

Lyric Voice and *You*: Notes on Addressability

A number of recent texts challenging the standard publishing format of the codex also put to work crucial properties of the lyric voice beyond received notions of the voice itself and sounding as such. Anne Michaels' and Bernice Eisenstein's *Correspondences* (2013), the stimulus for this essay, is published in an accordion format, the pages falling out of its box much to the surprise and confusion of the reader. Economic constraints and the groundswell of contemporary poetics mean such texts remain relatively rare, but the phenomenon is growing: *Correspondences* joins Anne Carson's *Nox* (2010), for example, in this discrete genre of 'accordion poems'. The prehistory for this approach to form and format is rooted in a text published in codex but whose poetics are in radical conflict with its format. Shunning the hierarchy of left-aligned text for a typographical constellation distributed across two pages, Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* (1897) is impervious to the structuring authority of binding. An aleatory principle in defiance of conventional book production is evident in the white of the page, which in Mallarmé's system becomes a space for the articulation of silence (which is not the same, of course, as the articulation of nothing). Mallarmé's poem strains at the leash of format, as if the combined physical force of words are blasting the binding apart. But despite the poet's innovative layout, it was published—albeit seventeen years after its debut in 1897 in the magazine *Cosmopolis*—in the conventional format of a book.¹ Had the poet not considered alternatives? Perhaps *Un coup de dés* demands a technique of reading more akin to an art installation, reconfiguring our understanding of reading as a form of embodied engagement. In a gallery, the text could be absorbed in its visual totality as an artwork or 'read' more or less in sequence as you would with a book held in your hands.

The interaction of the reader's hands has become a dramatic gesture at odds with, but by no means separated from, the process of reading the physical object of the book in the received manner of turning the pages. B. S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (1969), which relates the story of two men whose friendship blossoms at work but which is cut short when one of them dies from cancer, retains the action of turning the pages whilst dispensing with the binding that organises such reading from beginning to end. The novel's chapters are split between pamphlets and contained in a box, which makes the reader confront the chaos of cancer and memory through any sequence desired: throw them up in the air, see where they land, pick one at random, and so on, until they form a pile to be returned to the box.

Like Johnson's novel, Anne Carson's *Nox* enacts the work of mourning through the possibilities offered by alternative formats. Sequential reading is

somewhat preserved by Carson's text (the semblance, at least, of sequencing through numbered segments and repetitive features such as definitions of classical terms), whereas Johnson's novel resists linearity through the lack of a singular spine guiding the reader's experience. Paradoxically, the accordion format is bound not by one, but by many, spines, the text returning to its box in the manner of a puppet animated by its puppeteer. The format of *The Unfortunates* can be contained only insofar as the pamphlets are rehoused in its box. But the order of events will always be different. Carson's text is far from linear or sequential in a conventional way, organised as it is by a visual impetus more akin to an artwork or sketchbook than to a poem. The page is exploited precisely as a texture, onto which fragments, images, and handwritten words and phrases appear to have been seared, stained, scratched, or pressed. It is as if the paper strains under the weight of affect and meaning: meaning, in a sense, has a weight. The printed page and the interpretative process are brought into more intimate relation with one another.

From Mallarmé to Johnson, Carson, and Michaels, format and form release the reader from the straitjacket of what Barthes called the readerly into the manifold freedoms of the writerly. Let us not underestimate, however, the degree to which the accordion format and alternative formats generally loosen critical attention by tempting the reader to dwell longer than is usual within the folds of the text. 'On the one hand . . . on the other hand': accordion texts enliven even this most stolid of rhetorical figures by means of a physical gesture, the body somehow making contact with intangible metaphor. In *Correspondences*, word and image function in much the same way as the two distinct logical possibilities held in tension by critical discourse. Correspondences abound—Eisenstein's images on the one hand and Michaels' poem on the other—but are dialogic rather than dialectical; a dual, as it were, but not a duel. Dialectics are inapposite for a subject requiring anything but conflict: history and memory, Paul Celan and Nelly Sachs—such dialogic focal points generate critical empathy between subject and author, reader and text. '[V]oices speak not only from the singularity of their souls but one to another', write Michaels and Eisenstein, 'embracing all that has been placed beneath and inside'. The physicality of reading and metaphors about the process of interpretation are aligned, 'reading between the lines' and 'across the pages' being as much about physical contact as working things out. Hence '[a] layered kinship is formed, a touch across the pages'. A quotation from the text reproduced on one of the boards (we are somewhat denied the strict linear structure of back and front) alludes to the text's governing principle:

not two to make one,
but two to make
the third,

just as a conversation can become
the third side of the page

‘To unfold’ / ‘to enfold’: in a paratext following the list of permissions, these transitive verbs signpost the origin of form and format in language. Touching and being touched, the sensation of contact and the phenomenal life of affect. Allowing the pages to spread out is a textual embrace.

The somber tones of Eisenstein’s portraits of Holocaust victims and survivors, whose penetrating eyes stare through the middle distance of the page, animate the idea of the physically impossible but poetically resonant third side. Drawing on an affective mode of visuality, heightened as it is by the particular role that the accordion plays in the act of reading, Michaels and Eisenstein seem to reference the phototextual practice of W. G. Sebald, himself one of the subjects featured in *Correspondences*. In the opening pages of *Austerlitz* (2001), the narrator recalls a visit to the Nocturama in Antwerp. Four images of eyes, two human and two animal, stare the reader down as if to warn them against inattention or empathy fatigue. ‘[A]ll I remember of the denizens of the Nocturama,’ the narrator reports, ‘is that several of them had strikingly large eyes, and the fixed, inquiring gaze found in certain painters who seek to penetrate the darkness which surrounds us purely by means of looking and thinking’ (Sebald 2011: 3). The irony of the narrator’s comments being made in relation to animals occupying the Nocturama is not lost on the reader; after all, a semantics of darkness and the night is embedded in the very name of the place. This irony increases our empathy for the animals, who cannot escape internment by humans exercising power to profit from zoological entertainment. The criticality of such empathy is writ large elsewhere in the text, as it is in *Correspondences*, in relation to the victims and traumatised survivors of the Holocaust. The creaturely, one of the dominant tropes of Sebald’s work, construes human and animal life at the limits of livability and the ethical demand posed by the retreat of autonomous existence. Something of the creaturely could be said to emerge whilst reading *Correspondences*, enhanced by the physical nature of handling the text. The third page notionally revealed by the movement of the accordion, which unfurls one ‘fixed, inquiring gaze’ after another, differs from the portraits in *Austerlitz* in that the eyes of Eisenstein’s subjects are downcast, weary, and seemingly defeated. If they fail to penetrate the reader’s gaze (and consciousness), they demand something equally pressing of the reader: wordless and unspoken, the gaze is an invitation to respond, and the response posed by Michaels’ and Eisenstein’s text is to read back and forth, in and between the folds, all the while haunted by the portraits. Refusing narrative linearity and imagistic simultaneity, *Correspondences* calls forth alternative forms of engagement that mimic haphazard memory through the performance of reading the text: turning over to inspect both sides at once, laying out and reading the poem or

portraits in consecutive order, holding up to the light in the hope of discovering the liminal third page. 'In its Latin etymology', Derrida writes in relation to Celan, 'witness, *témoïn* (*testis*), the one testifying, is the one who is present as a third (*terstis*)' (2005: 72; emphases original). 'Celan' is first mentioned on the third fold of Michaels' text, 'Sachs' on the fifth. On the fourth fold, the line 'They met in Zurich's Stork on Ascension Day' refers to the location and day of the first meeting between the poets. Opposite, laconic mention is made of Celan's ill-fated visit to the hospitalised Sachs in Stockholm:

'Come as quickly as possible,'
Sachs had written
and then:
'Don't, under any circumstances, come.'

No sooner has the poem established the terms of its own language and form than a poetics of witness is invoked through Celan and Sachs. The reader is situated uneasily, perhaps even reluctantly (hence the feeling of unease), in the structure of witness constructed from the text's third page.

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Six years separate Sachs' first letter to Celan and their meeting at the Stork Hotel in Zurich. In 1960, Sachs was invited to Meersburg in Germany to collect the Droste Prize for women poets. Stepping foot on German soil was no simple act for one suffering from a persecution mania brought about by Neo-Nazism and a nation that continued to equivocate over its past. Upon the advice of her doctor, Sachs decided to stay in Zurich and travel across the Swiss border into Germany on the day of the ceremony. Perhaps it was Switzerland's neutrality—a geographical and linguistic rapprochement, as it were, between two nation-states and languages—that enabled this encounter between poets whose kinship was an effect of exile as much from homeland as it was from the mother tongue. 'You know these things of mine, you have them about you: I have a home', Sachs wrote (12.21.1957), as if to suggest that being is corroborated only by another who has experienced the same. It is tempting to consider the space and time between letters as the kind of caesura found in the poetry, the last line of a letter suspending the anticipation of response, gaps in time loaded with undecipherable affect. But to extrapolate the time and space across which the letters are articulated as somehow expressive of the urgency of one correspondent exceeds the bounds of propriety underpinning all letter writing. Still, the frequency of Sachs' letters is notable. Both writers received psychiatric treatment involving hospitalisation, Celan ending his life in the River Seine. Time was on a short

lease. It is not difficult to interpret delays and fluctuations of register in the correspondence in light of what the mind allowed at a given point in the trajectory of psychological distress. In his biography of Sachs, Aris Fioretos refers to ‘Durchschmerzung’, the guiding principle of the poet’s work: ‘[i]t is not a question of applying some religiously or poetically justified method to step out of oneself, leaving suffering and uncertainty behind, but about going through the inevitable pain to reach another, perhaps longer-lasting dimension of existence. For Sachs the very precondition for this striving was the fundamental uncertainty about the outcome’ (2011: 259). The call without response is the poet’s worst imagining against the hope invested in the poetics of addressability. ‘[Y]ou are coming and then I will be in my homeland, whatever sand we may be standing on’ (1995: 21), Sachs wrote to Celan in anticipation of their meeting in Zurich. The condition of exile is resolved not by any return to the homeland but by a kinship encounter, a version of *Heimat* estranged from land and rediscovered in the deterritorialised condition of language.

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In calling forth the correspondence of Paul Celan and Nelly Sachs, *Correspondences* situates the reader tentatively between the experiment posed by its accordion format and the poetics of the lyric voice designated by the second-person singular. The discussion so far has concentrated on the ways in which formats activate the second person by making you, the reader, a producer rather than the mere consumer of the text in hand. *Correspondences* draws upon the possibilities provided by its accordion format in order to bring into focus the poetics of witness identified with Celan and Sachs. This nexus between format and poetics continues to inform the following, in which addressability is seen to operate in the second person and apostrophe, not to forget prosopopoeia, but in respect of form rather than format.

The second-person singular is no singular designation, ranging from interrogative deixis tending to pinpoint a guilt-ridden self, to the softer register of a poem’s address towards a potential witness. In either case, the reader is likely to be stymied: ‘Who? Me?!’ Nor is the force of the second person diminished by the illusion of specificity. Ontologically-speaking, the pronoun ‘you’ cannot gesture to a substantive reader since their identity lies beyond the poet’s powers of determination. That the second person has some concept of the text’s reader *in sight* cannot be a given, ‘in sight’ referring here not merely metaphorically but literally to the way in which Eisenstein’s portraits hold the reader’s attention through portraits of the human stare. Such portraits remain bound by the conventions of representation as a second order

phenomenon, though, which means I am pushing the conversion of metaphor into literality too far. Perhaps, then, the phrase 'in mind' best encapsulates the operation of the second person during the time of writing. Who or what is imagined by the second person during the time of writing is a fanciful, maybe even facile, but ultimately irresistible, question: *Who did you have in mind?* Is it possible, in other words, for a poet to write the second person without attaching to an otherwise ambiguous pronoun a *known* individual, or the concept (at least) of a race or group or community? And does this fanciful/facile question, I am no doubt outrageously going to suggest, bear some relation to the face as the figure of the Other as encountered in the work of Levinas and Derrida?

Holding in mind the image of an individual, group, race, or community, suggests a level of possession that would commit violence against the Other since even to imagine the Other borders on ethical transgression. Hence the complex relations underwriting the lyric voice, involving the simultaneous illusion of presence against a strategy in which naming as such is elided by 'you' (*you*). Yet the lyric voice is, to a degree, or is at the very least a linguistic trap demarcating in some way, ontology: through its invocation to an addressee, being is invoked through presence. Derrida: '[w]hoever bears witness [does] not provide proof; he is someone whose experience, in principle singular and irreplaceable (even if it can be cross-checked with others in order to become proof, in order to become probative in a verification process) attests, precisely, that some "thing" has been present to him' (2005: 77). Granted, Derrida is not talking here about the philosophy of being as such, but the overlap between the second person as invocation and the concept of the witness nevertheless bears scrutiny. Moreover, the context for Derrida's argument is at least a discussion of Celan. He continues:

This 'thing' is no longer present to him, of course, in the mode of perception at the moment when the attestation takes place; but it is present to him, if he alleges this presence, as presently *re-presented* in memory. At any rate, even if—something unusual and improbable—it were still contemporary at the moment of attestation, it would be inaccessible, as *perceived* presence, to the addressees receiving the testimony, who are placed in the order of believing or are asked to place themselves there. (2005: 77-8)

Arguably, the addressee anticipated by the testimony of the poem is not its reader. As such the poetics of testimony is predicated on absence, in the light of which articulation is stuck between the fact and the futility of the poem's existence. Derrida's analysis alights on difficult critical territory with regard to the concept of witness as juridical proof and the relation of believing to

knowing as such in the mind of the poem's addressee. 'The only condition for bearing witness, its only condition of possibility as condition of its impossibility—paradoxical and aporetic' (2005: 68), Derrida informs us, thereby abolishing any assertion of the reader as witness to catastrophe. The situation of the reader, in other words, is neither sovereign nor singular, located nowhere and everywhere in the shifting sands of addressability. Unethical forms of presumptive identification by which the reader assumes their status as the addressee under the mark of the second person are only marginally corrected by deixis that identifies the reader as an ethical subject whose writerly desires are circumscribed by the demand of witness.

Any singular or collective identity or subjectivity imagined by the poet during the time of writing erodes as the poet's life advances and all but disappears (save for the 'authority' of biographers) upon their death. Hence the constitutional ambiguity of the second person makes a mockery of the poet's powers of determination, whereas the lyric voice as form becomes problematic in the poetics of witness and testimony once subjected to the vicissitudes of memory and oblivion. Given the implicit bond between witness and history, testimony and the historical archive, the lyric voice locates itself in time. In 'Shibboleth', Derrida's obsessive analysis of dates and dating in Celan's work is sensitive to the myriad ways in which the lyric voice moves between determination and ambiguity in order to prepare the grounds for an encounter with the Other:

In the unique ring of its constellation, one and the 'same' date commemorates heterogeneous events, suddenly neighbours to one and the other, even though one knows that they remain, and must remain, strangers, infinitely. It is just this which is called the encounter, the encounter of the others, 'the secret of encounter'—and precisely the meridian is discovered. (2005: 10-11)

The discovery of this meridian is itself a parsing of heterogeneous events, alluding as it does to the title of Celan's famous speech, itself a critical testimony, witness in the form of a testamentary poetics. A meridian of some kind is evident in 'Sprachgitter' ('Speech-Grille'), in which the speaker appeals directly to an anticipated Other:

(Were I like you. Were you like me.
Did we not stand
under *one* trade wind?
We are strangers.)

(2001: 107)

Although a shared history is acknowledged here, the rhetoric of the parenthesis and of the question confine the speaker's authority to speculative fantasy. Thus, the italicised 'one', as a mark of emphasis, is as much about the speaker's desire for something to be the case as it is about the case itself. If 'We are strangers' underlines the paradox of an encounter without recognition, 'under *one* trade wind' (Felstiner's translation being faithful to the 'Passat' of the original), signifying that which blows westerly, alludes to the figure of absolute Otherness made conspicuous by its absence: The East. Celan's carefully constructed ambiguity complicates the poem's deixis even if the reader finds it difficult to expunge the idea that it is directed at them.

In 'Todesfuge', iterations of the second person ('sie,' 'dich,' and 'ihr') shift between apostrophe directed towards inanimate objects and something akin to narrative fiction and free indirect discourse. Context is read from the implied scene of a given utterance: namely, from the perspective of the post-Holocaust poet-speaker and quotation *as if* from the scene and site of history: 'Schwarze milch der Frühe wir trinken sie abends [. . .] Schwarze milch der Frühe wir trinken dich nachts' ('Black milk of daybreak we drink it at evening. [. . .] Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night' [Celan, 2001: 31]). The fugal transposition of nouns here ('abends' . . . 'nacht') explores the colour of different words whilst retaining the ground of semantic sense. A distorted, negative incantation attuned to annihilation emerges from this fugal tension between dynamic form and an implacable frame of reference. Such tension turns to violence in the third stanza with the voice of the perpetrator: 'Er ruft stecht tiefer ins Erdreich ihr einen ihr andern singet und spielt' ('He shouts dig this earth deeper you lot there you others sing up and play' [Celan, 2001: 31]). The unmarked flow between the speaker and the perpetrator demonstrates a form of deixis in which the speaker becomes the potential target of the murderous second person. Crucial distinctions between the informality of the speaker's use of the singular 'dich' and the guard's use of the plural 'ihr' are lost on the page in English, in which the specificity of the second person can be discerned only in the moment of utterance, through the tonality of the speaking voice: you will know, in other words, when it is *you*. That the second person features in relation to a human respondent only under circumstances of extreme duress and paradoxically when there is no possibility for a response of any kind is one of the poem's starkest ironies.

Non-German speakers are hidebound by 'entering' the German language only objectively through linguistics: that is, grammar and semantics are understood from within the process of mediating the alien medium of another's language—the language *of* the Other—through the mother tongue. The predicament posed by reading Celan in translation—akin to loss but not identical to it—is related to the child's entry into language. Deep memory is

inflected within the mother tongue ('Muttersprache') by its uncanny pronouns. To what extent can we grasp how 'du', 'dich', 'Sie', 'sie' and 'ihr', etc., register in those who have grown accustomed to their use since birth? (Prior to language acquisition, the subject falls prey to subjection within the domain of the addressee, as Althusser made clear in his theory of interpellation). That Celan and Sachs fought against history's ruinous effects on the German language is widely documented. Catastrophe destabilised the foundation of (their) language (in general) forever. 'It, the language', Celan argued in his acceptance speech for the Bremen Literature Prize (1958) about the *Muttersprache*, 'had to pass through its own answerlessness, pass through fruitful muting, pass through the thousand darkneses of deathbringing speech' (2001: 395).² The poet's mother tongue could no longer function without redress after the murder of the mother. The reversal of the poet's entry into language results in traumatised forms of articulation under the negative aegis of psychic struggle. Writing simultaneously dis- and re-articulated. Celan and Sachs confronted this dilemma of language after the catastrophe by registering its forces of attraction and repulsion in fractured lyrics. Their respective poetics were therefore forged against the spirit and letter of the unsayable identified by the field of Holocaust Studies as underwriting all representation *about* and *for* the Holocaust itself, not to mention, *pace* Adorno, writing poetry after the Holocaust.

Yet 'unsayable' for whom? You?

This critical trope of the unsayable is thrown into question by the myriad cultural productions formed in response to the Holocaust itself and post-Holocaust life. Hence the age-old scenario of the melancholic, from antiquity and Robert Burton to the likes of Sebald, whose professed inability to articulate their condition is belied by an otherwise capacious and wide-ranging eloquence. The peregrinations of the melancholic return us to the question of the unsayable insofar as they testify to a enunciating subject locked into circuitries of evasion and metonymic displacement. It is not for nothing that melancholia has been associated with the planet Saturn and its rings (a symbolism explored obsessively in Sebald's renowned atrabillious text, *The Rings of Saturn*). Considered from the perspective of melancholic desire, apostrophe merely confirms a strategy by which the ego displaces itself onto the addressee without due recognition of the autonomy of the second person. This corresponds to Jonathan Culler's idea of the I-thou structure as 'nodes or concretization of stages in a drama of mind' (2001: 164). Yet the I-thou structure fails the test of narcissism in the absence of a sovereign ego. The notion of the second person voice enabling the displacement of affect falls down when we consider the idea that both agents in the circuit of communication (Culler again) posited by apostrophe are locked in a melancholic feedback loop by which each utterance obsessively follows its

own echo. In Celan and Sachs the practice of displacement without resolution entails the kind of signification accumulative to the extent of an agonising metonymy.

It could be argued in respect of the history of apostrophe that the speaker's address towards an inanimate object has tended to involve a form of disinterested consciousness for which the stakes of addressability are limited insofar as the speaker is concerned with time as a general phenomenon rather than with the concrete events of history. This notion is radically overhauled by Celan and Sachs. In 'O die Schornsteine', ('O the chimneys'), the first poem from Sachs' *In den Wohnungen des Todes* (1947) (*In the Habitations of Death*), the historical implications opened up by the disturbing subject matter of the referent cannot fail to elicit engaged, rather than disinterested, consciousness for the poem's speaker and reader. In Sachs' work, the Orphic 'O' establishes a space of invocation altogether different from the lineaments of subjectivity to be found in lyric poetry's rich back catalogue. Subjectivity is not so much off bounds as imbricated with the idea of those for whom the poet intended to speak. A sequence in the same collection attempts to recover lost unities through the collective form of the chorus. Titles such as 'Chorus of the Rescued' and 'Chorus of the Orphans' feature alongside poems in which natural elements are given the power of address. A similar tendency is present in Celan's work, but through the prism of late Surrealism. By contrast, the collision of Sachs' quasi-late Romantic register with contemporary history distorts performative diction by way of a traumatic referent. In 'Chorus of the Orphans', for example, addressability by way of the first person plural is deployed for metaphysical redress: 'Wir Waisen wir klagen der Welt / [. . .] Wir Waisen gleichen niemand mehr auf der Welt! / O Welt / Wir klagen dich an!' ('We orphans we lament to the world: / [. . .] We orphans are like no one in this world any more! / O world / We accuse you!') (1967: 28-31). The 'O' is the historicised locus of desperation.

In 'Chor der Ungeborenen' ('Chorus of the Unborn'), Sachs inverts apostrophe by situating the addressee in relation to a speaker more untenable than the natural elements given voice elsewhere in the collection. The object here is not merely inanimate; it has never existed. Yet their speech is no less urgent than that of the living: 'Ihr Liebenden, / Ihr Sehnsüchtigen, / Hört, ihr Abschiedskranken' ('You who love, / You who yearn, / Listen, you who are sick with parting') (1967: 42-43). The poet endows those without voice the powers of addressability. The lyric voice is equally endowed with the capacity to transmit one element to a host: 'Wir sind es, die in euren Blicken zu leben beginnen / [. . .] Schon zieht uns euer Atem ein' ('We are those who begin to live in your glances / [. . .] Already your breath is inhaling us') (1967: 42-3). If anything the poem pays witness to a Benjaminian conception of history as gradual catastrophe, following a metonymic trail, in other words, instituted

by *Auschwitz*. ‘Wir kommenden Lichter für eure Traurigkeit’ (‘We future lights for your sorrow’), the last line of the poem, gestures towards open-ended witness in the form of protracted, militant melancholia. While the distinction between ‘sorrow’ and ‘sadness’ for ‘Traurigkeit’ might seem fairly inconsequential, Sachs’ translator has selected the word denoting a deeper, more profound sense of loss, as opposed to the universal, perhaps even trivial, ‘sadness’. This is a poem against forgetting, but couched in the language of those for whom memory is always already precluded.

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‘The only condition for bearing witness, its only condition of possibility as condition of its impossibility—paradoxical and aporetic.’ Derrida’s words are inescapable. They apply with equal force to Celan’s and Sachs’ readers, who pay witness to the poetics of witness no matter at what point in history reading takes place. Michaels’ and Eisenstein’s *Correspondences* enfolds itself, accordion-like, within the ever-expanding implications of a history of reading as uncertain as it is unavoidable. In this way, Michaels’ self-reflexive poem repeatedly turns its attention to the conditions of language to which each and every utterance falls prey:

each word embedded,
 the mud of another country on its shoes,
 an upstairs lamp so we won’t bump our heads on
 darkness, each word a fall
 into inarticulate space, each word
 a stub, a placeholder for the
 inexpressible solute or solvent [. . .]

smell of wet pavement on that cool morning,
 the ragged book left open by the bed,
 every noun and verb a slow peristalsis
 through our understanding,
 each word so worn with use

Words also embedded within and between the folds of the text. The ‘ragged book left open by the bed’ is both temptation and demand. The biological implications of ‘slow peristalsis’ bear down on the idea of reading, signification being rooted, or taking root, in the body. Peristalsis: ‘[a]n involuntary muscular wavelike movement by which the contents of the alimentary canal etc. are propelled along’, as the OED puts it. This word has caused wavelike movements during the process of writing the present essay. Oftentimes such movements have been involuntary as well as intentional. The noun has performed on my thinking and writing an equivalent action to what

it exerts on the body. The Greek derivation—*peristellō* wrap around (as PERI-, *stellō* place) [the OED again]—makes inevitable Michaels' inclusion of the word in her poem, since language wraps itself around the attempt to understand as much as the folds of the accordion format simultaneously compels, and evades capture by, the hands. In the final analysis (falling somewhat short of the final word, as is to be expected by the provisional nature of the foregoing as an assemblage of 'Notes'), it is you, the reader, who are thus locked into a intransigent dilemma of reading, itself a form of bearing witness, by which the text has something and nothing to do with you.

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Notes

1. The first book publication of *Un coup de dés* was in a limited edition of 60 copies in 1914 by L'Imprimerie Sainte Catherine, Bruges.
2. Amongst the ironies pinpointed by his commentary (1995: 113-18) on Celan's Bremen speech, John Felstiner highlights his use of the verb 'angereichert', meaning 'enriched', which 'buries Hitler's *Reich* within itself' (1995: 115; emphasis original) in the following sentence: "Passed through ['It', the German language] and could come to this, 'enriched' by all this" (2001: 395).

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