

ISSN 1918-7351

Volume 14.3 (2022)

Book Review

Keinmaleins: Texte zu Celan

**By Werner Hamacher; Preface by Jean-Luc Nancy
(Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2019)**

Andrej Božič

Institute Nova Revija for the Humanities, Ljubljana, Slovenia

ORCID: 0000-0003-4625-798X

The poetry of Paul Celan (1920–1970), the German-speaking author of Jewish descent, who had fortuitously fled the fate of his numerous, innumerable compatriots, of his parents perishing in the Holocaust, has attracted—and to this day continues to do so—dedicate and detailed attention of many contemporary philosophers belonging to—re-turning to it from—different, occasionally contradictory and conflicting traditions of thought. At the same time, the opaque movement of its discrete, secretive language, of its subtle, delicate voice, the complex composure comprising the inter-linking of opposing counter-currents—the re-appropriating self-alienation of the own and the re-alienating self-appropriation of the foreign—, through—amidst and across—idiomatic dialect(ic)s, (by) itself also often (cor)responds to—and re-sounds—the intense interest for philosophy, of which the poet was an avid reader. The multifaceted character of Celan’s poetic creativity that has not only, through commentaries, significantly contributed to, but is already, at its core, carried by the conversation between poetizing and thinking, thus, re-presents a specific hermeneutic challenge, which perhaps transports and deports

all efforts of understanding—each and every attempt at it—towards their very limits, towards its in-(de)termination.

The German literary theoretician, philologist, and philosopher, Werner Hamacher (1948–2017), who became—himself being crucially influenced by the endeavor(s) of Jacques Derrida—one of the foremost internationally acclaimed proponents of post-structuralist deconstruction, regularly wrote about and devoted several treatises to Celan’s enigmatic oeuvre. The posthumous publication entitled—with a hardly translatable, with an almost untranslatable word—*Keinmaleins* gathers—in the chronological order of conception—Hamacher’s texts on Celan, which the author, in the form of essays, articles, or lectures,—with the exception of one remaining as yet unpublished—separately presented to the public between the years 1999 and 2014. The six studies of the volume offer profound, both philologically meticulous as well as philosophically insightful interpretations of select poetic works by Celan that (predominantly) bear witness to the poet’s encounters with thinkers, whose writings—to a certain degree, albeit sometimes merely *per negationem*—fundamentally co-constituted the development of his auto-poet(olog)ic self-understanding.

Although the brief sketch of a review can only procure an inadequate, a cursory summary of Hamacher’s opulently knowledgeable and deliberately cogent book, it can, nonetheless, be said that at the center of the author’s discussions lie the—forever fragile, ever fragmentary—links connecting Celan’s poetry with some of the most important philosophical personalities of the 20th century. Whereas the first five studies consecutively contemplate upon the poet’s creative reception—the poetic trans-figuration, even trans-mutation of a potential “influence”—of the principal precepts—of theory, but also of practice—of Walter Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, and, finally, (Heidegger’s) Parmenides—or, vice versa, (Parmenides’s) Heidegger—, the last one—a sort of a recapitulation through the prism of a contemporary’s memoirs, of a friend’s memory—focuses on the fateful reverberations of Celan’s traumatic experiences as reported—on the basis of walks and talks shared together—by the French poet and translator Jean Daive. However, Hamacher’s highly attentive approach to Celan’s poetry, denoted by a keen hearkening to the intertwining of the (con)notated nuances of meaning as well as to the breaks, the ruptures and the pauses, the silences transpiercing its sense, does not content itself with recounting the (im?)possible inter- and cross-sections in the—tenuous and strenuous—relation between poetry and philosophy, but, taking account of the conversation that they themselves, that we ourselves are—striving, therefore, to take it a few steps further—, seeks—through the con-text(s) of Celan’s

language—to dis-close its opening—or to open its dis-closure?—towards the other, towards an()other other. The—*an?*—encounter—and, with it, the poetry of encounter—is (not)—only?—change, *Veränderung*, but (also)—not?—, as Hamacher repeatedly intimates, *Veränderung*, an—*the?*—othering.

Werner Hamacher's book on Celan compellingly and convincingly, through the encounters it discusses with passion and with patience, at all stations it halts at, pursues the path-way—as such it maybe is not of interest merely to the scholars of the poet, but may attract the amply heterogeneous readership concerned with the continuation of the n/ever-ending, n/ever-beginning conversation between poetizing and thinking, between poetry and philosophy—towards that, which warrants, within phenomenality itself, a glimpse into the—un-?noted? un-?not(ice)able?—abyss of the aphenomenal, towards that, which maintains itself—at odds with what is (not), against *all* odds—as, as one of Celan's poems pronounces, a “singable remnant,” *singbarer Rest*.