not only the beyond, the symbolic, that hides itself behind the phenomenal appearance of things: the opposite is also true. Poetry, and with it art in a larger sense, was to interrogate the relationship that existed between the depth of linguistic structure and the complexity of the context which inspired it. The persistence of a connection, no matter how obscure, between the "objet" and the "au-delà" would thus betray, indirectly, the aim of crushing the principle, defended by Breton and his followers, that concepts are gifted with an existence independent of any confirmation by perceivable reality. According to the group of "Éphémère", a poetry



that did not come to terms with the incomprehensible concreteness of the world was unimaginable.

Conceived in this way, in the pages of the journal poetry is an across-the-board investigation far removed from any ideological frameworks of a political or cultural nature.³² Within this perspective, the experience is not only an indispensable introduction for a poetics that is synonymous with *enquête*; it also accompanies creation in every phase, becoming itself the privileged object of aesthetic reflection with respect to the “final product”. “L’état de création l’emporte plus que l’œuvre elle-même”.³³

The hoped for “instauration d’absolu” in the text expresses the search, through both verbal and non-verbal codes, for that which remains of a dissonant and lacerated reality which has been impoverished by a century that, though still unfinished, had put not only the sense and role of art to a hard test, but the very concept of reality itself. Moving beyond both Mallarmé’s idea of poetry and Surrealistic enthusiasm, the “Éphémère” group’s attempt ended up being suspended somewhere between the past and the present, absent as it was of subversive will, exaggerations, and formalisms. Instead, the value hidden in the potentialities and limits of language had about it the character of a challenge against the danger of a definitive failure of expressive possibility within the tragedy of history.

The same preoccupations, however, had already informed Celan’s reflections well before *Meridian*. As Laura Terreni has shown, the programmatic writings from the years 1958-60 indicate a change with regard to the previous prose pieces. Having lost faith in the experiences that had seen him a “sperimentatore ludico contestatore”,³⁴ the author began to question the concept of *Wirklichkeit* that was

³² Dupin compares “Éphémère” with the famous “Tel Quel”: “Tel Quel a été fait, a été bâtie sur des théories, les théories aussi sont des idéologies, ils se sont attachés tantôt au stalinisme, tantôt au maoïsme, mais ceci était au dehors de nos préoccupations”. Franco Buffoni, *Intervista con Jacques Dupin*, cit., p. 32.

³³ Jacques Bousquet, *Note-Book* [1938-1941], Rougerie, 1921, p. 40, cit. in *Alain Mascarou, Jalons pour une “biographie intérieure” de L’Éphémère*, FMD, p. 43.

³⁴ Laura Terreni, *La prosa di Paul Celan* (Naples: Edizioni Libreria Saperre, 1985), p. 45 (“experimenter playful objector”).



becoming absolutized, conceptually circumscribed, to the extent that it was beginning to coincide with *Wahrheit*.³⁵ Immediately after a more careful observation of the dialectic between reality and truth, the author rejected (without therefore definitively disavowing) "melodiousness": to his eyes too evident and too complete in the Symbolist and post-Symbolist tradition in France. His later research is more oriented toward a "musicality" that was more sober, more attuned to facts; for this he could not help but employ a jarring "grauere Sprache" obtained through arduous and meticulous work on language.³⁶ With his insecure, or even obstinate, progress, the Darmstadt discussion develops and radicalizes the problems implied in the prose of those years, and unconsciously moves towards those ideas expressed by the Maeght group. With its inclusion at the beginning of the journal, *Der Meridian* is an introduction to the investigation the *prière d'insérer* desired, and describes an ideal trajectory for the research conducted by other authors in the *Cahiers*.

Poetry, language and silence: the *Begegnung* with Jacques Dupin

If within criticism the relationship between Paul Celan and André du Bouchet is well accounted for, that with the young Dupin – who in those years was trying to make his way forward between poetry and art criticism in the environment of the cultural *élite* of Paris – remains rather unknown. In this case too the contact between the authors took place through the creative and interpretive experience of translation. In the spring of 1970:

[Celan] accepta, la dernière année de sa vie, de traduire une suite de mes poèmes. Il choisit des poèmes qui lui semblaient proches et qu'il désirait traduire. Mais leur titre: La nuit grandissante, m'a paru, après coup, rejoindre ses hantises profondes. Plusieurs séances de travail

³⁵ *Ivi*, p. 46.

³⁶ Here I refer to the celebrated *Risposta ad una inchiesta della Libreria Flinker* (1958), from which I relate certain passages in the Italian translation by Giuseppe Bevilacqua: Paul Celan, *La verità della poesia. "Il meridiano" e altre prose* (Turin: Einaudi, 1993), pp. 37-38.



chez lui, non loin de la Seine. Nous nous sommes penchés sur sa table. Il tenait à m'associer à son travail sur la langue, la double langue dont il cherchait jusqu'au vertige à trouver l'accord, les équivalences. Moments

bouleversants pour moi où l'acuité de son écoute et de ses questions, les dérives nécessaires, la pesée du mot sur le trébuchet des correspondances, la saisie des sonorités et des rythmes me forçaient à relire, à redécouvrir, à récrire pour lui des poèmes presque déjà évaporés.³⁷

According to Dupin, an exchange, tacit and developed at a distance, over time was established through their texts:

J'avais la sensation dès mes premières rencontres avec lui, au début des années cinquante, mais aujourd'hui plus clairement qu'alors, que nous procédions, que nous étions descendus, séparément, des mêmes collines rocailleuses et nues. Je crois que Paul le présentait, me tendant la main. Il ne m'en a jamais dit un mot. Nous nous sommes trouvés, rencontrés souvent, peu confiés. Tendus, ensemble et distincts, sur l'interrogation, sur l'instabilité de la langue.³⁸

As Celan says: “[D]as Gedicht zeigt, das ist unverkennbar, eine starke Neigung zum Verstummen”.³⁹ The poetry discloses a strong tendency toward silence. Dupin expresses his own anxieties as regards the theme of silence in the text entitled ‘Moraines’, which was published in Issue Number 8 of “Éphémère”:

Le silence creuse son lit dans la parole jusqu'au cœur de celui qui ne l'attend plus, qui veille et travaille dans la souffrance de sa non-venue. Balle de nul fusil tirée, à nul horizon comparable, elle se loge dans le cœur bruyant, pour l'anéantir, et germer. Nous n'avons plus à dominer la mer, assourdissante, à transcrire le marmonnement du

³⁷ Jacques Dupin, *Un appel. Paul Celan*, cit., p. 164.

³⁸ *Ivi*, p. 163.

³⁹ Laura Terreni, *op. cit.*, p. 106.



cyclope... Le silence qui reflue dans la parole donne à son agonie des armes et comme une fraîcheur désespérée. Le moindre mot se charge de violence, même celui que sa violence native écartait de nous. Distincte du mouvement des lèvres grises, la parole silencieusement irradie... Trajectoire du crépuscule, météore grandissant...⁴⁰

The word seems to be harassed, eaten away by silence. The void that opens up in the language generates missing action ("la non-venue") and creates inexistent forms ("la balle de nul fusil tirée, à nul horizon comparable"). One, however, is dealing with an absence that turns into an uncomfortable presence: "[Elle] se loge dans le cœur bruyant pour l'anéantir, et germer". This is an incapacity that, if on the one hand deprives poetry of its traditional prerogatives of comprehension of surrounding reality ("Nous n'avons plus à dominer la mer, à transcrire le marmonnement du cyclope"), on the other ensures its introduction into the pulsing heart of man so as to bring about new life. To the rigidity of having a bearing on the already rough surface of the words comes the "refluer", the flowing in an opposite direction. Silence, then, paradoxically becomes an innovative blood that corroborates an unexpected inorganic landscape. It is as if it were giving life to a world made of words, a world in which weapons are substituted for the sea (line 5) and the only possible value is violence ("le moindre mot se charge de violence, même celui que sa violence native écartait de nous"). In this restored relationship between language and the world, silence presents itself in all of its "desperate freshness", exercising a power of attraction, even if decadent and fleeting (suggested respectively by the lexemes "crepuscule" and "météore"); it delineates a trajectory, a trail to follow that preannounces itself ever more forcefully ("grandissant") and captivatingly.

⁴⁰ Jacques Dupin, *Moraines*, in EPHE (January 1968), n. 8, pp. 60-69. The text was later included in the collection *L'Embrasure* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), and is currently in *Le corps clairvoyant 1963-1982* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), pp. 147-185. The *corpus* contains, among others, all of the texts published in "Éphémère" with the exception of *Le trajet le plus court* (which appeared in Number 4).



The affinities to Celan's reflections on the uncertainty of language and on the necessity of its reformulation after the experience of the war are evident. Though he perceives the destructive force of silence, Dupin understands the necessity of not renouncing creation. On the contrary: creation must renew itself while bringing with itself the signs of its own mourning. From this point of view, the word "grige" (le "lèvres grises" in line 7) appears and, by no means a coincidence, sounds very close to the *grauere Sprache* of Celan. We are, in any event, before parallel modalities, each actualizing its own *Atemwende*⁴¹ as had been proposed in *Meridian*, each appropriating a poetry made of a "linguaggio attualizzato, affrancatosi sotto il segno di un processo individuante, indubbiamente radicale, ma, allo stesso tempo, perennemente consapevole dei limiti che la lingua impone, delle possibilità che la lingua dischiude".⁴² A language – oscillating between fullness and emptiness – that seeks to recognize both itself and the world and, finally, lay claim to its own existence.

A poem like 'Flügelnacht' can be read as the attempt to relate to the growing void produced by the weakness of the word, and to confront a world of which it is creator and eyewitness. The poem was published in the same number as Dupin's 'Moraines'.

Flügelnacht, weither gekommen und nun
für immer gespannt
über Kreide und Kalk.
Kiesel, abgrundhin rollend.
Schnee. Und mehr noch des Weissen.

Unsichtbar,
was braun schien,

⁴¹ This formula gave its name to the 1967 collection, which was composed in the period immediately preceding Celan's inclusion in "Éphémère".

⁴² Laura Terreni, *op. cit.*, p. 106: "Sondern aktualisierte Sprache, freigesetzt unter dem Zeichen einer zwar radikalen, aber gleichzeitig auch der ihr von der Sprache gezogenen Grenzen, der ihr von der Sprache erschlossenen Möglichkeiten eingedenk bleibenden Individuation". The translation remains that of Giuseppe Bevilacqua, *op. cit.*, p. 15.



gedankenfarben und wild
überwuchert von Worten.

Kalk ist und Kreide.
Und Kiesel.
Schnee. Und mehr noch des Weissen.

Du, du selbst:
in das fremde
Auge gebettet, das dies
überblickt.⁴³

The text includes the reader in a vision of movement: the winged night, or night in the form of wings, initially approaches the observer's eye with a horizontal movement, and comes from afar ("weiter gekommen", line 1); then, with a vertical trajectory, it sweeps toward the ground. Night invades space, covers it (the idea is suggested by the preposition *über*, line 3) while falling into a suspended, timeless dimension ("für immer", line 2). This moment generates the precipitation of all the elements present on earth ("abgrundhin rollend", line 4). Sky and earth are combined in one singular, universal collapse whose end one cannot see – the idea of movement in its unfolding is suggested, among other things, by the present participle of the verb *rollen*. The end of this collapse cannot be seen, but can be intuited: the contrast with the past participle of the second line ("gespannt") expresses a movement that is interrupted immediately thereafter. The idea of fulfillment – or better still, of annihilation – to which Celan often refers through the metaphor of white/snow is amplified by the "für immer" and connects the image to a dimension in which the perpetuity of nothingness and the falling toward a space-time abyss whose dimensions are difficult to perceive prevail.

⁴³ 'Flügelnacht' is part of the collection *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* (1955). I have consulted the bilingual edition edited by Giuseppe Bevilacqua: *Paul Celan. Poesie* (Milan: Mondadori, 2001), p. 216.



This invasion of the night (the night of nature but at the same time that of writing), nevertheless, does not bring darkness. On the contrary: beginning in the fourth stanza it is clearly reality that is being presented to the eyes of whoever is watching the shadows' advance from below. It is a reality that is pulverized, barren, made up of chalk, lime, and gravel ("Kreide, Kalk, Kiesel", lines 3-4). Elements are reunited here that, beyond suggesting the idea of aridity, present themselves in the form of colors whose luminosity is emphasized by the line "Schnee. Und mehr noch des Weissen" (line 5). This is an abundant and asphyctic white, a white of the absence of life, that returns in the second stanza, introduced, moreover, by the privative prefix *Un-*. The relationship between light and darkness is turned on its head in the second group of lines as well: it is not the night with its darkness that denies the light of the world; but rather, it is the whiteness – evoked in the last word of the preceding stanza – that no longer makes the dark colors visible ("Unsichtbar, was braun schien"). Reality appears to progressively fade, covered by a spectral mantle that paralyzes it, and takes it away from itself.

It is interesting to note how Dupin also takes advantage of a similar scenario in a text that came after 'Flügelnacht' and was published in "Éphémère" entitled *Le soleil substitué*.⁴⁴ The text further develops, in our opinion, the problems posed in *Le silence creuse son lit dans la parole*.

"Un chiffon neigeux glisse sur l'obscurité du tableau. Il efface les lignes de la nuit, les calculs d'une approximation fastidieuse, les jambages d'une culpabilité oppressive. Que reste-t-il que la main va toucher?"⁴⁵ As opposed to 'Flügelnacht', the scene does not represent a movement of night upon the barren earth, of darkness upon light, but the opposite: a subtractive white takes the place of the surface of a picture, and cancels it out. The field of view or, we could say, metaphor of artistic representation, the painting that has the

⁴⁴ Jacques Dupin, *Le soleil substitué*, in EPHE (November 1970), n. 19-20, pp. 450-459. The text was included in the collection *Debors* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), then collected in *Le corps clairvoyant*, cit., pp. 221-234. In this paper I refer to the version that appeared in "Éphémère".

⁴⁵ *Ivi*, p. 450.



characteristics of night ("l'obscurité" of the first line, echoes in the following "les lignes de la nuit"), is threatened by a snowy covering that cancels out tormented frames of mind ("les calculs d'une approximation fastidieuse, les jambages d'une culpabilité oppressive") and envelops reality, considered in its concreteness and perceivability ("Que reste – il que la main va toucher?"). In both cases, the reader can feel the presence of an external presence (the night and the snow) threatening his or her perception of things as they present themselves to the eye.

Nevertheless, in 'Flügelnacht' a slight change of perspective is suggested. Within an already barren landscape that is to be further impoverished, the only elements that bring color and life are thoughts ("gedankenfarben", line 8) and words ("wild überwuchert von Worten", lines 8-9).⁴⁶ This section of the stanza could be seen as an attempt on the part of man – observer of natural and linguistic phenomena – to react to the impoverishment and fading out of the world through the activity of thought and its concretization in the form of language. The effort which has been described in the second stanza, however, is invalidated by the three successive lines: that which remains of this confrontation with reality is always the same landscape. If the order in which the elements are presented in the text has changed ("Kalk" preceds "Kreide", line 10), nature remains inorganic and achromatic. The word which intervenes, which reacts to the attacks from outside, does not seem to have the power to change or recreate the world, to oppose itself to its corrosive tension.

Dupin proceeds by insisting on the destructive power of the void brought on by silence. The poet's reaction is above all emotional: that which remains after the cancellation of the painting is "la projection d'une parole évidée par la peur".⁴⁷ After having excavated the word, the poet is gripped by fear and worries about a definitive defeat by the artistic gesture ("peur, [...] que d'autres pages, hors du tableau, ne s'entrœuvrent").⁴⁸ The author seems to be a victim of

⁴⁶ Furthermore, in this case, the presence of the prefix *über* in "überwuchert" could be seen as a reaction to the movement from the ground up towards the night in line 3.

⁴⁷ EPHE, p. 451.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*



the confusion created by the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign brought to paroxysm when he affirms “nous sommes le non-lieu et le non-objet, d’une gravitation de signes insensés, [...] de leur élan destructeur, le champ dévasté de leur conjonction et de leur divergence”.⁴⁹ It is, however, a fleeting moment. Poetry for Dupin remains forever a space of pain and of possibility (“espace de la douleur et de la chance”);⁵⁰ therefore, the mixed fear and feelings of rage and hatred are followed by an out-and-out “betrayal” of poetry as it had been understood up until that moment: according to the author, one must try to leave the well-worn paths of contemporary poetry, not only in order to save oneself, but to contribute to the continuation of the existence of artistic creation itself. The hoped-for change is not to be found in looking to the past, Dupin believes, nor in subverting the tradition: “Ce n’est pas par la distorsion d’une pratique ancienne que le glissement, la dérive, la migration se poursuivent et s’amplifient...dans le livre et hors du livre”;⁵¹ nor is it in realizing a revolution against the political and cultural institutions to which writing is connected by a double thread of dependence and dissidence. Writing finds within itself, and within the *hic et nunc* that has made it such, the strength to interrogate and regenerate itself; it “recueille et réactive sa trace dans sa matérialité déchirée”, it feeds upon its own internal laceration and “demeure, pendant son repliement, l’axe du renversement du Réel, la puissance de dislocation féconde”.⁵²

In ‘Flügelnacht’ the disastrous attempt to recompose the shreds of reality submitted to our gaze opens, at its conclusion, an unexpected perspective. In the final lines, there is once again a reference to the sense of sight, which, filtered by the presence of a “Du”, is personified (“Auge”).⁵³ The ambiguity of the German text would make one think that the interlocutor is an indignantly addressed

⁴⁹ *Ivi*, p. 452.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ivi*, p. 458.

⁵³ On the rich polysemy of the image of the eye, which is quite frequent in Celan’s work, cfr. Pier Marco Turchetti, *Ethos des Auges. Testualità e lessicografia nelle bozze preparatorie di alcune poesie di Sprachgitter*, in *L’Opera e la vita*, cit., pp. 103-137.



night; from this perspective, the text conveys the idea of an inexorable void that is generally alien to both the landscape and to itself. A second type of reading, however, would bring one to see – at this point of the text – an appeal to the reader who has assisted in the invasion of darkness; and these readers, implicated as they are in the void's advancement, are called upon by the author through the synecdoche in line 15. In this case, the word's past, the confrontation with the word in the second line, would truly be consummated.

The eye that observed the fall of night (and perhaps the falling of the snow if one literally interprets line 5) is simultaneously "fremd" and "gebettet, das dies überblickt": it is alien to the phenomenon, even if it participates in it. Here too readings can differ. That which seems the most logical with that which so far has been said is connected to the concept of *Fremdheit*, expressed once again in *Meridian*: at the looming threat of silence inherent in poetry after Auschwitz, the real challenge would be to react, to seek to absorb the corrosive power in order to turn it into an aesthetic key. The creative burst would thus transform itself into human and artistic strength intent on understanding alterity in all its uncomfortable difference, with the ultimate goal of investigating ourselves, being itself both outside of itself and the world. The "Auge gebettet" that accompanies the conclusion of the text thus becomes the image of man who, perceiving his own irrelevance before the natural world, attempts to go against it, well aware of the danger of just such an action and the risk of being taken over by a feeling of solitude and alienation. In this way, the paradox recurrent in the writer's works – which is at the same time a provocation – returns; the paradox which Camilla Miglio has seized upon, seeing in Celan's landscape the style of "non belonging": a landscape "continuamente attraversato da crepacci e interruzioni, fatto di sabbie e ghiacci inospitali, inabitabile, se non per brevi attimi, sempre esposti al pericolo di cadute in profondità (o altezze) fagocitanti", in which poetry tries to construct a different referentiality, a *neue Wortlandschaft*, a new landscape of words that are able to generate *Sprachräume* in which one recognizes one-



self,⁵⁴ but which, as we have demonstrated in ‘Flügelnacht’, shift between decay and palingenesis.

The conclusion Dupin arrives at is to write, in spite of the difficulties. “Cesser d’écrire n’est pas s’exposer”:⁵⁵ without exposing oneself, without internal and external conflict, neither creation nor personal regeneration can exist. It is the trace of an experience worthy of being lived (“cesser d’écrire n’est pas disparaître. Et disparaître n’est pas finir”);⁵⁶ it is the act of affirmation of that poetry which, as Celan himself writes, “ne s’impose plus, elle s’expose”, it must seek its own focal point in the world outside of itself, with the risk of dangerously teetering at the brink.

Celan and the French period: research prospects

La poésie ne s’impose plus, elle s’expose. Written by Celan and published in “Éphémère” and published in original form after the poet’s suicide,⁵⁷ the note reassumes, in a dry and abrupt French, some of the central themes discussed in the pages of Bonnefoy and du Bouchet’s journal. What emerges, in fact, is the entire crisis of a literary genre by that point incapable of giving itself theoretical foundations, of determining, from within, goals and paths to take.

The idea is suggested by the double meaning of the verb *imposer*: in the sense of “suggesting from within”, the aphorism makes clear that it is no longer possible to realize the principles of *art pour l’art* in which art has an intrinsic value, its own reality in respect to the outside world; on the other hand, poetry is no longer able to assert itself, in as much as the centrality that it had assumed within the artistic revolutions of the twenty years between the two world wars had not been enough to prevent the rise of Nazi-fascism. The only way

⁵⁴ Camilla Miglio, *Vita a fronte*, cit.; in particular, the chapter *Il nuovo paesaggio, di parole*, pp. 30-39 (“Continually shot through by clefts and interruptions, made up of inhospitable sands and ices, uninhabitable for more than a few short moments, forever exposed to the danger of falling into devouring depths (or heights)”).

⁵⁵ EPHE, n. 19-20, cit., p. 455.

⁵⁶ *Ivi*, p. 458.

⁵⁷ EPHE (1970), n. 14.



to react to the crisis of poetic representation would seem to be to impose a new impulse to that which came before. A new, but dangerous, impulse: disruption was needed, with unsafe but necessary movements, a getting out of oneself (*s'exposer* in the sense of "turning to the outside") in order to confront the world and explore ourselves. From this perspective, Dupin and Celan's testimonies, albeit with some differences, express the anxiety of the poet before the perception of a void of history and the lack of instruments to understand it; and at the same time the necessity of departing once more from a shared reflection on the marks the age had left within the linguistic sign.

The study of Celan and Dupin's texts published in "Éphémère" in no way exhausts the richness and the variety of the debate that the journal's pages came to create within the works of other notable authors, for example, Alberto Giacometti. Celan's contribution in his country of exile emerges, however, from the context of the journal: the editorial committee's interest in the poet's works responds, in fact, to the need to transcend the ideological and cultural void caused by disappointment with post-Symbolism and Surrealism on the one hand, and, on the other, the Occupation and the war. Moreover, it is through the work of one like Celan – in which art and history tragically converge – that the editors of *Cahiers* and its cultured audience were able to understand and read authors of the caliber of Osip Mandelstam, Marina Tsvetaeva and Nelly Sachs, in addition to Johannes Poethen and Iliassa Sequin.⁵⁸

But to return to Celan's direct contribution while in his country of exile (and to the question posited by Bonnefoy): rather than considering the "presence" of the author from the point of view of his sociological and media impact – as the French poet had done – or from the exclusively literary-historical one connected to his influence on French poetry, it seems to us opportune to try and combine the two approaches so as to bring to light, in all of their complexity,

⁵⁸ Alain Mascarou, *Les Cahiers de l'Éphémère*, cit., p. 181. The critic speaks of a true "constellation" of authors unknown to the French public and introduced into the cultural atmosphere of Paris thanks to Celan's interaction.



the elements of contact and tension which had an influence upon both the human and artistic relationships between the German-speaking poet and his contemporaries in the country that hosted him during the years of his most intense literary production.⁵⁹ The issue at stake is doubly interesting. If, on the one hand, this type of reading allows for a clearing up of some rather unknown aspects of French cultural history, on the other, it is above all Celan's *œuvre* that stands to benefit from a "French" perspective worthy of being explored in greater depth.

⁵⁹ Which would integrate, moreover, the perspective of analyses proposed by the poet and translator Martine Broda. In one of her studies from a few years ago in which she analyzed Celan's influence on works of other members of "Éphémère", Broda re-dimensionalized the phenomenon minimizing the "presence" of Celan-ian contamination in the works of writers close to the poet, like André du Bouchet and Jean Daive. The text is an act of accusation against a contemporary French poetry that was weak, almost intimidated, in the author's opinion, by the greatness of Celan's *œuvre*. From our point of view, what is interesting about Celan's experience in Paris is something else, as we have tried to demonstrate. Cfr. Martine Broda, *Présence de Paul Celan dans la poésie contemporaine*, in "Arcadia" (1997), vol. 32, pp. 274-282.