

# Language as Remnant: Survival, Translation and the Poetry of Paul Celan

Dipanjan Maitra  
Jadavpur University, Kolkata

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**Abstract:** This paper is an attempt to explore the relation between poetry and survival taking as a point of focus the poetry of the post-war European poet Paul Celan. By drawing attention to the French thinker Jacques Derrida's several influential studies of Celan's poetry on the problems of "witnessing", "testimony" and the "idiomatic" this paper finally examines the Italian thinker Giorgio Agamben's notion of the "remnant" to understand a poetics of survival.

**[Keywords:** Celan, survival, translation, witness, Agamben, testimony, remnant, Derrida.]

It, the language remained, not lost, yes in spite of everything.  
Paul Celan, "Speech on the Occasion of receiving the Literature Prize of the Free  
Hanseatic City of Bremen (1958)"<sup>1</sup>

Poets- witnesses- found language as what remains, as what actually survives the  
possibility, or impossibility, of speaking.  
Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*<sup>2</sup>

## I. Paul Celan and the mother tongue

A language that has remained is also in some ways a language that has survived. Hence to attempt to answer the question "what makes poetry survive?" one must confront at some stage the inevitable question of a language that has survived. The poetry of Paul Celan offers a site in which these two issues coincide. One of the great post war poets of the last century Celan, (born Paul Antschel to Jewish parents in 1920 in what was Bukovina, Romania before Soviet and German occupation) and especially his "Todesfugue" has come to represent the very symbol of Jewish suffering and plight during the Holocaust. Celan of course consciously avoided the term "Holocaust" and referred to the events of the Nazi era and also what took place in the Nazi death camps as "that which happened". As his biographers insist, the event that forever punctuates Celan's poetry is what he witnessed between 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> June 1942. By this time the Hitler-Stalin non-aggression pact had become ineffective once Hitler had attacked Soviet territory. Romania had joined the Axis forces and Bukovina's Romanian governor had begun deporting Jews to labor camps. According to Celan's friend Ruth Lackner, fearing a Gestapo raid Celan had decided to seek refuge in a cosmetic factory for the night of 27<sup>th</sup> June. But Celan was unable to persuade his parents to accompany him. His mother especially was convinced that it was futile to try to escape her "fate"<sup>3</sup>. It was to be Celan's last argument with his parents. The next morning he returned to find his front door sealed and his parents gone. Celan would himself contradict in his later recollections the exact chronology of events, even insisting that he had abandoned his father, across a barbed wire into a death camp. What is certain however is that he himself spent the next two years in a labor camp from which in 1944 he either escaped or was released. Celan would learn later that his parents had died in the camps and his

mother murdered, possibly near the Bug River.<sup>4</sup> The trauma of an inexpressible loss would forever be entailed by an obsessive guilt of survival in Celan's life and poetry:

Still do the southerly Bug waters know,

Mother, the wave whose blows wounded you so? ("Nähe der Gräber"/ "Nearness of Graves")<sup>5</sup>

The false charge of plagiarism leveled against him by the widow of the poet Yvan Goll would be for Celan simply another instance of anti-Semitic attack on Jewish life which according to him continued to exist in Germany and post-war Europe. Celan's eventful meeting with Heidegger in 1967 (which became the occasion for one of his most celebrated poems "Todtnauberg") or his equally significant "homecoming" in Tel Aviv in 1969 were perhaps his attempts to encounter (a term which would become crucial to his poetics) an insoluble paradox: the impossibility of thinking and writing in one's mother tongue which is also the language of one's mother's assassins: a language none other than German- German that *witnessed* its own degradation in the act of being an accomplice to Nazi propaganda, Nazi slogans and Nazi slurs:

And can you bear, Mother, as once on a time,  
the gentle, the German, the pain-laden rhyme?<sup>6</sup>

("Nähe der Gräber"/ "Nearness of Graves")

In an uncollected poem "Wolfsbean," the mother and her tormentors suddenly become linked inextricably through the very act of writing:

Mother, I've  
written letters.  
Mother, no answer came.  
Mother, one answer came.  
Mother, I've  
written letters to-  
Mother, they write poems.<sup>7</sup>

("Wolfsbohne"/ "Wolfsbean")

Like the ghastly image of the Nazi officer who writes love letters to his lover and daydreams in "Todesfugue", the phrase "Mother, they write poems" appears out of nowhere, confronts the entire poem with the restless, frantic queries of a tormented mind.

## II. Celan's "addressable Thou": The Witness and the Idiomatic

His most eminent biographer and translator in English John Felstiner shows, that Celan in his poetry began nothing less than a renewal of the German tongue. Being able to perform functions on the German language which is unparalleled still, Celan sought to infuse his mother tongue with elements from the "holy tongue" Hebrew, Hebraism-whose existence and whose history the Nazi officials tried to obliterate. Felstiner accounts for the notorious difficulty of translating Celan to this act of infusion, within this perpetual slippage in Celan's poetry into the idiomatic or even idiolects or neologisms. Jacques Derrida in his influential studies of Celan has insisted that it is the idiomatic that *marks* out the singularity of an event, its un-repeatability<sup>8</sup>, so that Celan in his tampering and modification of the German tongue:

...displaces it, in the sense that he leaves upon it a sort of scar, a mark, a wound.<sup>9</sup>

This “wound” or mark for Derrida is also a “mouth”<sup>10</sup> in the sense that it *speaks* and speaks precisely of the singularity of the poetic act. The task of the reader becomes thus to keep this wound/mouth “open”, un-sutured, ensuring that:

One must speak in such a way as to give it [the poem] the chance to speak. We are talking about this in reference to interpretive reading and the hermeneutics of the poem, but this also holds for life in general. One speaks, trying to listen to the other. One *should* speak while leaving to the other the chance to speak, while giving the floor to the other.<sup>11</sup>

This is true of Celan’s poetry as a whole as he insisted that poetry for him was essentially a dialogue a “message in a bottle” that perpetually seeks an Other or what he calls echoing Martin Buber an “addressable Thou”<sup>12</sup>. In this context, Derrida inaugurates a discussion of the significance of “dates” in Celan’s poetry. The “date” or a mark thus marks what Derrida calls an “idiomatic event”<sup>13</sup>. A poem itself becomes a witness to a singular, un-repeatable event. For Paul Celan, as his biographer notes poetry becomes the only vehicle of testimony because:

Like many people who lived through those years, he gave almost no factual testimony about them- which gives his poetry a testimonial charge.<sup>14</sup>

This “testimonial charge” is precisely the *burden* of testimony, of a secret, that his poems continually carry and contain within themselves. The densely allusive quality of some of his late poems – “Todtnauberg” or “Eden” (“Du liegst”) is also a result of the reader’s absolute separation from the idiomatic event. Celan’s late friend, the critic Peter Szondi (who outlived Celan only by a year, committing suicide in 1971) was a privileged witness to the genesis of “Eden” and although Szondi’s studies of Celan’s poetry (“Engführung” for instance) claim that the poem speaks of no reality other than its own his reading of “Eden” is inevitably guided by his first hand account<sup>15</sup>. Michael Hamburger, the noted translator of Hölderlin and Celan, refuses to translate “Eden” being aware of Szondi’s “elucidation”:

Szondi’s elucidation of the double or triple meanings of the operative words in that poem [“Eden”] might have enabled me to translate it, but not to make those meanings accessible to English-language readers without notes...So I chose not to translate the poem.<sup>16</sup>

In this case one can go so far as to say that it is in fact Szondi’s testimony that renders “Eden” with its complex allusions to the assassination of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht almost impossible to translate. Szondi’s study makes the poem and his comments on the events which according to him directly produced it, indispensable. The witness (Szondi) and Celan’s poem become inseparable in this instant.

In his Bremen address Celan relates the act of witnessing more fundamentally to language itself. Like Hannah Arendt who spoke of the German tongue as the only remnant<sup>17</sup> of pre-Hitlerian Europe, Celan speaks of language as a remainder:

Reachable, near and not lost, there remained in the midst of the losses this one thing: language.

It, the language remained, not lost, yes in spite of everything.<sup>18</sup>

What Derrida has termed an “untranslatable testimony” can be thought of in terms of a fundamental incapacity to speak, a language and its *own* answerlessness:

...it had to pass through its own answerlessness, pass through frightful muting, pass through the thousand darknesses of deathbringing speech.<sup>19</sup>

To go back to Derrida's question is many-layered:

But what would an untranslatable testimony be worth? Would it be a non-testimony? And what would a testimony that was absolutely transparent to translation be? Would it still be a testimony?<sup>20</sup>

Celan answers this profoundly chiasmic question by treating the problem of an idiomatic event in a language that is a remnant. When can a language become a remnant? What is the nature of such a language? This is how Agamben's notion of the "remnant" becomes relevant in the context of Paul Celan's poetics.

### III. The *remnant*

The "remnant" is a term that Agamben interrogates in texts often devoted to his path breaking reading of messianism in relation to Walter Benjamin or even St. Paul. One can think of *The Time that Remains* or even his much celebrated *Homo Sacer* project in this context. Agamben locates in various messianic texts by Paul and others where an irrevocable fissure is introduced between various categories- the Jews and the non-Jews, the saved and the non-saved, the human and the non-human not by advocating a simple policy of exclusion but by positing a *remnant*. The *remnant* functions as a state of exception taken to its extreme not by making the law inoperative but by *dis*-applying itself, taking the law to its extreme fulfillment by making it *unformulable*. Thus the limits separating the human from the non-human, the possible and the impossible become simply irrelevant. The German extermination camps embody perfectly this state of exception as everything becomes possible within that space<sup>21</sup>. The *remnant* as a concept in Agamben exists to demonstrate this double negative, the non-non-Jew, the non-non-saved, not something that is a part of the whole but rather a radical "non-coincidence" of the part to the whole. It is that which *remains* of both. This is how Agamben defines the witnesses of Auschwitz – neither the dead nor the survivors but "what remains between them"<sup>22</sup>. Celan's language if it is truly a language of the witness (of the idiomatic event, of "that which happened") then it should also function as a *remnant*. To understand this relation of the *remnant* to the poetics of Paul Celan it is important to trace the itinerary that Agamben follows to approach Celan's poetry.

Agamben is led into a dialogue with Celan's poetry by none other than Primo Levi and *his* reading of Celan. For Levi, a survivor of the extermination camp Celan's poetry appears as a "pre-suicide" writing that is reminiscent of the "last inarticulate babble" of the dying<sup>23</sup>. Agamben associates Celan's babble to the speech/babble of the most unfathomably obscure figure in the extermination camps: the non-language of the "Muselmann". The "Muselmann" to put it simply is he who can not bear witness, nearing death with severe malnutrition, the Muselmann is he on whom the distinction between the human and the non-human has become blurred. It is significant that Levi's book usually translated as *If this is a Man* indicates this figure in the camps. The Muselmann exists only through memoirs of survivors. There is none, as there could not be any account or testimony of the Muselmann. Levi, like Celan was haunted till the end of his life (which also ended in a suicide) by the guilt of having survived, always in place of others. Levi is never tired of admitting that it is the Muselmann and not himself (or other survivors for that matter), who is the true witness. One such figure was a certain Hurbinek, the "child of Auschwitz", who died in the camps in 1945. He spoke only babble and once repeated only one word which Levi imagines to have been either "mass-klo" or "matisklo"<sup>24</sup> and which bore no resemblance to any language on earth:

They dug and heard nothing more;  
 they did not grow wise, invented no song,  
 devised for themselves no sort of language.  
 They dug.

(“Es war Erde in Ihnen”/“There was earth inside them”)<sup>25</sup>

The Muselmann is not a survivor, neither is he one of the dead, he is as Agamben brilliantly shows, the complete witness and thereby a *remnant*. Correspondingly, his language also functions as a language of testimony although like that of Hurbinek barely more articulate than babble. But to put the question more bluntly, what does such babble actually say? How does it bear witness to events when it can hardly be comprehended? There are no sentences or linguistic markers to signify anything. One can only ascertain that *something* has been enunciated. To analyze this *something* in speech that no longer signifies Agamben calls for an entirely new semantics or rather a *metasemantics* of enunciation.

#### IV. A metasemantics

In *Remnants of Auschwitz* Agamben draws our attention to the last phase of Michel Foucault’s career when independently of Emile Benveniste, he was drawing closer to a “metasemantics built on a semantics of enunciation”<sup>26</sup>. This semantics of enunciation does not concern itself with a “definite level of linguistic analysis” i.e. the sentence, the proposition or the text of the statement but on *discourse* and its *taking place*. Agamben calls it an analysis of a pure *outside* of language, its pure exteriority. Within what he calls the “positive dimension” of the plane of enunciation, Foucault, according to Agamben, locates his *archive*. The archive is to be thought of as a space situated between what Agamben calls the *langue* (meaning the system of construction of *possible* sentences, in other words sentences that are *possible* to speak) and what he terms as the *corpus* meaning the collection of sentences *actually* uttered. Agamben, unlike Foucault wishes to investigate not the realm between the *said* (in actuality) and what is possible to say (i.e. *langue*) but rather the region between *langue* and its taking place, between a “pure possibility of speaking and its existence as such”<sup>27</sup>. This realm what he subsequently terms as *testimony* is what demarcates the *outside* from the *inside* of *langue*. This is also how Agamben makes a distinction between the *archive* and *testimony* in two ways. Firstly, the *archive* is that which is made up of a system of relations between the *said* and the *unsaid* while *testimony* always hovers in the space between the *sayable* and the *unsayable* in every language. Secondly, Agamben reopens in some ways the question of the agency of the subject. In the Foucauldian constitution of the *archive* “the bracketing of the subject”<sup>28</sup> was inevitable. The subject was reduced to a mere function of “anonymous” statements, as only a *subject of enunciation*. But *testimony* because it is situated between the *unsayable* and the *sayable* exists as a *contingency* always accompanied by a possibility *not to be*. This contingency is not to be confused with the utterance and non-utterance of discourse or speaking or not speaking. Instead it refers to the possibility that the *subject* may or may not have language, that the *subject* is incapable of speech. By “contingency” Agamben means the “giving of” a possibility, the very existence of a potentiality as such. Thus Agamben observes that:

The subject is thus the possibility that language does not exist, does not take place- or better, that it takes place only through its possibility of not being there, its contingency. The human being is the speaking being, the living being who has

language, because the human being is capable of *not having* language, because it is capable of its own in-fancy<sup>29</sup>.

The subject's *capacity to have the incapacity to speak* is sufficient evidence for Agamben to prove that *subjectivity* exists as *witness*. Subjectivity can bear witness for those by bearing witness to those who can not bear witness similarly *testimony* is potentiality that becomes realized, *actual* through an impotentiality to speak. As Celan so profoundly realized:

No one  
bears witness for the  
witness.<sup>30</sup>  
("Aschengloire"/"Ash-Aureole")

This is precisely what Agamben terms as Levi's paradox. The Muselmann is the true or complete witness, but who can never *bear* witness because he lacks a language that signifies. And yet by this very incapacity to speak his testimony becomes authentic. This is also where Agamben departs from Derrida's conjecture: the Muselmann's testimony is authenticated not by any factual evidence or by the *text* of his statement but by its *unsayability*. His babble complements the memoirs, the *texts* of the survivors- those who speak always in proxy. This is why Celan speaks of the radical "answerlessness" of his German, because it is always encircled by the dark babble of the unspeakable:

It passed and gave back no words for that which happened; yet it passed through this happening. Passed through and could come to light again, "enriched" by all this.<sup>31</sup>

To answer Derrida's first question, the untranslatable testimony as it refers to the idiomatic is not a non-testimony but the testimony of the *true* witness as it bears witness by its radical impotency to speak, to be translated. Celan also answers how the untranslatable testimony is also paradoxically the absolutely translatable testimony. Celan's poem "Tübingen, January" ("Tübingen, Jänner") that is in many ways a reference to Hölderlin (and the allusions to the bearded patriarch Moses who was known for his stutter) brings out this problematic in its decisive last verse paragraph:

Came, if there  
came a man,  
came a man to the world, today, with  
the patriarchs'  
light-beard: he could,  
if he spoke of this  
time, he  
could  
only babble and babble,  
ever- ever-  
moremore.  
("Pallaksch. Pallaksch.")

The neologisms of the last lines as becomes apparent from the original German are marked by the absolutely translatable:

Immer-, immer-  
zuzu.  
("Pallaksch. Pallaksch.")<sup>32</sup>

(“Tübingen, Jänner”/ “Tübingen, January”)

“Pallaksch” is a word that the poet Hölderlin used in his last years when he had, by all accounts lost his mind. “Pallaksch” is a coinage on Hölderlin’s part, by which he sometimes meant “yes” and sometimes meant the very opposite “no”<sup>33</sup>. It is this word “Pallaksch” therefore that remains absolutely translatable because it is absolutely idiomatic. But to render it into an English translation of the poem is also to infuse the translation with the insoluble ambiguity of the original. It is Celan’s refusal to cast a blind eye to the “answerlessness” of German. The “yes” contained in the word “Pallaksch” is inseparable from its polar opposite, its own denial, an equally prominent “no”. Celan anticipates it even in an earlier poem, “Speak you too” (“Sprich auch du”):

Speak-  
But don’t split off No from Yes.  
Give your say this meaning too:  
give it the shadow. (“Sprich auch du” / “Speak you too”)<sup>34</sup>

Celan’s poetry refuses to exclude the “shadow”, acknowledges language *and* its own *capacity to have the incapacity to speak* and thereby exists as *witness* for those who can not speak. The language of testimony as Agamben notes, no longer signifies because it gradually moves towards the non-language of those who can not bear witness, the incomprehensible babble of Hurbinek for example. This is why Agamben speaks of the language of testimony as a fundamentally *dead language* because it survives its own speakers.

#### IV. “Your unannullable / witness”

Agamben locates two opposing forces in the field of any language: on the one hand there is a constant movement towards innovation and transformation or dynamism which is opposed on the other by a second movement towards preservation, stability and stasis. He calls the first movement aimed at innovation *anomia* (as opposed to grammatical “norm”) while the latter pertains to control and limit. Agamben locates the *subject* at the intersection of these two currents. The role of this *subject* is the same as that of the “author” or the *auctor* (defined as he who has the authority to decide in a debate). The *auctor* decides what is *sayable* and *unsayable* in a language and maintains a relation between the norm and the *anomia*. A language becomes *dead* when this relation collapses in a subject when it is no longer possible to distinguish between the sayable and the unsayable. With the demise of the subject it also becomes impossible to say “I”. Thus the normative part *dies* and the *anomic* gives birth to a new language. According to Agamben an example would be the case of Latin when the tension between the *sermo urbanus* and *sermo rusticus* broke down and the Romance vernaculars rose in place of Latin. To write in a dead language is to once again assign oneself the position of a subject, an *auctor* to decide between the sayable and the unsayable in a language. Agamben gives the example of Giovanni Pascoli who wrote in Latin in the twentieth century and also of Modern Hebrew where an “entire community” sought to resuscitate a language that had become purely religious<sup>35</sup>. Finally it becomes possible to define *testimony* in terms of a *dead language*:

If we now return to testimony, we may say that to bear witness is to place oneself in one’s own language in the position of those who have lost it, to establish oneself in a living language as if it were dead, or in a dead language as if it were

living- in any case, outside both the archive and the *corpus* of what has already been said.<sup>36</sup>

The witness one may say has two possible positions as a subject within a language. One can extend Agamben's thesis by pointing out that Celan's poetry takes up both. On the one hand, he undertakes the arduous task of restoring a language that has already suffered the worst by infusing it with foreign tongues and especially Hebrew, the holy but dead language. On the other hand, from the position of a speaker of Modern Hebrew and also a writer, Celan participates in the process of revival of a dead language:

Still, in the coronary arteries,  
unbinded:

Ziv, that light.<sup>37</sup>

(“Nah, Im Aortenbogen” / “Near, in the Aorta's Arch”)

“Ziv” or “Ziw” is a word that as Felstiner suggests Celan unearthed from Gershom Scholem's reading of the Kabbalah. It is virtually untranslatable and remains a curious enigma even in German. It refers to God's presence as an unearthly light (Shechinah) amongst the exiled people of Israel<sup>38</sup>. Celan's dead language therefore functions as a *remnant* because it makes the distinction between the *sayable* and the *unsayable* unformulable. It functions within this state of exception, signaling the breakdown of the *subject/auctor* position and becomes even as a voice, a mere “breath turn” (to echo one of Celan's last works, *Atemwende*) an “unannullable witness”:

Deep in the time crevasse,  
by  
honeycomb-ice  
there waits, a Breathcrystal,  
your unannullable  
witness.<sup>39</sup>

(“Weggebzeit” / “Etched Away”)

One might thus add that this why poetry, at least Celan's poetry has survived or better, *remains*. As *remnant*- as a *witness*.

#### Notes:

1. Celan, Paul. *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*. Trans. John Felstiner. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001, 395. All quotations from Celan's writings refer to the above edition, unless otherwise indicated.
2. Agamben, Giorgio. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. New York: Zone Books, 1999, 161
3. Felstiner, John. *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001, 14
4. Felstiner, John. *Paul Celan*, 15-16. See also: “Paul Celan to Ingeborg Bachmann, Paris, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1949” in *Correspondence: Paul Celan and Ingeborg Bachmann*. Trans. Wieland Hoban. London, New York and Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2010, 13. Celan wrote to Bachmann on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1949, “Except that I sometimes tell myself that my silence is

- perhaps more understandable than yours, for the darkness that imposes it upon me is older.”
5. Celan, Paul. *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, 11
  6. *Ibid.*, 11. For a more Heideggerian approach to Celan’s poetics especially with regard to his famous Meridian speech, see Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe. *Poetry as Experience*. Trans. Andrea Tarnowski. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999
  7. *Ibid.*, 383
  8. Derrida, Jacques. *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*. Edited by Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, 68-69
  9. *Ibid.*, 99-100
  10. *Ibid.*, 167
  11. *Ibid.*, 167
  12. Celan, Paul. *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, 396
  13. Derrida, Jacques. *Sovereignties in Question*, 49
  14. Felstiner, John. *Paul Celan*, 22
  15. Szondi, Peter. “Reading ‘*Engführung*’”, in *Celan Studies*. Trans. Susan Bernofsky with Harvey Mendelsohn. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003, 32-33, 88-92. Szondi notes for instance while reading the phrase “schwärzlichem Feld” (blackish or blackened field) in the third verse paragraph of the first section of the poem that, “Since his poetry no longer describes ‘reality,’ but rather itself becomes reality, the ‘blackish field’ is no longer what his poetry describes, but what it causes to come into being.” (*Ibid.*, 32). In his essay on Celan’s poem “Eden” (“Du liegst”), Szondi is at pains to justify how the elements of the poem itself and their “interdependence” go on to “transform the real events referred to.” But his own admission that “Obviously Celan’s poem would never have been written –at least not in this form– had it not been for the experience of his stay in Berlin, which were determined more by his friends and by chance than by the poet himself.” (*Ibid.*, “Eden”, 88) constantly militates against such a reading.
  16. Hamburger, Michael. “Introduction”, in *Paul Celan: Selected Poems*. Translated with an Introduction by Michael Hamburger. England: Penguin Books, 29
  17. Quoted in Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 159. Agamben notes that in an interview given to German television in 1964, Hannah Arendt was asked what for her remained of the pre-Hitlerian Europe. Arendt replied that it was the mother tongue (*muttersprache*) that remained. Celan’s situation was quite similar.
  18. Celan, Paul. *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, 395
  19. *Ibid.*, 395
  20. Derrida, Jacques. *Sovereignties in Question*, 69
  21. Agamben, Giorgio. *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*. Trans. Patricia Dailey. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 106-107. See also for Agamben’s path breaking treatment of the relations between sovereignty, law and the state of exception around the figure of the *homo sacer* in Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 15-29, 91-103, 181-188
  22. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 164
  23. *Ibid.*, 36-37
  24. *Ibid.*, 38

25. Celan, Paul. *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, 135
26. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 139
27. *Ibid.*, 144
28. *Ibid.*, 145
29. *Ibid.*, 146
30. Celan, Paul. *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, 261
31. *Ibid.*, 395
32. *Ibid.*, 159
33. Felstiner, John. *Paul Celan*, 173-174. The importance of Hölderlin as that of the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam in Celan's life and poetry can hardly be undermined. Felstiner notes that on the night when Celan drowned himself in the river Seine, he was reading Hölderlin's biography (*Ibid.*, 287)
34. Celan, Paul. *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, 77
35. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 159-160. See also: Agamben, Giorgio. "Pascoli and the Thought of the Voice" in *The End of the Poem: Studies in Poetics*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999, 62-75, for Agamben's detailed analysis of the death of the voice and onomatopoeia in the poetry of Giovanni Pascoli.
36. *Ibid.*, 161
37. Celan, Paul. *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, 303
38. Felstiner, John. *Paul Celan*, 236-240. See also: Felstiner, John, "Mother Tongue, Holy Tongue: On Translating and Not Translating Paul Celan" in *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Spring, 1986), pp. 113-136, *JSTOR*, Accessed 16.10.2009. Felstiner has argued that "Ziv" is untranslatable because the Hebrew word for God's presence in this word is Celan's effort to assimilate at least for a brief moment letter and spirit, signifier and signified in the "holy tongue" of Hebrew. One must also take a note of what must stand as a remarkable effort at translation: Felstiner's *returning* of "Todesfugue" to Celan. Felstiner decides to gradually *un-translate* as he *returns* to the original German *via* his English translation. So that the last lines in the English version become one with the unforgettable lines: dein goldenes Haar Margarete/ dein aschenes Haar Sulamith.  
  
See also Agamben's distinction between "Ziv", *that* light and the image of the light in Celan's poem "Lichtzwang" ("Light Compulsion") which "keeps human creatures, who are lost and huddled as if in a wood, from touching themselves." (Agamben, Giorgio. "The Just Do Not Feed on Light" in *The End of the Poem: Studies in Poetics*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999, 126-129).
39. Celan, Paul. *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, 247.