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Das Briefgeheimnis: Ingeborg Bachmann and Paul Celan's Poetics of Correspondence

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Das Briefgeheimnis: Ingeborg Bachmann and Paul Celan's Poetics of Correspondence

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Abstract

Ingeborg Bachmann and Paul Celan are two of the foremost German-language poets of the post-1945 era. Celan, a Jewish poet whose parents were murdered in the Holocaust, and Bachmann, the Austrian daughter of a National Socialist, both sought a way to write after atrocity. Both writers struggled to use German as a poetic medium in their poetry and prose, as language appeared to have been poisoned through its association with National Socialism. Wider cultural concerns such as Theodor Adorno's dictum that to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric influenced the post-catastrophic literary landscape. In 1958, Celan famously compared writing poetry after 1945 to sending out a message in a bottle. This metaphor characterizes his dialogic approach to writing poetry. Famously, Bachmann and Celan carried out a poetic dialogue in their published work as they shared motifs and themes which they reinterpreted in their own works. From the time that Bachmann and Celan first met in Vienna in 1948, they began exchanging letters and poetry until Celan's death in 1970. In 2008, the letters that Bachmann and Celan exchanged between 1948 and 1967 were published for the first time in the volume *Herzzeit*. These letters provide new insights into the authors' struggle to find a viable mode of expression after 1945, and how they sought to overcome these problems through constructing a dialogue. This thesis will argue that Bachmann and Celan continued their poetic dialogue in some of the letters and that these letters serve as a poetic form in their own right.

Declaration of Authorship

I, Alice James, declare that this thesis entitled "Das Briefgeheimnis: Ingeborg Bachmann and Paul Celan's Poetics of Correspondence" and the work presented in it are my own. I confirm that no part of the material provided has previously been submitted by the author for a higher degree in Durham University or any other University. All the work presented here is the sole work of the author.

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Acknowledgements

Chapter 1

Introduction

Für Ingeborg

Du sollst zum Aug der Fremden sagen: Sei das Wasser!
Du sollst, die du im Wasser weißt, im Aug der Fremden suchen.
Du sollst sie rufen aus dem Wasser: Ruth! Noemi! Mirijam!
Du sollst sie schmücken, wenn du bei der Fremden liegst.
Du sollst sie schmücken mit dem Wolkenhaar der Fremden. Du sollst
zu Ruth, zu Mirijam und Noemi sagen:
Seht, ich schlaf bei ihr!
Du sollst die Fremde neben dir am schönsten schmücken.
Du sollst schmücken mit dem Schmerz um Ruth, um Mirijam
und Noemi.

Du sollst zur Fremden sagen:
Sieh, ich schlief bei diesen!

Wien, am 23. Mai 1948.

Der peinlich Genauen,
22 Jahre nach ihrem Geburtstag,
Der peinlich Ungenaue (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 7)

Paul Celan wrote and sent the above poem, 'In Ägypten', to Ingeborg Bachmann in a letter on her 22nd birthday in May 1948, shortly after they met for

the first time at the flat of the surrealist painter, Edgar Jené, in Vienna. This poem marks the genesis of their renowned poetic correspondence, a dialogue that was carried out in their published work, and in many of the letters they exchanged, until Celan's death in 1970. Following the publication of their letter correspondence in 2008 in an edition entitled *Herzzeit* (Bachmann and Celan, 2008), this thesis examines how dialogue played an important role in their poetics and in their motivation to continue to write against a backdrop of language scepticism which was felt by many German-speaking writers after the Second World War.

Shortly following their first encounter, Bachmann wrote a letter to her parents to express her joy at Celan having fallen in love with her:

> Heute hat sich noch etwas ereignet. Der surrealistische Lyriker Paul Celan, den ich bei dem Maler Jené am vorletzten Abend mit Weigel noch kennenlernte und der sehr faszinierend ist, hat sich herrlicherweise in mich verliebt, und das gibt mir bei meiner öden Arbeiterei doch etwas Würze. Leider muss er in einem Monat nach Paris. Mein Zimmer ist momentan ein Mohnfeld, da er mich mit dieser Blumensorte zu überschütten beliebt. (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 251)

Throughout Bachmann and Celan's written correspondence motifs, such as the poppy mentioned in the above letter, are repeated, reworked and develop new significances. The poppy serves as a motif in much of the writing that the authors exchanged, such as in Celan's volume of poems *Mohn und Gedächtnis* and also in Bachmann's novel *Malina*. In addition, the poppy also had a physical presence in their relationship, as at the start of their relationship Celan left poppies in Bachmann's student room on her birthday as is described in the above letter to her parents. In her private unpublished writing Bachmann described the gifts she received from Celan on her birthday:

> Von Paul Celan zwei prächtige Bände moderne franz. Malerei mit den letzten Werken von Matisse und Cézanne, ein Band Chesterton (ein berühmter engl. Dichter) Blumen, Zigaretten, ein Gedicht *[wohl "In Ägypten"]*, das mir gehören soll, ein Bild [. . .], das ich Euch in den Ferien zeigen kann. (Er fährt morgen nach Paris). Ich war daher gestern, am Geburtstagvorabend noch sehr festlich mit ihm aus, Abendessen und ein wenig Wein trinken. (25.6.1948, PNIB[1])(Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 251)

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[1]Privatnachlaß IB, Kärnten

Their poetic and literary correspondence includes twenty-three of Celan's poems from the volume *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (Celan et al., 2004), which are inscribed with 'f.D.', signifying 'für Dich', for Ingeborg Bachmann. In Bachmann's *Die gestundete Zeit* (Bachmann, 1974) she also references Celan's work and responds to his use of motifs by reworking them in her poetry and prose work. She brings these motifs into new contexts and responds to their use in Celan's writing, constructing what could be termed a poetic dialogue. Following Celan's death in Paris in 1970, Bachmann wrote a section of *Malina* entitled 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' which describes a princess's encounter with a dark stranger, a reference to Celan. This section of the novel uses themes and motifs developed throughout Celan's entire oeuvre and marks the end of their correspondence. In particular she draws on the poppy motif which held significance at the start of their relationship and which became a shared motif throughout their twenty year long dialogue (Bachmann, 1995b). The full significance of 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' is explored in section 2.3 of this thesis.

Although Bachmann and Celan continued to write poetry and prose following 1945, the act of writing was experienced as problematic. A fundamental concern that troubled many German-speaking writers of the post-1945 era was the usability and suitability of German as a poetic medium. Although language scepticism, referred to as the *Sprachkrise*, existed in 20th Century German-language literature before the Second World War (Ajouri, 2009, pp. 147-163), after 1945 a sense of scepticism and ambivalence towards the German language was renewed. However, as Dirk Göttsche notes, post-1945 language scepticism was not just a continuation of the *Sprachkrise* tradition, but a reaction to a state of crisis (Göttsche, 1987, p. 21). The suspicion that German had been in some way corrupted by its use under National Socialism, or that it was even an implicit part of it, meant that poetry's artistic medium, the German language, was treated with extreme scepticism. As their letter correspondence provides testimony to, both Bachmann and Celan struggled to find a viable mode of expression after 1945, yet despite their scepticism surrounding language and expression, they maintained a written dialogue for twenty years in a range of literary forms.

The need to establish a dialogue through writing became central to Celan's poetics. The repetition of the Du in 'In Ägypten' is one of the most characteristic features of Celan's poetry. On being awarded the *Literaturpreis der freien Hansestadt Bremen* in 1958, Celan publicly declared that writing poetry after 1945 is like sending a message in a bottle, that is perhaps on its way towards

an unknown but 'ansprechbares Du' (Celan, 1958b, p. 11). As a result of his experiences of National Socialism, Celan's poetry is often associated with an intense silence and language scepticism. However, in its efforts to connect with a Du, his poetry paradoxically seeks to establish a dialogue. In a way, Celan's poetry serves an epistolary function as his writing only gains agency when it is read by another. Through an analysis of Bachmann and Celan's letters and published poetry and prose, this thesis will provide an in-depth exploration of how dialogue serves as a poetic principle in Bachmann and Celan's writing.

In their letter correspondence, writing is often experienced as a struggle, whilst essential for communication. In a letter dated 31st October 1957, Celan both underscores this difficulty and the significance of the first poem of their correspondence. He depicts Bachmann as the motivation for his writing, and even speaking: 'Denk an 'in Ägypten'. Sooft ichs lese, seh ich Dich in dieses Gedicht treten: Du bist der Lebensgrund, auch deshalb, weil Du die Rechtfertigung meines Sprechens bist und bleibst' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 64). Here, Celan suggests that Bachmann justifies his writing and use of language. Not only does Bachmann's influence mean that Celan can write, but she is depicted as the 'Lebensgrund' of his writing. The idea that the recipient is the 'Lebensgrund' of the text stresses the idea that a text depends on its reader in that it only gains agency when it is interpreted by its recipient. Moreover, the term 'Lebensgrund', reason for living, suggests that this problem of expression is not just a continuation of the fin-de-siècle *Sprachkrise*,[2] but that it originates from a sense of crisis.

As Bachmann and Celan explore crises of expression in a range of forms it is important not to conflate how these crises are experienced in the letters and in their poetry. In the letter the Du who Celan writes to is Ingeborg Bachmann, whereas in the poems the Du is undefined and is destined for a reader who is unknown to the text's author. Celan appears to view the text as only taking shape when it can be read and re-read, the reader is the 'Lebensgrund' of the text as the text has a life beyond its author. Following this principle poetry shares some of the dialogic features of a letter.

Herzzeit, edited by Barbara Wiedemann and Bertrand Badiou, is the first major work dedicated to the letters that Bachmann and Celan exchanged between 1948 and 1967 (Bachmann and Celan, 2008). At the end of this edition, in their commentary, Wiedemann and Badiou comment on the complexities sur-

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[2]See chapter 1.2 for more details.

rounding these letters and on the ways in which language, silence and expression are explored in the correspondence:

> Ihre Briefe schwanken zwischen einem märchenhaften, 'romantischen', das Verlorene heraufbeschwörenden Ton und ganz sachlichen Hinweisen auf Zeitschriften, Verleger oder die Fahrtstationen nach Niendorf — und das manchmal in ein und demselben Brief.
> (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 218)

Badiou and Wiedemann note the nuances of Bachmann and Celan's correspondence, in particular the range of ways in which they express themselves in the letters. Romantic or poetic expressions are sometimes embedded in factual conversations about train times or appointments. In addition to their poetic and literary work the letters provided another mode of expression for the poets.

The letters document Bachmann and Celan's turbulent relationship alongside concerns pertinent to German-speaking writers of the post-1945 era. Some of the major concerns relate to the problem of expression, the endurance of fascism and the continuation of anti-Semitism. The letters demonstrate that these concerns are not only themes explored in the poets' published literary works, but that these concerns are also experienced and problematized in their personal correspondence. Some of the letters present an overlapping of cultural and personal concerns. Examples of personal concerns include the accusations of plagiarism that Celan faced from Claire Goll, along with an anti-Semitic attack on Celan's work by Günter Blöcker in October 1959 in which Blöcker claims: '*Celan hat der deutschen Sprache gegenüber eine grössere Freiheit als die meisten seiner dichtenden Kollegen. Das mag an seiner Herkunft liegen*' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 124).[3] For Bachmann and Celan 1945 did not represent a caesura marking the end of fascism; both authors continued to grapple with the consequences of fascism, patriarchy, and anti-Semitism in their writing.

However, they approached these issues from very different vantage points. Celan was a German-speaking Jew from Czernowitz (formerly in Ukraine) whose parents were murdered in a concentration camp in Ukraine following the family's arrest by Nazis in 1942. Celan was sent to a forced labour camp 400 kilometres south of Czernowitz in Tăbăreşti in Wallachia. It is not known exactly how long he spent there, but he is purported to have claimed to have spent time

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[3]For Celan's conversation with Bachmann regarding Blöcker's criticism, see: (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, pp. 124-128) and for Celan's conversation with Max Frisch, see: (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, 166-172).

'off and on' in labour camps during the Second World War (Felstiner, 2001, p. 15). Originating from a multi-lingual enclave of Czernowitz, Celan's mother brought him up speaking German whilst his father taught him Yiddish, German was therefore considered to be Celan's mother-tongue (Felstiner, 2001, p. 6). Consequently, Celan read Blöcker's comments regarding his heritage and use of German as an anti-Semitic attack (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, pp. 124-128).

Bachmann, on the other hand, grew up in Klagenfurt in provincial Austria where her father was a member of the Austrian National Socialist Party. Joseph McVeigh suggests that there was an 'unarticulated tension between the author and her father' (McVeigh, 2004, p. 132) because of her father's participation in National Socialism. On his death it is claimed that Bachmann commented that he was the only person never to have abandoned her (reported by Bachmann's friend Heidi Auer) (Hoell, 2001, p. 149), suggesting a possible closeness to her father. In the journal that Bachmann kept as a teenager she expresseed an inability to relate to the older generation 'Nein, mit den Erwachsenen kann man nicht mehr reden!' (Bachmann, 2011, p. 15) Her embarrassment at that age later developed into her deeply critical writing on Austrian and German society in her published works, such as in *Unter Mördern und Irren, Malina* and *Ein Ort für Zufälle.*

Bachmann and Celan's letters provide new insights into their personal and poetic relationship, and also their personal responses to wider social and cultural concerns of the post-1945 period. Prior to their publication, these letters had been the subject of much speculation. According to Sigrid Weigel and Bernhard Böschenstein, the lack of access to the letters had resulted in a methodological challenge for academic research:

> Anstatt Gegenstand biographischer Neugier werden zu können, bleibt das "Geheimnis der Begegnung" von dem Celan im *Meridian* spricht, auf diese Weise in den Archiven bewahrt und stellt auf diese Weise eine Herausforderung an die literaturwissenschaftliche Methodologie dar: die Notwendigkeit nämlich, sich auf die *literarischen*, nicht *brieflichen* Korrespondenzen zu konzentrieren und so tatsächlich ausschließlich den poetischen Dialog zu rekonstruieren.
> (Böschenstein and Weigel, 2000, p. 9)

Following the publication of the letters, the distinction that Weigel and Böschenstein make between literary and epistolary correspondence is not so clear-cut. While in the published editon they do point out the nuances of expression in

the letters 'Ihre Briefe schwanken zwischen einem märchenhaften, 'romantischen', das Verlorene heraufbeschwörenden Ton und ganz sachlichen Hinweisen' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 218), here Weigel and Böschenstein appear to distinguish between biographical texts and literary texts. It is this distinction that this thesis seeks to challenge. Although the letters do provide biographical insights into the authors' lives, such as dates, times and meetings etc., the correspondence is not just an exchange of factual or biographical information. Some motifs and metaphors found in their published work, such as the poppy motif, can be traced back to their letter correspondence. Even Celan's famous message in a bottle metaphor appears early on in the letter correspondence through references to the sea and the rescue metaphor. Moreover, certain formal features and considerations surrounding their use of form hint that the letters were not simply used to exchange information or to arrange meetings. As it will be argued that certain metaphors and motifs from their published work are also used and reformulated in the letter correspondence, and because the two writers construct a literary dialogue in other written forms e.g. in poetry and prose, the literariness of the authors' letters comes into question. If a dialogue is constructed in poetic form or verse and is dedicated to a specific person, the language used in this form is usually identified as poetic. When Bachmann responds to Celan's poetry or prose in her own prose work e.g. her short story *Undine geht* or her novel *Malina*, then the language used is considered to be literary. This thesis will consider the letters as being situated at the crossroads of poetic and practical language. It seeks to examine both the limits and the full literary potential of this form by examining its distinguishing features against other dialogic forms. This thesis will therefore consider Bachmann and Celan's correspondence in forms that are more commonly considered to be literary or poetic. Moreover, because Celan's poetry is often associated with dialogue, the poetic function of dialogic form requires examination.

In the letter correspondence, the entire epistolary process of writing, sending, receiving and reading is given great attention. Occasionally, the way in which letters are sent and received is similar to the way in which Celan would write and send a volume of poems to Bachmann. They are sometimes sent via a mutual friend such as Nani or Klaus Demus as a volume rather than being sent individually and being entrusted to the post. This is the same way that Celan sent poems to Bachmann. Another characteristic of the correspondence is that unfinished letters are frequently discussed within sent letters. On 24th November 1949, Bachmann wrote to Celan:

jetzt ist es November geworden. Mein Brief, den ich im August geschrieben habe, liegt noch da — alles ist so traurig. Du hast vielleicht auf ihn gewartet. Nimmst Du ihn heute noch?
(Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 13)

Bachmann's discussion of a letter within another letter, coupled with the suggestion that Celan would be waiting for this letter with anticipation, suggests that a distinction is made between types of letter. A certain type of letter is sent with more ease than the unfinished letters that are discussed in the sent letters.

The suggestion and promise of unfinished letters within the sent letters is often met with pleas from the other who wishes to receive letters. In other instances, Bachmann and Celan encourage each other to write even when writing is experienced as problematic by the other, for example in November 1949 Bachmann wrote to Celan 'Versuche es, schreib mir, frag mich, schreib Dir alles weg, was auf Dir legt!' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 14) and in another letter dated February 1959 Celan wrote 'Sei guten Muts, Ingeborg, schreib — und schick mir, wenn Du kannst, ein paar Seiten' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 104). Writing is presented as having a therapeutic quality for the writer; this is coupled with a desire to receive a letter. Their correspondence presents a dynamic of struggle and desire; a struggle to write letters and a desire to receive them. This dynamic is not just based on the act of giving and receiving a material document, but is also motivated by the content of the written text, the suggestion of a message that may or may not be sent. Some messages are sent simply to make contact and to state that the act of writing has become too difficult. In a telegram sent from Bachmann to Celan on 18th November 1959, Bachmann wrote: 'NUR NICHT HEUTE ABEND LASS UNS DIE WORTE FINDEN' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 129). This urgent expression of crisis highlights the difficulty surrounding expression that was experienced by the writers. Telegrams and letters, such as the above, depict an immediate and personal response to a state of crisis. Other letters discuss this inability to write within a written text:

Lieber, lieber Paul,
wohl jeden Tag habe ich schreiben wollen, aber unsere Rückreise, und für mich noch eine Reise dazwischen, haben mich zu nichts kommen lassen; wenn ich wenigstens noch, wie es andre können, einen Brief schreiben könnte in einer Stunde oder an einem Abend

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> — aber es ist seit langem schon wie eine Krankheit, ich kann nicht
> schreiben, bin schon versehrt, wenn ich das Datum hinsetze oder das
> Blatt in die Maschine ziehe. (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 157)

Bachmann expresses here how she had wished to write to Celan, but the act
of writing had become too problematic. This is another example of a letter
which was written to convey to the other the difficulties that are experienced
when writing. Bachmann expresses this difficulty through the use of a bodily
metaphor as she likens writing to failing health.

Bachmann and Celan's correspondence presents a typology of letters. There
are letters that express immediate crisis, those which suggest that another letter
is being composed and has not yet been sent, and the unsent letters that are
discussed in the sent letters. The function of the letter as a way of exchanging
information with someone who is not in close proximity does not appear to be
the only concern in Bachmann and Celan's letters, especially as some of the
unsent letters become a topic of conversation within sendable letters. The topic
of unsent letters recurs and many of the letters are either simply not sent or
they are thrown away. In their commentary on the letters, published in the back
of the *Herzzeit* edition, Barbara Wiedemann and Bertrand Badiou suggest that
the concerns related to sending letters expressed in the correspondence serve as
proof of the sense of doubt affecting the authors:

> Immer wieder ist von nicht abgesandten Briefen die Rede: Manche
> dieser Briefe scheitern und werden weggeworfen, der eine oder andere
> Versuch wird immerhin aufbewahrt und steht zwischen den Briefen
> als Zeugnis des Zweifelns. (Badiou and Wiedemann, 2009, p. 215)

Some letters are introduced by telegrams or by shorter letters. In one letter
describing the travel arrangements for a conference in Hamburg, Bachmann
apologizes to Celan in the final paragraph for having only written a factual
letter, creating a further distinction between types of letter.

> Sei nicht böse, dass es nur ein sachlicher Brief geworden ist. Ich er-
> warte jetzt ungeduldig ein Lebenszeichen von Dir. Nimm alle meine
> Hoffnungen für die kommende Zeit! Ingeborg.
> (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 47)

Notably, this letter is not just factual, it also expresses wishes and hopes. This
raises the question of what is meant by a factual letter? If factual letters can

contain emotions, then the opposite of the factual letter is not necessarily something that exclusively includes personal feeling and emotion, as they can be contained within factual letters.

In the correspondence, the form of communication is also carefully considered. In one case, Bachmann is inspired to begin writing to Celan following a telephone conversation with him. This suggests that not only do Bachmann and Celan identify a different type of letter, but that this type of letter contains or presents information in a way that cannot be communicated in the same way orally over the phone. In another instance, Celan suspects that Bachmann is unable to write a letter because of an earlier telephone conversation between the two:

> Ingeborg, ich sage mir, daß Dein angekündigter Brief nur deshalb nicht kommt, weil es Dir schwer fällt, ihn zu schreiben, d. h. weil ich es Dir mit meinem Redeschwall am Telephon noch schwerer gemacht hab, als es ohnehin schon war. Schreib also bitte nur ein paar Zeilen, ich weiß ja, daß Du weißt, worum es mir, auch in dieser üblen Bonner Sache, geht. (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 101)

The fact that the letter correspondence does not just consist of factual exchanges, and that this form interacts with its content differently from other media, such as the telephone, implies that the letters have some other or additional purpose than just to communicate a basic message.

Letter-writing usually serves to maintain contact between two or more people at a distance; it enables a conversation that cannot be had verbally or in person. In Bachmann and Celan's correspondence, certain letters are kept for months before they are sent to the recipient, in this way, they fall out of the oscillating pattern of a conversation. The composition, editing and contemplation of sending the letters, more closely mimics the act of writing and publishing literary prose or poetry for a reading audience than it does a personal conversation. To exemplify this, in a letter dated 8th February 1959, Bachmann writes to Celan:

> Paul, der Brief ist nur nicht gleich geschrieben worden, weil ich hier ein paar schwere Tage hatte, mit Aufregungen, und nun die Grippe dazu, nicht schlimm, aber ich fühle mich zu nichts imstande, kann nicht arbeiten, und es ging gerade so gut vorher.
> (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 102)

Bachmann apologizes for not having been able to finish writing a letter due to illness. She expresses her inability to write a letter within another letter and also comments on how this illness has had the same effect on her literary work. In this way, an association is made between writing literary works and writing a certain type of letter, as one type of letter can be completed and sent and another cannot. Moreover, in a letter dated 7th November 1957, Bachmann writes to Celan: 'Einen Brief an Dich kann ich nicht in zehn Minuten schreiben!' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 68) Regardless of whether or not this means that the letters can be described as literary, what it does show is that either a certain type of letter is particularly difficult to write, or that it requires greater thought and consideration than messages that can be communicated over the telephone or sent in the other type of letter.

In this thesis, the compositional choices that inform the letters will be examined with a view to determine whether these letters can be termed literary. Moreover, this study seeks to identify the distinguishing features of this form and its relation to and interaction with the message and language. This will be achieved through an analysis of the fictional, metaphorical, and real letter correspondences used by Bachmann and Celan, also in their published literature. Furthermore, this thesis will continue the recent study into the relationship between language and form in Bachmann's work. Recent research into Bachmann's poetic drafts by Áine McMurtry has provided important insights into Bachmann's considerations surrounding form in her later work (McMurtry, 2012). This research has challenged the generally accepted view of Bachmann as 'die gefallene Lyrikerin', the idea that she renounced poetic writing in the early 1960s as an inadequate form of literary expression and that she instead turned towards prose work. The letters provide another form of expression, and their publication in 2008 offers new insights into the authors' considerations surrounding form and language after 1945.

The remainder of this chapter considers the cultural problems facing German-speaking writers following 1945, including language scepticism and Theodor Adorno's dictum that to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric, a statement which greatly influenced the debate on poetic writing after the Holocaust. This statement and the debate surrounding it demonstrate some of the cultural concerns facing writers such as Bachmann and Celan. This debate focusses on artistic and poetic production after the Holocaust, and it contributed to writers questioning their use of form and language against this backdrop. This thesis will consider how language, and arguably poetic language, is used in a form that

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is more commonly associated with a practical function than a poetic function. The final section of this chapter then examines theoretical perspectives on the letter form, with a view to exploring how the letter can be exploited as a motif in literature. This will lead onto a discussion in chapter two about how Bachmann and Celan exploit the letter motif in their own works. The remainder of this chapter will also explore ideas about what it is that makes language literary or poetic. The ultimate question being, can letters be read as literary?

Chapter two investigates Bachmann's and Celan's own thought on the literary and theoretical significance of the letter. As chapter one considers the factors that can make language literary and makes more general comments on the practical functions of letters, chapter two and three consider Bachmann and Celan's post-1945 poetics including theoretical considerations on dialogue. This will help to ascertain what they consider constitutes poetic writing in their own terms. Following this, the final chapter will return to an analysis of the letters with Bachmann's and Celan's own poetic considerations in mind. The key texts that inform chapter two are Celan's prize acceptance speech for the *Literaturpreis der freien Hansestadt Bremen*, in which he famously likened the role of post-1945 poetry to a message in a bottle, and Bachmann's novel *Malina*, in which the protagonist's unfinished letters are woven into the narrative structure.

The third chapter examines Bachmann's and Celan's responses to the thought and writing of Georg Büchner. This chapter will consider aspects of their Büchner Prize acceptance speeches *Der Meridian* (1960) and *Ein Ort für Zufälle* (1964) as a way of examining how their thought on poetry and language in the post-1945 era translates into a dialogue in their literary work. Both speeches deal with the problem of writing poetry following 1945 from positions of crisis. Both Bachmann and Celan consider Büchner's *Dantons Tod* and *Lenz* and relate these texts to their own contemporary context. The ideas developed in Celan's speech and in his short story *Gespräch im Gebirg* demonstrate an engagement with Büchner's *Lenz* and also *Dantons Tod*, which Bachmann then reinterprets in her short story *Undine geht*. In this way, Bachmann writes a literary response to Celan's outline for the role of poetry in the *Meridian*.

Chapter four returns to some of the theoretical considerations explored in chapter one, after having considered Bachmann and Celan's poetics in chapters two and three, and analyses some of their poetry and love lyrics of the 1950s. Here, particular attention is paid to the dialogue carried out by the authors in and through their poetry. The final chapter offers an examination of the language use in some of the letters in Bachmann and Celan's correspondence,

this will be compared to their use of language in their poetry. Chapter four seeks to use the theoretical perspectives explored throughout the thesis to determine whether or not the letters form part of or contribute to Bachmann and Celan's poetic endeavours.

1.1 Linguistic and Cultural Crisis: Writing and Publishing after 1945

One of the major concerns facing German-speaking poets in the aftermath of the Holocaust was the suitability of the German language as a poetic medium. Philologists such as Victor Klemperer in 1946 and H. G. Adler in 1965 wrote about the occurrence of 'semantic shifts' in German during the Nazi era (Klemperer, 2006; Horan, 2003, p. 53). They considered that the use of German under National Socialism had tainted the language, as the meanings of certain words were considered to have changed through their use in Nazism. In some cases the meanings of words became more specific, or meanings were extended. Klemperer believed that Nazism had corrupted concepts and that young people unconsciously clung to some of the Nazi concepts that still existed in German words. Not only did meanings of existing words change, but new words came into the German language as a result of National Socialism, such as 'des Entdunkels', the word used for lifting the blinds following blackouts (Klemperer, 2006, p. 1).

As German was the language that Celan had learnt from his mother, his relationship to the German language was particularly problematic. Following the death of his parents and a large proportion of European Jewry, Celan could not rid German of its association with this horror. His concerns with language, however, were not just as a result of his personal relationship to the language, as Theo Buck warns:

> wehren wir uns gegen derartige Zumutungen. Dann können wir auch, mit Paul Celan, nicht "guten Gewissens", sondern mit allen nötigen Vorbehalten, nach der verlorenen Ganzheit der deutschen Sprache suchen. (Buck, 1993)

Celan's concerns surrounding language and expression should not simply be reduced to an attempt to reconcile his own personal trauma with German and poetry.

Some of Bachmann's concerns surrounding expression following 1945 were not only influenced by the immediate post-1945 crisis of language but also by the turn of the century *Sprachkrise* phenomenon. At the turn of the 20th-century a disillusionment with language as an expressive medium was experienced by some modernist Austrian and German writers. This crisis, termed the *Sprachkrise*, was famously detailed in Hugo von Hofmannsthal's 'Ein Brief' (1902), the paradigmatic modernist expression of a crisis of language and cognition. This *Sprachkrise* phenomenon had a major impact on the literary consciousness of the modern era.[4] The earlier crisis outlined by Hofmannsthal in 1902 was reiterated by Bachmann at the end of the 1950s in her first Frankfurt lecture 'Fragen und Scheinfragen'.[5] In the post-1945 era, linguistic scepticism gained a new sense of urgency. Bachmann's concerns with writing after 1945 were also tied to issues of female authorship in a society which she considered to still be fascist and patriarchal. The post-1945 Austrian and German literary scene is often depicted as having been dominated by men, Jo Catling describes the 1950s and 1960s as:

> [...] a period virtually devoid of significant women authors. This

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[4]Philip Ajouri traces this crisis back to Hegel (1770-1831) for whom concepts, which form an important part of language, signify the being of the thing in itself (Ajouri, 2009, p. 149). This view maintains that truth and reality both stem from the concepts. Moreover, the realist tradition was concerned with language's ability to convey empirical reality, although language's capability as a means of representation was not radically thrown into question. Then naturalist writers such as Karl Henckel, who were compelled by positivism, encouraged a new form of language in everyday speech; this was first seen in dramas. Dirk Göttsche suggests that the crisis is linked to revolutionary advances in media; this was evident in the case of Karl Kraus who in his newspaper *Die Fackel* (1899-1936), criticized the lazy use of language in journalism (Göttsche, 1987, p. 51). The *Sprachkrise* at the turn of the century, however, was associated with the *Erkenntniskrise* [crisis of cognition] in philosophy. Ajouri associates this crisis with Nietzsche's *Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne* (1873) (Ajouri, 2009, p. 149). In this work Nietzsche poses the question 'Ist die Sprache der adäquate Ausdruck aller Realitäten?' (Nietzsche, 1967, p. 372) thus taking issue with Hegel's notion that reality and truth stem from concepts. Part of Nietzsche's argument is based on the subjectivity of experience and the hermeneutic problems of shared experience. According to Nietzsche language cannot adequately convey such a great range of experiences. Ajouri suggests that it is this work in combination with Ernst Mach's work on concepts and Fritz Mauthner's *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* (1901/02) which may have informed Hofmannsthal's language scepticism which then went on to have a major impact on literary modernism.

[5]'Der Fragwürdigkeit der dichterischen Existenz steht nun zum ersten Mal eine Unsicherheit der gesamten Verhältnisse gegenüber. Die Realitäten von Raum und Zeit sind aufgelöst, die Wirklichkeit harrt einer ständigen neuen Definition, weil die Wissenschaft sie gänzlich verformelt hat. Das Vertrauensverhältnis zwischen Ich und Sprache und Ding ist schwer erschüttert. Das erste Dokument, in dem Selbstbezweiflung, Sprachverzweiflung und die Verzweiflung über die fremde Übermacht der Ding, die nicht mehr zu fassen sind, in einem Thema angeschlagen sind, ist der berühmte "Brief des Lord Chandos" von Hugo von Hofmannsthal.' (Bachmann, 2005a, p. 259)

image is due both to the male domination of the forum of the new West German literature, the *Gruppe 47*, in the narrative of post-war literary history (with only passing reference to its 'token' women), and to the self-image of second wave feminism as a radical break with the conservatism of the immediate post-war years.

(Catling, 2000, p. 169)

The only other woman to gain fame from association with the *Gruppe 47* was Ilse Aichinger.[6] Throughout the entire twenty years of the groups existence, Bachmann and Aichinger were also the only two female writers to win the group's prize. Franziska Meyer notes that later accounts from the group attribute Aichinger and Bachmann's success to 'male gallantry' (Meyer, 1997, p. 46). Some of Bachmann's published writings, for example in *Malina*, portray the silencing of the female voice in post-1945 Austria, a society which she deemed to have falsely denied its own involvement in fascism during the Nazi era.

Celan's relationship to German was complex; language does not just serve as a way of articulating or communicating his experiences of the world. Paradoxically, it can lead to feelings of loneliness, as he explained in a letter to Karl Schwedhelm on 6th November 1952: 'Als Jude musste ich nun neben manchem anderen auch erfahren, dass die Sprache nicht nur Brücken in die Welt, sondern auch in die Einsamkeit schlägt' (Buck, 1993). Here, Celan associates his relationship to language with his Jewish identity. In Bachmann and Celan's correspondence, each writer goes through periods of linguistic crisis, in which one author cannot write to the other. In their published literary works language scepticism is readily associated with cultural crises. However, in the letter correspondence, it is important not to assume that these periods are only symptomatic of a wider cultural or literary malaise. Bachmann and Celan both suffered psychologically and spent periods in psychiatric hospitals.[7] In a letter written by Celan to Bachmann on 31st October 1957, Celan explains that he has overcome a period of personal crisis that had prevented him from being able to communicate using language: 'Weißt Du, daß ich jetzt wieder sprechen (und

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[6]In 1947 a group of young writers came together with the intention of founding a new literary journal, they named themselves 'Gruppe 47' after the year in which they formed. This group became a greatly influential literary circle including writers such as Walter Jens, Heinrich Böll and Ilse Aichinger. In the correspondence, Bachmann and Celan discuss having been invited to a meeting of the 'Gruppe 47' in 1952.

[7]In 1963 Bachmann received treatment at the Martin Luther Hospital, Celan also underwent psychiatric treatment in a clinic in Paris in 1962 and 1963 (McMurtry, 2012, p. 117).

schreiben) kann? Ach, ich muß Dir noch viel erzählen, auch Dinge, die selbst Du kaum ahnst. Schreib mir' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 65). The letter requires intersubjective engagement and a linguistic response from the addressee. Therefore, this form places demands on the reader that come into conflict with the writers' expressive difficulties. More clearly than in poetry or prose, the letter explicitly highlights Bachmann's and Celan's severe doubts surrounding language, as this scepticism is shown to not only effect their literary production, but also their personal correspondence.

Moreover, silence plays an important role in their correspondence. The epistolary form is confronted with the paradoxical task of voicing silence, or finding words despite an extreme sense of scepticism towards language. This results in the occasional breakdown in the correspondence as each writer goes through periods of silence. On 7th September 1959, Celan wrote to Bachmann 'Ich glaube, ich muß durch ein längeres Stummsein' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 122), and in response to this Bachmann wrote of Celan's 'Zeit des erwarteten Stummseins' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 123). In these cases silence is anticipated, yet in other instances silence comes as an immediate response to crisis. In other cases, letters are written but accompanied by an acknowledgement of the problematic nature of writing in German: 'Ich denke und denke, aber immer in dieser Sprache, in die ich kein Vertrauen mehr habe, in der ich mich nicht mehr ausdrücken will' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, pp. 120-121). The crisis of language appears to result from a combination of social, cultural and personal concerns.

Furthermore, different types of silence are experienced. Celan even distinguishes his silence from Bachmann's: 'Nur sage ich mir manchmal, daß mein Schweigen vielleicht verständlicher ist als das Deine, weil das Dunkel, das es mir auferlegt, älter ist' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 13). This is reminiscent of Celan's letter to Schwedelm in which he associates his experience of German and his need for silence with his Jewish identity. On 25th August 1949 replied to this letter with an acknowledgement that their silences have different meanings and sources:

> Dein Schweigen war sicher ein andres als meines. Für mich ist es selbstverständlich, dass wir jetzt nicht über Dich und Deine Beweggründe sprechen wollen. Sie sind und werden mir immer wichtig sein, aber wenn nichts, was Dich betrifft. Für mich bist Du Du, für mich bist Du an nichts "schuld". Du musst kein Wort sagen, aber

ich freue mich über das kleinste. Mit mir ist das anders. Ich bin
wohl der Einfachere von uns beiden, und doch muss ich mich eher
erklären, weil es für Dich schwerer zu verstehen ist.

Mein Schweigen bedeutet vor allem, dass ich die Wochen behalten
wollte, wie sie waren, ich wollte nichts, als eben ab und zu durch eine
Karte von Dir die Bestätigung bekommen, dass ich nicht geträumt
habe, sondern alles wirklich war, [wie] es war. Ich hatte Dich lieb
gehabt, ganz unverändert, auf einer Ebene, die "jenseits Kastanien"
war. (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, pp. 14-15)

Bachmann considers her crisis to be simpler than Celan's, yet so different that
she has to explain the meaning of her silences. As she acknowledges the com-
plexity of Celan's silences, she writes: 'Du musst kein Wort sagen, aber ich
freue mich über das kleinste'. Bachmann's own silences are depicted as having
a positive function, she describes that her silence is a way of holding onto the
positive moments in their relationship. In this instance, rather than needing
Celan's written words, she suggests that simply a card as a reminder of him
would suffice. The card itself acts as a communicative device.

In a letter written on 31st October 1957, Celan expresses his desire to be
silent with Bachmann: 'Aber das allein, das Sprechen, ists ja gar nicht, ich
wollte auch stumm sein mit Dir' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 64). Whilst
both writers identify a difference in their silences, at other points in the corre-
spondence, they express a wish to be silent with one another. Silence is a way
of avoiding using a corrupt language altogether, thereby escaping its association
with atrocity. In the letter correspondence, the crisis of language appears in dif-
ferent moments as both a personal and a cultural crisis that can be momentarily
escaped through recourse to silence.

After 1945, it was not just the poetic use of German that was being ques-
tioned, but also the role of art and cultural criticism. The act of writing and pub-
lishing following the Holocaust was placed in the spotlight by Theodor Adorno
who famously and controversially wrote in his *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft*
that to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. Elaine Martin describes how
following Adorno's years of exile during the Hitler regime, on his return:

[Adorno] was astounded by the cultural euphoria among the post-
war populace in its desperate attempt to glide over the recent past
and reconnect to the supposed "true" soul of pre-National Socialist
Germany. Adorno empasized instead the need to examine culture's

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complicity. (Martin, 2011, pp. 22-23)

Detlev Claussen writes that the social differences that Adorno noticed between Europe and America during his period of exile enabled him to write *Prisms*, the collection that *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft* appears in. Moreover, this text represents a return to cultural theory:

> Adorno had written the introductory essay in 1949 and then published it in 1951 in a *Festschrift* for the seventy-fifth birthday of Leopold von Wiese, the doyen of German sociology. We can read it as a manifesto announcing the return of the "critical theory" to which Adorno appealed in contrast to the established conservative cultural criticism. (Claussen and Livingstone, 2009a, pp. 205-206)

As has been well documented, Adorno's statement that to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric has been used and interpreted in a variety of ways that may not match what Adorno meant by this controversial statement. Celan understood Adorno's statement as a complete ban on writing poetry. In *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft* Adorno wrote:

> Kulturkritik findet sich der letzten Stufe der Dialektik von Kultur und Barbarei gegenüber: nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch, und das frißt auch die Erkenntnis an, die ausspricht, warum es unmöglich ward, heute Gedichte zu schreiben.
> (Adorno, 1963)

Claussen stresses that this statement was particularly problematic for Celan given that 'his ability to survive Auschwitz depended on his ability to write poetry' (Claussen and Livingstone, 2009b, p. 328). The act of writing in order to cope or survive is thematized in the letter correspondence, as during periods of crisis both Bachmann and Celan frequently stressed the importance of continuing to write. As will be seen in chapter 2.3, Bachmann adopts a semantic field of rescue and water imagery in some of her letters to depict Celan being saved through poetic writing. John Zilcosky contends that Celan's relationship to Adorno was probably not as ambivalent as it is often depicted as having been (Zilcosky, 2005, p. 671). Zilcosky even notes that Adorno's statement is itself poetic:

> Adorno's statement *is itself poetic*, making use of figurative language: "Auschwitz" is a metaphor or, more specifically, a synecdoche, in

which one extermination camp substitutes for the entire mass murder of the European Jews. Moreover, "ein Gedicht" likewise stands in synecdochally for art and culture *in toto*. (Zilcosky, 2005, p. 671)

However, Celan understood Adorno's statement in non-figurative terms. The notion of poetry as a way of coping or surviving is reinforced in a letter written on 10th Decemeber 1958 from Bachmann to Celan:

Wie das Böse aus der Welt zu schaffen ist weiß ich nicht, und ob man es nur erdulden soll, auch nicht. Aber Du bist da und hast Deine Wirkung und die Gedichte wirken für sich und beschützen Dich mit – das ist die Antwort und ein Gegengewicht in der Welt.
(Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 100)

Writing poetry is presented as a way of coping with crisis. This letter was written in response to a letter from Celan with an extract from an anti-semitic review written by Jean Firges critcizing his Bonn lecture. Part of the extract highlights the continuation of anti-Semitism:

Eine unfaire Kritik kam mir nach der Lesung in Form einer Karikatur zu Gesicht. Darauf stand in gebückter Haltung ein gefesselter Sklave, der schnaubend gegen seine Ketten aufbegehrte. Unter der Zeichnung stand (und beginnt die Gemeinheit): Hosiannah dem Sohne Davids! (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 99)

In Bachmann's response, her view on writing poetry is positive as poetry is viewed as a counterbalance to the evil in the world. Using poetic language thus has a positive and protective function. She does not claim that poetry will help to remove the evil, but she implies that poetry can help Celan to cope with the situation. Consequently, Adorno's dictum, read simply as that truncated quotation as a prohibition on writing poetry, was highly problematic for Celan. Celan found himself critically questioning and defending the role of poetry in his prize acceptance speeches, such as in the Bremen speech and his Büchner prize acceptance speech, the *Meridian*. However, according to Zilcosky by critically considering the role of poetry, Celan was in fact working *with* Adorno's dictum.

An understanding of Adorno's concerns is important for considering the cultural backdrop against which Bachmann and Celan were writing. Moreover, Celan's relationship to Adorno has been much debated in scholarship, as it has often been understood that writers such as Celan and Nelly Sachs caused

Adorno to recant from his original statement (Felstiner, 2001). Recent scholarship, however, suggests that Adorno never went back on his original statement (Zilcosky, 2005; Ryland, 2009).

Against the backdrop of late capitalism, Adorno believed that culture was becoming a product whose very existence was dependent on the society that it was supposed to critique. Instead of functioning in a way that autonomously critiques society, culture was acting against its own definition, as it was becoming subsumed by the larger social structures and the forces of late capitalism. Adorno saw the relationship between culture and society as becoming ever narrower and he maintained that culture was contributing to the status quo rather than making radical criticisms. According to Adorno, the minds of the cultural creators or the cultural critics were unconsciously being influenced by the pull of marketability, resulting in their own unawareness of their lack of intellectual freedom. Culture and cultural criticism were deemed to be increasingly dependent on economic factors. In this way, culture was whatever society was willing to finance. The freedom of the critic was therefore illusory as the idea of intellectual freedom is impressed onto the critic by society.

In turn, this imagined sovereignty of the critic finds itself in a dialectic with the consumer society. The reader assumes the intellectual freedom of the critic and this belief in the autonomy of the critic further serves the status quo. Differentiation between culture and society becomes less and less possible. Under the illusion of freedom, cultural criticism necessarily and unawarely stagnates as it serves society rather than critiques it:

> Decisive is that the critic's sovereign gesture suggests to the readers
> an autonomy which he does not have, and arrogates for itself a position of leadership which is incompatible with his own principle of
> intellectual freedom. (O'Connor, 2000, p. 198)

Adorno identified a paradox in cultural production, in that it is self-negating because of the impact of social factors on culture, and therefore cultural production in late capitalism is impossible.

However, it would seem nonsensical for Adorno to entirely renounce cultural production in this particular social scenario that he is critiquing. On the one hand, there exists a contradiction in that Adorno feels that he is in a position to continue to write social criticism himself. Either he considers himself to transcend the dialectic that he identifies or there must be some room for cultural criticism in post-1945 late capitalism. Charlotte Ryland's analysis of Adorno's

'nach Auschwitz' statement interprets what Adorno must have intended by his statement in order to avoid self-contradiction:

> To write poetry is therefore to take part in a culture that is identified with barbarism, and yet not to write poetry is to fail to attempt to counter that barbarism. Adorno's pronouncement of this dialectic is consequently a call-to-arms: the production of poetry must not be discontinued, but any such production must remain permanently aware of its own impossibility. (Ryland, 2009, p. 144)

The entwining of culture and society resulted in barbarism as culture was no longer capable of critiquing society as society exercised control over culture's very existence. By functioning against its own definition cultural criticism loses all purpose. Adorno's statement adds a further dimension of concern to writers following 1945, as to write poetry is to be implicated in barbarism, even if writing poetry serves as a way of confronting that same barbarism.

Another concern for writers, also in the Gruppe 47, was modern rationality in the 20th-century, a concern also explored by Adorno. In his *Ästhetische Theorie* he aimed to address the Hegelian and Marxist questions of how can art survive under capitalism? And, is art capable of transforming the world? As has already been seen in the correspondence, Bachmann suggests that poetry serves as a counterbalance in the world. Rather than being transformative, art can serve as a means of escape from the world, a complete counterbalance. In both Bachmann and Celan's work they consider the role of art in relation to reality. Rather than engaging with the existing reality in a way that transforms that reality, they consider art as a means of conceiving of or reaching a different sort of utopian reality.[8] This idea will be explored in more detail in chapters two and three.

Chris Conti outlines Adorno's views on the role of modern art in light of his aesthetic theory as: 'The modernist artwork burdened aesthetic form with the task of absorbing the self-destructive rationality, or 'logic of disintegration' which was unravelling the social fabric of modern life' (Conti, 2004, p. 280). What is meant by self-destructive rationality is that there exists a contradiction in society's participation in its own self-destruction, exemplified by the Nazis open discussions of their plans to kill other human beings. This concern still relates to the production of weapons and the excessive consumption of the

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[8]See section 2.3

world's resources. There is a recognition that these actions are socially destructive as the acts are not concealed and are freely talked about, yet society still participates in these same actions. In Adorno's view, the modernist artwork absorbs the self-destructive tendencies of modern rationality. Gudrun Kohn-Waechter argues that Bachmann and Celan's poetics engage in dialogue with the destructive rationality in a way that presents a risk to the writer:

> Die Flaschenpost-Dichtung Celans und Bachmanns sucht den Dialog mit Vernichtern. Bekanntlich setzt sich Celans Dichtung mit der Vernichtung der europäischen Juden im Nationalsozialismus auseinander, Bachmanns Spätwerk mit Todesarten von Frauen.
> (Kohn-Waechter, 2000, p. 212)

However, this view is contested in the following chapter, as has been suggested, Bachmann and Celan's poetics seek to conceive of an alternative reality to the post-1945 empirical reality. Bachmann even writes in the correspondence that: 'die Gedichte wirken für sich und beschützen Dich mit – das ist die Antwort und ein Gegengewicht in der Welt' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 100). Their art does not absorb the self-destructive rationality, rather it seeks a way of moving beyond it and also protecting the writer from it.

These are examples of some of the cultural considerations facing writers after Auschwitz. In order to fully understand how the cultural concerns are dealt with in Bachmann and Celan's correspondence — poetic and epistolary — the distinguishing features of the letter need to be considered in greater detail. This should help to ascertain whether the language used in the letters adopts any of the same strategies, as in Bachmann and Celan's published literature, to overcome these cultural and personal concerns with language and expression.

1.2   Epistolary Writing: Biographical and Literary Intersections

1.2.1   The Edited *Herzzeit* Volume

The insights that the recent publication of the letters provide are not only based on the content of the letters, but also on the way in which the form interacts with the message. Letters present different communicative obstacles and strategies to the author than is the case with other forms of spoken or written discourse. Before considering the literariness of the letter, and how poetic language can

be transposed onto a form more readily associated with practical language, the practical functions of the letter need to be considered. By identifying the distinguishing features of these letters — such as the relationship between the 21st-century reader and the 20th-century letter, inter-subjectivity, and the text as a biographical document — a clearer insight into the interaction between form and language can be reached.

As these letters were published for the first time in the 21st-century, the reader is reading them from an historical vantage point, from a digital age, in which letter-writing has been mostly displaced by quicker forms of technological media. This poses certain limitations on a contemporary reading of historical letters. According to Michel de Certeau, individual experiences greatly influence each individual's own understanding of moments in the past, such as historic events: 'events are often our own mental projections bearing strong ideological and even political imprints' (De Certeau, 1988, p. 38). Biographical documents, such as letters, cannot provide verifiable answers about the past, at best such documents are what Sarah Poustie describes as '*representations* of the past' (Poustie, 2010, p. 11). She further argues that there is no sense in seeking 'objective truths' in letters, at best we can make analytically verifiable interpretations of the information presented in these types of document.

Louis Montrose considers that history is simply made up of ideas based on information that has been communicated via social constructs. He refers to the 'historicity of texts' as the cultural contexts from which texts come, and he also refers to the 'textuality of history' to underscore the impossibility of constructing an authentic image of the past (Montrose, 1989, p. 20). Texts and other documents from the past are interpreted from a contemporary perspective and as a result their significance in their own socio-historical context is impossible to accurately determine. Ideas about the past are determined by decisions made in the present, informed by the decisions of academics as to which documents are worth studying, and the publisher's choice regarding which documents are marketable. This holds similarities to Adorno's comments from the previous section, as the construction of history is not immune to the pull of marketability.

A further consideration for the reader is that the letters in the collection may not give a full picture of the relationship and lives of Bachmann and Celan as documents may be missing and additionally some conversations were conducted via telephone or by other means:

Es mag Lücken in der Dokumentation eines Lebens geben, doch das

steht der Idealvorstellung nicht im Wege, dass ein Leben vollständig erfassbar sei, wenn nur die Dokumentation vollständig ist. Dem Paradigma der 'Rekonstruktion' liegt also ein epistemologisches Vertrauen in die Erfassbarkeit des Gegenstands der Biographie zu Grunde. (Ní Dhúill, 2009, p. 33)

What can be discerned from the letter correspondence is that some of the letters were written following a meeting, or in one case immediately following a telephone conversation. Letter-writing was inspired by events and conversations which are not accessible to a reader who is external to the relationship. Consequently, it is impossible to create any kind of authentic model of the past from biographical documents. A lot of the interest surrounding biographical documents stems from the perception that they are evidence of what happened in the past; they contribute to the formation of an *Idealvorstellung*.

Attempts to construct an authentic image of a life are particularly pertinent when examining biographical documents concerning Bachmann who has, to some degree, had a public image constructed of her life. This has been particularly problematic in scholarship as it has served to maintain the perception of Bachmann as 'die gefallene Lyrikerin'. McMurtry refers to Monika Albrecht's study, which examines both the media discussions of Marilyn Monroe and Bachmann in the 1950s and suggests that there was a 'dominant desire for Woman's modernization and sexualization' (McMurtry, 2012, p. 6). The construction of the image of Bachmann then was influenced by the socio-cultural context of the time in which that assessment was made, which has led to misinterpretations of her poetics of the 1960s.

Sigrid Weigel further warns against attempting to form an image of Bachmann based on her literary works:

Sowenig aber Bachmanns Literatur ihre Lebensgeschichte abbildet, sowenig kann diese aus den Aussagen anderer Autoren, Freunde oder "Zeitzeugen" rekonstruiert werden. Diese können zwar als Sprecher des damaligen Zeitgeistes oder eines aus der je eigenen Perspektive kolorierten Bachmann-Bildes, nicht aber der Person gelten. (Weigel, 1999, p. 294)

Weigel also warns against constructing an image of Bachmann from testimonies of other authors, friends or contemporaries. Weigel's concerns are that since Bachmann became such a celebrated public figure, the testimonies of those who

were around her are often unreliable, as friends or acquaintances attempted to write themselves into her life story or to give themselves an unjustifiably important role in the narrative of her life. Weigel supports this claim with examples of such narratives.[9]

Moreover, following the publication of *Undine geht*, Bachmann explained in an interview in 1964 that there had been a lot of misunderstanding surrounding the story as readers had interpreted the story as a confession of the author due to the story's first person narrative perspective. Bachmann explained that 'Denn die Leser und auch die Hörer identifizieren ja sofort — die Erzählung ist ja in der Ich-Form geschrieben — dieses Ich mit dem Autor. Das ist keineswegs so' (Bachmann et al., 1983, p. 46). In this interview, Bachmann expresses her own concerns at the desire of others to construct a narrative of her life.

The letter correspondence provides a direct testimony from Bachmann herself with biographical detail. However, the way in which she writes would have been influenced by Celan due to the reciprocal nature of letter-writing. Although a letter differs from prose or fiction as it is not intentionally fictional, Claudio Guillén writes that letters enclose 'a fictional thrust' because of the nature of reciprocity (Guillén, 1994, p. 5). The letter provides a platform for the writing subject to cement their own image of themself to present to the reading other:

> There is hardly an act in our daily experience, rooted in life itself, that is as likely as the writing of a letter to propel us toward inventiveness and the interpretation and transformation of fact: hence the ambivalence of the product, on the razor's edge between the fact and the interpretation. The 'I' who writes may not only be pretending to act upon a friend, say as Aretino is practically forcing Michelangelo in a letter to send him some of his sketches for the Sistine Chapel, but acting also upon himself, upon his evolving mirror image, as Aretino obviously does, shaping his own identity for Michelangelo's sake. (Guillén, 1994, p. 5)

According to Pedro Salinas 'es cobrar conciencia de nosotros' [it develops our awareness of ourself] (Salinas, 1967, p. 29), writing the letter helps the writer to understand or to shape an image of themself. In this way, letter-writing differs from journal writing as the inter-subjectivity of this act requires that the presence of a specific other is always in the letter-writer's consciousness.

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[9]See 'Die Biographie als Anathema' in (Weigel, 1999).

The subject environment, the writer and the letter, depends on the reader's environment as a space for the subject to present their self image. Letters are, however, not simply reflective documents, they can also serve as catalysts for emotive responses or actions on the part of the recipient. Letters depend on their dialogic function, keeping the other in mind and how the message may influence the addressee. The portrayal of the writer's self depends also on their awareness and knowledge of the addressee.

In Bachmann's prize acceptance speech for the Anton Wildgans Prize, she discusses the author's subject position and how it interacts with a form of writing, such as published poetry or prose that is available for an unknown reading audience:

> denn eine Stunde wie diese hat absolut nichts zu tun mit allen meinen anderen Stunden, meine Existenz ist eine andere, Ich existiere nur, wenn ich schreibe, ich bin nichts, wenn ich nicht schreibe, ich bin mir selbst vollkommen fremd, aus mir herausgefallen, wenn ich nicht schreibe. Wenn ich aber schreibe, dann sehen Sie mich nicht, es sieht mich niemand dabei. [...] Es ist eine seltsame, absonderliche Art zu existieren, asozial, einsam, verdammt, es ist etwas verdammt daran, und nur das Veröffentlichte, die Bücher, werden sozial, assoziierbar, finden einen Weg zu einem Du, mit der verzweifelt gesuchten und manchmal gewonnenen Wirklichkeit. [...] Wer einen dazu zwingt? Niemand natürlich. Es ist ein Zwang, eine Obsession, eine Verdammnis, eine Strafe. (Bachmann, 2005c, p. 486)

Here, Bachmann distinguishes between the writing self and herself. Before making this distinction, she highlights that one specific moment in her life does not necessarily relate to all the other moments in her life. So, the moments when she is giving a speech or the moments when she writes a poem do not give an accurate representation of all of her other moments. The temporality of the act of writing means that a poem or a novel can be written in a specific moment in an author's life, but this same text can exist in multiple presents for readers at various times in the future, remote from when the author wrote that same text. Certeau's comments on events are relevant here, as from the moment in which texts are written, they are then interpreted from different moments in time. The moment in which the text is written becomes a past event, and according to Certeau past events can be influenced by our own ideological imprints.

Bachmann's acknowledgement that her writing self exists for the reader in their own present leads her to state 'ich bin mir selbst vollkommen fremd'. Her lack of identification with her non-writing self comes into tension with her writing self as she states 'Wenn ich aber schreibe, dann sehen Sie mich nicht, es sieht mich niemand dabei'. Writing a text for publication starts from a point of isolation and ventures out into the unknown to communicate something to a number of unknown readers at unknown points in the future. In her Anton Wildgan prize speech she describes writing as: 'Es ist eine seltsame, absonderliche Art zu existieren, asozial, einsam, verdammt [...] und nur das Veröffentliche, die Bücher werden sozial, assoziierbar, finden einen Weg zu einem Du'. Writing is experienced as a necessary evil. Rather than the need to write having a positive motivation, it is associated with negative human drives such as obsession. As is the case in the letters, writing is experienced as both problematic and neccessary. The solitary nature of writing is contrasted with the public reception of the written text that connects with the reader. The reader has the impression of connecting with the writer whose words have reached them. The writing subject is misinterpreted or re-interpreted and thus becomes dissociated from the self. In this process, the writer also has no knowledge of the reader and this leaves the writing self exposed. Some of the words used here are taken straight from Celan's 1958 Bremen speech in which he discusses the role of poetry following 1945. The relationship between the two speeches will be looked at in more detail in the next chapter.

These considerations outline the difference between letter-writing and writing a novel or a poem for publication. It is the epistolary intent of letter-writing that means that the writing self does not find itself left with this same sense of estrangement. Epistolary writing is usually dependent on making a connection with a known other. Consequently, literary letters find themselves at the crossroads of the poetic and the practical. The language is directed towards a specific person with a message for that person in mind.

However, since Bachmann and Celan's letters have been published in a volume, the dynamic of the letters changes as the subject positions change. The new reader interacts with the text differently from its intended recipient, moreover, the reader is presented with a narrative as the volume of letters is entitled *Herzzeit*. This choice of emphasis perhaps serves as evidence of Adorno's comments on the pull of marketability influencing cultural production. The way in which the letters have been published makes them accessible to a wider reading public, however, the title *Herzzeit* draws our attention to just one aspect of the

correspondence. In addition, some of the details of the letters and the choices that the author made when composing the letters are lost when they are typed up onto a computer and are then published in a volume. Bohnenkamp and Wiethölter argue that:

> Briefe sind keine Texte, sie sind darauf nicht zu reduzieren, auch wenn sie zwischen zwei Buchdekeln [...] Sobald Briefe Texte sind, sind Briefe keine Briefe mehr. (Bohnenkamp et al., 2008, p. IX)

The image on the following page of one of the handwritten letters from the correspondence, written by Celan in November 1957 for Bachmann, demonstrates some of the compositional choices which are not visible next to the typed up letters in the published volume. Just a few copies of the original letters are at the back of the volume. The original letters provide the reader with more information, for example, they reveal Celan's choices on how to present the information on the paper and the ways he chose to organize the text. Choices about the type of paper, ink and handwritten marks or scribblings are lost in the published version.

Arguably, the letters in the edited volume have undergone a genre shift, since what could be termed the grammar of letter writing, is lost in book form. The visual space of the letter, made up of scribblings and edits, forms part of the communicative function. Roman Jakobson describes that in conversations:

> The purely emotive stratum in language is presented by the interjections. They differ from the means of referential language both by their sound pattern [...]. The emotive function, laid bare in the interjections, flavors to some extent all our utterances, on their phonic, grammatical and lexical level. (Jakobson, 1960, p. 4)

In the letter, alternative strategies have to be adopted to convey this emotive stratum in language. This language and grammar of letter-writing changes as the genre shifts when the letters are published in a volume for a reading audience. Bohnenkamp and Wiethölter suggest that some of the communicative effect of the letters is sacrificed in this shift, as even the choice of ink can impact on communication:

> Die Wahl des Schreibgeräts gehört zum Ensemble der außersprachlichen kommunikativen Signale, die das "schriftliche Gespräch" entscheidend prägen — so wie es Tonfall, Mimik, Gestik und Kleidung tun,

As lines so loves oblique may well
Themselves in every angle greet:
But ours so truly parallel,
Though infinite can never meet.

Therefore the love which us doth bind,
But Fate so enviously debars,
Is the conjunction of the mind,
And opposition of the stars.
        Andrew Marvell, The Definition of Love
                S. 77.

am 5. November 1957.

Eine kurze Nachricht, Ingeborg, mit der ich

vielleicht deinem Anruf zuvorkomme: heute kam

ein Brief aus Tübingen, man schlägt mir die

ersten Dezembertage vor, ich werde annehmen.

Die Reise geht dann wohl zunächst über

Frankfurt, wo ist bei Fischer für das Honorar

für eine kleine Übersetzung, an der ich jetzt

arbeite, abholen will, am 29. der 30. kann

ich in München sein. Ich kann ein paar

Tage bleiben, drei oder vier, sag, ob Du's

noch willst.

Zürich weiß, daß ich zu Dir fahren will,

sie ist so tapfer!

Ich werde nicht vergehen, nein.

Und wenn Du nicht willst, daß ich von

Figure 1.1: A handwritten letter from Celan to Bachmann, dated 5th November 1957, (ÖNB/Vienna Autogr. 1316/25-8 Lit).

wenn wir uns persönlich gegenüberstehen.
(Bohnenkamp et al., 2008, p. 37)

In this way, letters have their own grammar and the language choice depends on the writer's relationship to the addressee. The language used functions in accordance with the relationship between sender and addressee. In a similar way to how letters develop their own grammar, a non-language based form of communication, Jakobson even suggests that it is possible to speak of a grammar of traffic signals:

> There exists a signal code, where a yellow light when combined with the green warns that free passage is close to being stopped and when combined with red announces the approaching cessation of stoppage; such as a yellow signal offers a close analogue to the verbal completive aspect. (Jakobson, 1960, p. 12)

Part of the mechanics of letter writing involves the anticipation of receiving the letter or the anticipation of knowing that a letter that has been sent may eventually be read by the recipient. When a third person reads the letters in the form of a book in a different historical period, then it is questionable as to whether or not this reader is reading letters as such, as the dynamic between writer and addressee is lost. The dynamic of Bachmann and Celan's correspondence is based on a struggle to write and a desire to receive. The motivation to write and longing to receive that characterizes the letter exchange is not experienced in the same way by the reader of the volume. Moreover, the experience of exchanging a material object with another is lost along with the communicative effect of this gesture. It could be suggested that the letter form is temporally dependent and exists in the moments of communicative exchange between two or more people.

Letters are conventionally used to maintain a relationship or to communicate a message from a distance. The description given above by Bohnenkamp and Wiethölter suggests that the function of the letter is to mimic a conversation, through alternative means to body language, intonation and tone. When a conversation is moved from orality to literature the same sort of communication experienced in physical human interactions is difficult to replicate. A question raised here is do letters mimic orality? And how are the markers of affection, disgust, repulsion etc. to be replicated in a written form? These questions may help to identify the key differences between the letters that Bachmann

distinguishes as either factual or non-factual, since the latter are the letters which appear not to mimic orality, as they fall out of the oscillating pattern of a conversation. The difficulty of letter-writing, and particularly in the case of love letters, is how can intimacy be conveyed through writing and at a distance?

1.2.2 Technologizing the Word: Distance and Intimacy

Letter-writing creates both communicative problems and solutions for the writer and reader who attempt to engage in conversation at a distance. Walter J. Ong writes that 'writing moves words from the sound world into a world of visual space, but print locks words into position in this space' (Ong, 2002, p. 121). So, in the letter, in order to convey the human characteristics as described by Bohnenkamp and Wiethölter, the visual space needs to become a communicative space, by use of features that can have personal meaning, such as handwriting, scribbles, and paper choice. However, over the course of the 20th-century, epistolary writing has had to evolve in line with advances in communication technologies. These technologies have presented linguistic and communicative challenges as people are increasingly communicating with each other at a faster rate and at greater distances. Notably, Bachmann expressed a preference for the typewriter rather than handwriting whereas Celan wrote most often by hand:

> Nimm mir vor allem nicht übel, daß ich die wichtigsten Briefe immer mit der Maschine geschrieben habe. Das Tippen ist mir so zur Gewohnheit — oder viel mehr als das — geworden, daß ich kaum mehr fähig bin, Worte, die mir am Herzen liegen, mit Tinte aufs Papier zu malen. (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 21)

In this way, there is a difference in their uses of the visual space. Notably, the typewriter is used for letters that 'am Herzen liegen', suggesting that a type of letter is consciously presented in a different way from handwritten letters.

According to Ong 'print locks words into position in this space.' This view is similar to Heidegger's comment that texts were becoming depersonalized as typewritten messages were becoming increasingly commonplace. With the standardization of typewriters in 1910, and their increasingly common usage into the 20th-century, the personal character of the handwritten letter was considered to have been lost to the typewriter. According to Heidegger in his 'Parmenides' lecture in 1942/3:

> Das maschinelle Schreiben nimmt der Hand im Bereich des geschriebe-
> nen Wortes den Rang und degradiert das Wort zu einem Verkehrsmit-
> tel. Außerdem bietet die Maschinenschrift den Vorteil, daß sie die
> Handschrift und damit den Charakter verbirgt. In der Maschinen-
> schrift sehen alle Menschen gleich aus. (Heidegger, 1982)

With advances in media there came about the possibility of giving textual rela-
tionships a different character, along with the necessity of developing alternative
communicative strategies:

> Der mediengeschichtliche Wandel, den die mit der Verbreitung der
> Schreibmaschine bedingte Mechanisierung des Schreibens auslöst,
> macht auf einmal eine kategoriale Differenz sichtbar und bringt einen
> zuvor selten wahrgenommenen Aspekt der Schreibszene schlaglichtar-
> tig zur Erscheinung. (Bohnenkamp et al., 2008, p. 238)

In the typewritten letter (figure 11 in the *Herzzeit* edition) (Bachmann and
Celan, 2008), written by Bachmann to Celan in 1951, Bachmann's choice to
use a typewriter has not restricted her ability to express herself. Rather than
concealing personal expression, the typewritten letter in fact employs different
communicative strategies, there is a clear distinction between the handwritten
and the typewritten marks. Bachmann's edits are visible and the thought pro-
cesses that informed her conversation with Celan are temporally marked, as she
revised parts of the original text with a pen, and has marked on the date of other
comments, which she wanted to make following writing the original message.

Rather than immediately sending the letter following its composition, she
kept it and added an additional note on 4th July 1951. The letter thus enables
her the possibility of communicating with Celan in a way that oral conversations
would not allow. Ong writes that:

> Persons whose world view has been formed by high literacy need to
> remind themselves that in functionally oral cultures the past is not
> felt as an itemized terrain [. . .]. Orality knows no lists or charts or
> figures. (Ong, 2002, p. 98)

Dating thoughts and parts of texts before sending them to Celan allows Bach-
mann to share information with him in a way that a telephone conversation or
a conversation in person would not permit. In this way, letters are more similar
to a published piece of work than a conversation. Dating the letter means that

the document itself contains evidence of its own historical moment. The letter becomes a material, historical document. By typing letters, in a similar way to how Bachmann describes in her Anton Wildgans prize acceptance speech, the message gives the impression of permanence, an enduring present tense, that outlives the writer. There is always the possibility that the document will be picked up again by someone else, who then gains an impression of that moment in a particular historical period. These comments are, however, also similar to the risk that Derrida associates with sending a postcard in his *La carte postale: de Socrate à Freud et au-delá*, that the message can be taken up by an unknown person and becomes open to [mis]interpretations. A further risk that he identifies is that the message stands the risk of never reaching the recipient as it may be intercepted or destroyed during its journey to the addressee. Typing the letters in the same way that a novel may be typed gives the impression that the words and the message have a lasting impact. Heidegger's comment that typewritten texts have a distancing effect, dissociating the author to some extent from the text, may also be significant here, particularly to writers who found the act of writing problematic.

The written message has a lasting present as it moves from the writer's present into the reader's future. The message can be stored and read multiple times. By dating the messages the past becomes itemized and recorded. In this way, the letter becomes more than just a conversation, it is a way of recording and sharing the writer's thoughts in that moment with the recipient in the future. In contrast to electronic communicative media the letter has a physical presence and in the future it can be rediscovered. For this reason, letters are able to fascinate the reader in the future as they serve as tangible evidence of something having taken place, bringing a sense of the past into the present.

1.2.3   The Literariness of Letters

These distinguishing features of the letter have been exploited in works of literature such as epistolary novels. Diego de San Pedro's novel *Cárcel de amor* is considered to be the first novel of this kind. Jane Altman considers that the letter functions well as a literary device because 'the letter is unique precisely because it does tend to define itself in terms of polarities such as portrait/mask, presence/absence, bridge/barrier' (Altman, 1982, p. 186). The letter interacts with language in a way that is unique. Although letters function in a way that can make them purposeful for literature, the question remains as to whether or

not letters can be literary themselves.

Considering the comments from the previous section on the way in which genre can shift when letters are removed from their context and placed in a volume, the letter's very existence as a letter appears to depend on certain factors. Once the letter has been removed from its original context and placed in a volume it could be argued that the letters even become literary text. Guillén claims that genre can mediate between constitutive and conditional poetics, meaning that a text might become literary in the future, once the text has been removed from its original context:

> The consideration of genre, however, seems essential if we are talking about essays, dialogues, autobiographies, *caractéres*, maxims, sketches of manners, or 'familial letters.' In such cases the history of these types allows us to recognize literariness as an evolving circumstance not dependent on positive answers to questions like "is it fiction?" or "does it develop formal qualities?" (Guillén, 1994, p. 18)

The reader in the future may identify features of the letter that they deem literary in that period, which may never have been intended to be literary when they were written. However, if letters are dependent on their communicative function and epistolary intent, as soon as they are removed from their original temporal circumstances, and re-discovered in the future, they no longer serve their practical function in the same way. Liz Stanley argues that certain functions and features of the letter, such as its epistolary intent, define this form:

> A letter [. . .] signals an 'epistolary intent,' and the epistolary or letter form can be easily recognized and distinguished from other forms of writing, because of existing in a social context with shared and largely stable conventions governing its form.
> (Stanley, 2004, p. 207)

With this in mind, the idea that letters have the potential to become literary is questionable, as the genre has potentially shifted. In this way, the letters would become literary texts rather than literary letters. For a letter to be a literary letter, it would still need to have an epistolary intent and to act out the dynamics of reciprocity.

Letters may be considered not to be a literary form as literature is often associated with fictionality whereas letters are more commonly associated with

their practical function. However, as Peter Michelsen points out, many everyday interactions and uses of language could fall under the category of fiction:

> Auf der anderen Seite sind auch in der Alltagssprache Fiktionen aller Art — in Form von Lügen, Phantasien, Wunschträumen, politischen Versprechungen in Wahlreden, Anpreisungen in der Werbung, usw. — durchaus nicht selten, ohne daß diese willkürlichen oder unwillkürlichen Erfindung deswegen schon literarischen Rang einnehmen. (Michelsen, 1990, p. 149)

In addition, Guillén comments that letters can function as a platform for shaping the writer's identity may be stretched to suggest that even the practical process of letter-writing may involve a certain degree of fiction. Peter Michelsen thus suggests that it is not fictionality that makes language literary, but language's ability to transport the reader away from their reality:

> Die Frage, wohin den Menschen die literarische Sprache führt, können wir nun versuchsweise, und zunächst einmal negativ, beantworten: sie führt ihn in die Unwirklichkeit. (Michelsen, 1990, p. 149)

The most well-known discussions on poetic language and uses of language are associated with the Russian Formalists. As has already been mentioned, Jakobson saw poetics as necessarily tied to linguistics. The earlier formalists sought to distinguish between poetic and practical language, Jakobson even claimed that in poetic language the communicative function is to be reduced to a minimum. By this, he suggests that each word needs to be doing more than simply conveying what the word on its own denotes (Jakobson, 1960). The language used in letters would need to have multiple functions, it would need to be ambiguous in order to convey both practical and poetic meanings, or the letter would have to contain a combination of the two types of language.

For Jakobson a sign should both denote and connote something (Pomorska, 1968, p. 26). Each word conjures up multiple meanings, yet these words must function in a network of other words and linguistic particles. Literary language appears to need to be ambiguous. G. Vinokur maintained that poetic language has to be rooted in practical language. In order for even poetic language to function it needs to be able to communicate something to a reader, which makes the language necessarily practical (Pomorska, 1968, p. 25).

It is not possible to define exactly what it is that makes a text literary, however, the above theories will contribute to the theoretical framework of this

investigation. In order to determine whether the letters can be considered literary and still be considered letters, Bachmann and Celan's own considerations on poetic language need to be taken into account. Moreover, in some of their published writing they also theorize about epistolary forms of writing and their relation to language. Examining Bachmann's and Celan's poetics and thought on epistolary writing will provide further insights into the letter correspondence that they carried out between 1948 and 1967 and the significance of dialogue and form.

Chapter 2

Bachmann and Celan's Message in a Bottle

The letter communicates a message in ways that are not possible in other written or spoken forms. Altman's comments that the letter exploits polarities (Altman, 1982, p. 186), along with Derrida's remarks on the temporality of the form, and the possibility that the letter may never be received by the addressee, illustrate some of the letter's distinguishing features. These features underscore the fragile dynamic between language and form that characterizes letters. This chapter seeks to examine the theoretical potential of this form in order to gain an insight into how it functions as a literary device and as a metaphor in Bachmann and Celan's writing. This chapter develops the discussion on epistolary writing from the previous chapter into an examination of the productivity of the message in a bottle metaphor in Bachmann's and Celan's thought and literature.

Letters are interpersonal, they create closeness out of distance, yet the risk of the letter's failure can cause a rupture in the correspondence. In this way, the letter can also create a sense of distance if it fails to communicate. In order to communicate, the letter has to move across spatial and temporal boundaries. It moves from the writer's present tense to the reader in the future, which then becomes a message from the writer's past in the reader's present. As the writer has little control over temporal factors, such as when the message will be received, the writer's language risks losing some of its specificity. During the time between the message being written and read, events and thoughts contained in the message may change in some way, threatening the relevance

and specificity of the message. By suggesting that the message may not be relevant by the time it reaches the recipient is not to suggest that it is not valid or true, as the message was true at the time when it was written. External factors, however, can change the relevance of a message that was true at the time when it was written. Whilst these considerations also relate to other written forms, the letter usually concerns two specific people in specific socio-historic contexts. The letter thus functions differently from a novel or a poem, as the writer has an intended recipient in mind.

Because the letter has an intended recipient in mind, the process of sending and receiving can evoke a sense of longing. After letting go of the letter, the writer has to anticipate when the letter will be read and when a response will be received. In contrast to writing a poem or a novel for publication, letter-writing is a communicative process that seeks out and anticipates a response from the reader. As Bohnenkamp and Wiethölter point out the letters are letters rather than just texts when they exist in this dynamic (Bohnenkamp et al., 2008, p. IX). This dynamic of longing for letters involves both the writer and the recipient, who may anticipate or long for the arrival of the message. As has already been mentioned, Bachmann and Celan's letter correspondence presents a dynamic of struggle and desire. There is a tension between the desire to make contact and the difficulty of expression.

It is the physical act of holding the material object with the words of the loved one on the page that is also desired. Early on in Bachmann and Celan's relationship, Bachmann received a card from Celan with references to his volume of poems *Mohn und Gedächtnis* and his poem 'Corona'. On 24th June 1949, Bachmann responded to this card by writing: 'Deine Karte angeflogen kommen, mitten in mein Herz, ja es ist so, ich hab Dich lieb, ich hab es nie gesagt damals' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 11). The card itself becomes a metaphor, as the words that affected Bachmann in the message are depicted as the card physically coming into contact with her heart. However, the risks associated with letter-writing are also experienced in the correspondence, as sometimes the letters are misinterpreted. On one occasion, Bachmann not only gives a letter to Nani Maier to give to Celan, but she also gives her a verbal message for Celan, with the intention of avoiding potential miscommunication (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 16).

The major theoretical concerns that appear to inform letter-writing relate to time and space, hope and desire, fragility and interception. The writer sends a message with the hope that by the time it is received that the message will still

be relevant, along with the hope that it will arrive with the addressee. A further risk associated with letter-writing that Derrida identifies in his *Carte Postale*, is that a message can be intercepted by a third party, someone for whom the message was not intended. Derrida describes this risk as:

> Non que la lettre n'arrive jamais à sa destination, mais il appartient à sa structure de pouvoir, toujours, ne pas arriver. Et sans cette menace . . . le circuit de la lettre n'aurait pas même commencé. Mais avec cette menace, il peut toujours ne pas finir.
> (Derrida, 1980, p. 472)

> [It is not that the letter never arrives at its destination, but its structure comprises, always, the possibility that it won't arrive. And without that threat . . . the journey of the letter won't even have begun. But with that threat, it may never end. (Wills, 1984, p. 22)]

Derrida suggests that the message's journey might never end. By not reaching the named recipient, the postcard is open to the gaze of others, and therefore the journey becomes one of [mis]interpretation. Derrida identifies a tension between language and cognition in the postcard form, as the understanding of the language on the card is easily changeable depending on who reads the message, and where, and when. Derrida's *Carte Postale* is described by Christopher Norris as his 'most adventurous text to date in the effort to wrench interpretation away from its logocentric models and metaphors' (Norris, 1987, p. 193). The final section of Derrida's study called the 'Envois' contains love letters in the form of postcards which he refuses to send, as they may fall prey to the postal system. This denotes the misappropriation, loss or destruction of letters. The message on Derrida's postcard is open to misinterpretation; it is at once both public and private. The postcard poses both theoretical and hermeneutic possibilities as it is inscribed and coded with a message for the intended recipient, yet, this intended and addressee-specific meaning simultaneously ventures into the public sphere as it becomes accessible to the eyes of others. Norris suggests that the effect of the postcard is twofold as it first shows that 'textuality exceeds all the limiting specifications placed upon language by the need to maintain a strictly controlled economy of concepts' (Norris, 1987, p. 187) and that the postcard demonstrates that meaning is 'irreducibly specific, but tied down to local particulars of time and place that likewise escape the universalizing drift of reason' (Norris, 1987, p. 187).

Derrida's *Carte Postale* was inspired by a postcard that he obtained from the Bodleian library in Oxford showing Plato stood behind Socrates dictating to him. This image throws into question the way in which philosophy is most effectively communicated. Written philosophy leads to the dissemination of the text, and therefore the message reaches a wider audience than is reached in socratic dialogue. However, the dissemination of the written philosophy may lead to misunderstandings. The image on the postcard emphasizes the key differences between oral and literary forms of communication. Oral communication has the advantage of expression, intonation and tone etc., along with the possibility for the listener to ask questions to clarify the philosopher's argument. The letter situates itself somewhere between these two traditions. Whilst the letter does not have the communicative advantages of tone, intonation and body language, it does allow for the reader to ask questions for clarification.

Not only does the letter pose certain challenges to language and meaning, but from the turn of the century, this form became associated with a crisis of language, the *Sprachkrise*. Some of the aforementioned theoretical considerations were brought into dialogue with a crisis of language by Hugo von Hofmannsthal in his famous 'Ein Brief', better known as the Chandos letter. This fictional letter was published in 1902 in a Berlin daily. In Bachmann's first Frankfurt lecture 'Fragen und Scheinfragen' (1960/1), she references Hofmannsthal's fictional letter written by the fictional Lord Chandos to Francis Bacon, which Hofmannsthal set 300 years earlier in 1602. This letter expresses Chandos' disillusionment with language as a means of expression and representation. In the letter, Chandos writes to Bacon following two years of silence and to explain that his experiences of objects transcended the need for linguistic expression. His non-verbal experiences of the world were more profound than language is capable of conveying, therefore language is depicted as an inappropriate tool for the task of communicating Chandos' experiences. Chandos discusses his literary accomplishments and that he will have to abandon his future projects (Hofmannsthal, 1966). Although this letter is fictional, it is often associated with a caesura in Hofmannsthal's work, as Hofmannsthal also stopped writing lyric poetry and turned towards more socially engaged dramas around the same time that this letter was published. Like Chandos, Hofmannsthal also seems to renounce poetic writing. However, as Thomas Kovach points out, the focus that has been placed on this turn away from poetry has been somewhat exaggerated, as Hofmannsthal wrote several poems following 1902 (Kovach, 2002, p. 86).

This epistolary expression of a disillusionment with language serves as a call

for poetic renewal. Bachmann uses Hofmannsthal's crisis in her lecture 'Fragen und Scheinfragen' in which she states that 'Ein Brief' was the first document to discuss the problem of the relationship between self, language and object:

> Der Fragwürdigkeit der dichterischen Existenz steht nun zum ersten Mal eine Unsicherheit der gesamten Verhältnisse gegenüber. Die Realitäten von Raum und Zeit sind aufgelöst, die Wirklichkeit harrt einer ständigen neuen Definition, weil die Wissenschaft sie gänzlich verformelt hat. Das Vertrauensverhältnis zwischen Ich und Sprache und Ding ist schwer erschüttert. Das erste Dokument, in dem Selbstbezweiflung, Sprachverzweiflung und die Verzweiflung über die fremde Übermacht der Dinge, die nicht mehr zu fassen sind, in einem Thema angeschlagen sind, ist der berühmte "Brief des Lord Chandos" von Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Mit diesem Brief erfolgt zugleich die unerwartete Abwendung Hofmannsthals von den reinen zaubrischen Gedichten seiner frühen Jahre — eine Abwendung vom Ästhetizismus. (Bachmann, 2005a, p. 259)

Here, Bachmann makes two key claims. Firstly, she perceives reality to be a relative concept, or a man-made construct that needs to be reconsidered in light of man's actions. Secondly, she discusses the disintegration of the trust relationship between self, language and thing, suggesting that the successful interaction of these components is essential for poetic production. She then refers to 'Ein Brief', as the first text to document this crisis. In this way, she brings the post-1945 problem of poetic production, with its emphasis on the problematic German language, into dialogue with the Viennese fin-de-siècle *Sprachkrise* phenomenon. According to Bachmann, the poet's existence depends on the stability of the 'Vertrauensverhältnis', 'Der Fragwürdigkeit der dichterischen Existenz steht nun zum ersten Mal eine Unsicherheit der gesamten Verhältnisse Gegenüber' (Bachmann, 2005a, p. 259). The crisis of the relationship between self, language and thing that Hofmannsthal identified almost sixty years before Bachmann's speech is linked to the contemporary problem of the poet's existence. Bearing in mind Kovach's claim that Hofmannsthal continued to write poetry after 1902, Bachmann's assertion that the letter marks 'die unerwartete Abwendung Hofmannsthals von den reinen zauberischen Gedichten seiner frühen Jahren' (Bachmann, 2005a, p. 259) is not quite correct. Additionally, as the letter is fictional it does not mean that Chandos' thought necessarily stands for Hofmannsthal's thought on poetic writing, although it is a widely accepted view

(Harris, 2009; Ellmann, 2010; Luft, 2011). This reference highlights Bachmann's awareness of the earlier modernist crisis of language and points to an acknowledgement of the intensification of this crisis in the aftermath of the Holocaust, as the original crisis gained urgency.[1]

Hofmannsthal chose the epistolary medium as the most suitable form for conveying disillusionment with language. Rather than writing a speech or a statement to publish in the newspaper, he wrote a fictional letter. As a result of this choice, his language cannot be misconstrued as anything other than literary, as the fictional Chandos starts by writing in elegant prose. Despite the temporal proximity to Hofmannsthal's own decision to stop writing poetry, the intention of Hofmannsthal's letter is ambiguous, as it does not explicitly refer to Hofmannsthal's own crisis. Instead, it leaves the reader questioning their own experiences of language and expression. By intercepting a fictional correspondence the reader engages with what is set up as a personal correspondence, revealing the private thoughts of the fictional writer. Paradoxically, by use of a dialogic medium Hofmannsthal is able to engage the reader in a conversation about the inadequacies of language, whilst explaining why conveying the message in such a way, in language, is inadequate.

The fictional letter exploits the dynamic of 'real' letters, although it lacks many of the distinguishing features of the letter form. The fictional letter neither has an epistolary intent in the way Stanley outlines (Stanley, 2004, p. 207), nor the hope and desire of sending and receiving, nor the same risk of failure. Hofmannsthal's use of the letter does not allow for the direct communication of a message in the same way that a speech might, as he avoids engaging personally with the reader. If we think back to Derrida's comments on the problem of miscommunication as a letter ventures out into the public sphere, encoded with a specific message for an intended recipient, the reader's interception of the Chandos letter emphasizes some of language's own deficiencies. The way in which the message is received by the reader highlights yet another problem of language and cognition. The Chandos letter contains different levels of inten-

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[1]The reason that the term 'urgency' still applies in 1960/1 is because 1945 did not mark a caesura for the end of fascism in Bachmann's view. Bachmann's work deals with the endurance of fascism and the feeling of living in a constant state of crisis. In the drafts of her Georg Büchner prize acceptance speech *Ein Ort für Zufälle* (1964) she depicts this state of emergency: 'Und die Bedrohung findet nicht statt im Krieg, nicht in den Zeiten der nackten Gewalt, des dominierenden Überlebens, sondern vorher und nacher, also im Frieden, und ich hatte eine Ahnung, keine Gewißheit, [. . .] daß der Friede für uns schwere wäre' (Bachmann, 1995a, p. 176). Moreover, in an interview held in June 1973 she reinforces this same view: 'hier in dieser Gesellschaft ist immer Krieg. Es gibt nicht Krieg und Frieden, es gibt nur den Krieg' (Bachmann et al., 1983, p. 144).

tion, as there is Hofmannsthal's intention to reach the reader, Chandos' attempt to communicate his concerns to Francis Bacon, and the publisher's decision to publish the letter for the reader to come into contact with. The fictional letter lacks the relationship that needs to be sustained between writer and reader in a correspondence, as the reader remains unknown to the author. Bachmann's engagement with this text may have informed some of her theoretical perspectives on fictional letter-writing, as she engages with the complexities of this form in *Malina*.

Bachmann's reference to the Chandos letter could also serve to point to the end of a cultural tradition of letter-writing, as this letter is considered to follow the end of a cultural tradition of formal letter-writing:

> *A letter* ['Ein Brief'] veils the crisis of fin-de-siècle Vienna, a crisis consisting for Hofmannsthal in the consciously felt experience of "coming after" and being heir to a sophisticated European cultural tradition, [. . .] (Wellbery et al., 2004, p. 654)

Moreover, Bachmann made critical comments regarding a type of letter that she associated with the elitist patriarchal culture of Viennese modernism. In the below essay, written for the journal *Gulliver* in 1964 (Simon, 2002, p. 32), she refers to the sacred art of letter writing, which has been allowed to be called 'European'.[2] She distinguishes between the letters of the European elite and ordinary letters that are folded, unlike what she refers to satirically as the meaningful and responsible letters:

> Eine sakrale Beschau der Gegend und damit eine sakrale Briefkunst — europäisch hat man sie nennen dürfen — ist zuendegegangen, und es wird nicht mehr viel zu sammeln geben danach, ein paar Telegrammfetzen, Postkarten, ein paar Briefe auch. Warum nicht auch Briefe? Aber ohne den Faltenwurf, das Bedeutsame, das "Verantwortliche," das schon durch die Art der Anrede und durchgehende Stilisierung sich verrät. Eine Verarmung, wird man sagen. Ja, aber vielleicht auch ist man zu unwirsch und zu ungeduldig geworden, um Gedanken und Gefühle zu zelebrieren, die man auch hat,

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[2]In Bachmann's letter correspondence with Celan, 'Europa' is used as a metonym for the places in Europe that she associates with distress and that she attempts to escape from. Places that are perhaps associated with the cold rationality of modernity. She writes to Celan in 1953 to explain that she is content in Naples, Italy and that she sometimes wishes never to go back to 'Europe': 'Ich wohne in einem alten kleinen Bauernhaus, ganz allein, in einer wilden schönen Gegend, die "verbranntes Meer" heisst, und manchmal wünsche ich mir, nie mehr zurück zu müssen nach "Europa".' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 56)

oder man wird inne daß es nicht mehr viel taugt, darüber zu reden,
wenn man in der Situation des Rad-wechslers ist. Und manchmal
fühlt man sich einfach nicht aufgelegt, zwischen dem Ausfüllen der
Steuer-erklärung und einem Gang zum Bäcker, die Goldfeder in die
Tinte zu senken und Ewigkeit herzustellen oder überlegen Zeichen
zu geben von Person zu Person. (Bachmann, 1981, p. 67)

The implication here is that a type of letter belonged to an elite culture, re-
moved from everyday concerns, such as filling out tax forms or going to the
bakers. She suggests that this culture led to an impoverishment. Notably, she
associates this document of the European elite with the word sacred, suggesting
that the writers of the letters saw themselves as God-like figures, or considered
that their letters deserve veneration. This suggestion is followed by the image of
the 'Rad-wechsler', implying that these letter-writers were instrumental in pro-
pelling society and events. Bachmann suggests that this elite held a monopoly
over the course of events in history. She is critical of the lack of thought and
feeling that this culture allowed for, thus subtly criticizing the cold rationality
of European modernism. Sunka Simon suggests that this statement relates to
Bachmann's literary production, as it may have inspired her critical treatment
of the letter in her novel *Malina*:

> Written seven years prior to the publication of *Malina*, this theory
> of modernism as an age of the epistolary production of the meta-
> physics of Being, of subjectivity and national identity, foreshadows
> Bachmann's treatment of epistolary fiction in her novel.
> (Simon, 2002, p. 32)

Bachmann's criticisms of European rationality are explored in her novel *Malina*
as she embarks on an exploration of the theoretical potential of the letter. The
concerns she raises in this passage are explored in greater depth in her novel.
Here, her depiction of the power of a coldly rational European elite writing
'responsible' letters is coupled with a reference to eternity: 'die Goldfeder in die
Tinte zu senken und Ewigkeit herzustellen' (Bachmann, 1981, p. 67). In this
way, she acknowledges the actionability of letters, as documents that make a real
impact on lives and events. As Bachmann equates these letters with eternity,
she suggests that not only are the effects of the letters long-lasting, but that
the letters become historical documents themselves. These are the letters that
remain as traces of the past to inform the construction of history. These are

contrasted with other documents that are not remembered in the future and that get left behind 'es wird nicht mehr viel zu sammeln geben danach, ein paar Telegramfetzen, Postkarten, ein paar Briefe auch' (Bachmann, 1981, p. 67).

The points that have been made so far in this chapter draw attention to theoretical and cultural considerations that may have influenced Bachmann's and Celan's thought on letter-writing. The remainder of this chapter examines the ways in which Bachmann and Celan exploit the spatial and temporal features of the letter as a literary device. It further considers the relationship between language and the letter and how this relationship can open up new ways of thinking about how it is possible to continue to write after Auschwitz.

The next part of this chapter considers Celan's use of the message in a bottle metaphor in his Bremen speech as a way of exploring the relationship between German and poetry in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The second part of the chapter examines how Bachmann exploits the letter's language and time dynamic in her novel *Malina*. By including letters and conversations about letters in the protagonist's unconscious episodes and dream sequences, Bachmann creates an association between a repressed past and the restrictions that sociey imposes on the protagonist, prohibiting her from carrying her memories over into the present and the future. Bachmann depicts the postal service's control over the flow of letters and information, which will be shown to serve as a metonym for the Austrian institution's efforts to repress the past. Section 2.2 argues that Bachmann constructs an anti-*Flaschenpost* in the narrative, as the Austrian social institutions obstruct the flow of information into the future in an attempt to perpetuate the myth of Austria as National Socialism's first victim. This denial of the past prevents the protagonist from sending her messages into the future. By constructing an anti-*Flaschenpost* in the narrative, Bachmann engages with Celan's notion of a message in a bottle that he used as a way of considering the role of contemporary poetry. Notably, the temporal features of the letter, moving information from the past into the present and future, are problematized in the novel.

The final section of this chapter considers Bachmann's and Celan's thought on the relationship between reality and writing using examples from the letters, and an analysis of the fictional legend, 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran', a fragment in Bachmann's *Malina*, which includes multiple references to Celan and his poetry. Here, it is argued that Bachmann inserts a vision of utopia into the novel which serves as a counter-discourse to the cold rationality of 20th-century empirical reality. A dichotomy of art and rationality is at

tension throughout the novel and 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' represents the release of artistic imagination. The anti-*Flaschenpost* of the main narrative — or, master narrative — is countered by this literary vision of utopia, empirical rationality's artistic opposite. In this utopian vision, the message in a bottle is not restricted by cold rationality and the protagonist travels to the 'Grenze der Menschenwelt' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 353). Here, the past and present meet, along with the dead and the living. It will be suggested that this moment enacts a meridianal moment, Celan's poetic vision, as is outlined in his Büchner prize acceptance speech, the *Meridian*.

2.1 Dialogue as Self-Realisation: Celan's Message in a Bottle Metaphor

Celan was awarded the city of Bremen's literature prize, *Literaturpreis der freien Hansestadt Bremen*, in January 1958, for which he gave his first speech about the problem of modern poetic writing. In this speech, he outlines the problem of using German for poetry following National Socialism as:

> Sie, die Sprache, blieb unverloren, ja, trotz allem. Aber sie mußte nun hindurchgehen durch furchtbares Verstummen, hindurchgehen durch die tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede. Sie ging hindurch und gab keine Worte her für das, was geschah; aber sie ging durch dieses Geschehen. Ging hindurch und durfte wieder zutage treten, "angereichert" von all dem. (Celan, 1958b, p. 10)

Rather than explicitly mentioning the Holocaust and naming specific events that took place during the Nazi era, Celan uses the euphemisms 'was geschah', 'dieses Geschehen' and 'von all dem' for the horrors of the Second World War. Consequently, he avoids using any realistic depictions of what happened, whilst still acknowledging that the events took place. Celan simply states that German went through these events. The repetition of 'durch' and 'hindurch' emphasizes the multitude of horrific events that German went through. With each repetition there is a reminder of language's involvement in each occurrence. These repetitions implicate German in Nazism as language does not transcend events, but rather these events form part of language's journey. Likewise language forms part of the events, as it is through verbal and written commands that events are actualized.

Celan's description of language is characterized by fluidity. This image depicts language as something that is unfixed and that changes through use and context. At the time when Celan was giving his speech in 1958, language had existed throughout the Nazi era and had changed through its use, what remained post-1945 was a tainted language. Celan's concept of language change corresponds with the thought of philologists such as Victor Klemperer who examined semantic shifts in German, including cases of semantic extension and semantic narrowing, and considered that German had become poisoned as a result of its use under National Socialism as was already explored. Celan's comment that language provided no words to express what had happened corresponds with his decision not to use explicit terminology relating to the Holocaust, as the remaining words are loaded with Nazi ideology. Therefore, he deliberately avoids the use of words, such as 'Holocaust', when referring to what happened. According to George Steiner:

> All of Celan's... poetry is translated *into* German. In the process the
> receptor-language becomes unhoused, broken, idiosyncratic almost
> to the point of non-communication. It becomes a "meta-German"
> cleansed of historical-political dirt and thus, alone, usable by a pro-
> foundly Jewish voice after the Holocaust. (Steiner, 1998, p. 389)

In the Bremen speech, rather than cleansing his language of 'historical-political dirt', Celan suggests that there are no words to talk about what happened. Celan creates layers of meaning to highlight the damage done to language. On the surface, his speech avoids using Nazi terminology, but if we dig deeper, words that are not specific Nazi terms are burdened by the weight of the Nazi past. As Ryland points out the ironic use of 'angereichert' alludes to the Third Reich, rather than making a point about any real enrichment of German as a result of National Socialism. Moreover, the 'tausend Finsternisse' serves as a reminder of the Nazi wish for a *Tausendjähriges Reich* (Ryland, 2009, p. 116). Nazi ideology is hidden within 'ordinary' words, words that might not immediately be associated with Nazism. This notion corresponds with the Russian poet Ossip Mandelstam's poetics, as he maintained that remains of the past are found in poetic language in the present; the past is carried into the present through poetic language. Additionally, by using euphemistic language in place of Nazi terminology on the surface of the discussion, Celan underscores the language user's unawareness of the semantic shifts in language. The effect of Nazism on language lies beneath the surface and is ingrained in everyday discourse. Celan's

descriptions correspond with Klemperer's claim that the youth of the post-1945 era unconsciously clung to Nazi thought processes, as he considered that Nazi ideology was embedded in the language (Klemperer, 2006, p. 2).

Celan depicts language as both in layers and as in motion; certain concepts and ideas become ingrained in reality through their use in language and language's use in the past. In this way, language and reality are influenced by one another. Ryland notes that Celan uses mining and mineral imagery in his Bremen speech (Ryland, 2010, p. 116), which reinforces the idea that certain notions are deeply embedded in language. This highlights the severity of the problem of language for the poet and that this is not just a problem of language, but also a problem of reality.

In Celan's later prize acceptance speech, the *Meridian* (1960), he again attributes the idea of language as motion to poetry:

> Das Gedicht ist einsam. Es ist einsam und unterwegs. [...] Das
> Gedicht will zu einem Anderen, es braucht dieses Andere, es braucht
> ein Gegenüber. Es sucht es auf, es spricht ihm zu. (Celan, 1999, p. 9)

In Celan's prize acceptance speeches we find that the poetic process is twofold; it is a communicative process, reaching out towards another, or a recipient. In addition, it also signifies a process of becoming, the poem itself is 'unterwegs', reaching out into the future. The idea of poetry as 'unterwegs' also implies that it has a direction, as it is on its way towards an unknown reader in the future. This notion of poetry as becoming, as being part of a process, also serves to counter Gottfried Benn's notion of poetry as being absolute.[3] Celan considered that following the Holocaust poetry cannot be absolute as the language used to write poetry was poisoned during its use in National Socialism. Because of this, poetic language is part of a process towards an 'ansprechbarer Wirklichkeit' (Celan, 1958b, p. 11). Celan depicts the modern poem as a process of striving beyond or away from the damaged post-1945 reality and towards a different reality.

In Celan's Bremen Speech, it is the message in a bottle motif, as an illustration of the task of post-1945 poetic writing, that has gained the most critical

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[3]Gottfried Benn was, like Celan, a recipient of the Georg Büchner prize, however, Benn's concept of post-1945 poetry contrasted with Celan's, as Benn conceived of an aesthetic form that is absolute and monologic. Celan wrote in the *Meridian*: 'Das absolute Gedicht — nein, das gibt es gewiß nicht, das kann es nicht geben! Aber es gibt wohl, mit jedem wirklichen Gedicht, es gibt, mit dem anspruchslosesten Gedicht, diese unabweisbare Frage, diesen unerhörten Anspruch.' (Celan, 1999, p. 10)

attention (Schweizer, 1997; Jagow, 2003; Klüver, 2010). Like Hofmannsthal, Celan exploits an epistolary form as the best way of expressing the poet's crisis of language. Celan's message in a bottle metaphor is more urgent than the letter used by Hofmannsthal; the message in a bottle is sent out in desperation seeking out a response from an unknown reader with the hope of rescue. This marks a change in the *Sprachkrise* phenomenon after 1945, as the letter which had originally been used to express a profound disillusionment with language is now sent as a matter of urgency. Although Celan uses the letter as a metaphor, neither Celan's nor Hofmannsthal's letter functions in the same way as 'real' letters. Celan uses the motif as a literary device to exploit the relationship between time and language, and how this presents a challenge to the modern poet:

> Das Gedicht kann, da es ja eine Erscheinungsform der Sprache und damit seinem Wesen nach dialogisch ist, eine Flaschenpost sein, aufgegeben in dem gewiß nicht immer hoffnungstarken Glauben, sie könnte irgendwo und irgendwann an Land gespült werden, an Herzland vielleicht. Gedichte sind auch in dieser Weise unterwegs: sie halten auf etwas zu. (Celan, 1958b, p. 11)

The focus is no longer on the letter's content, but on the way in which it is sent out and received. Foreshadowing some of Derrida's later comments, an inherent feature of the message in a bottle is the risk of failure. Rather than renouncing the use of poetic language, Celan's message is sent out in the hope that poetry will be able to survive external threats and overcome the risk of failure. Whilst Adorno saw art as faced with the task of 'absorbing the self-destructive rationality, or 'logic of disintegration' which was unravelling the social fabric of modern life' (Conti, 2004, p. 280), Celan's message is sent out with the hope of overcoming the threats that modern rationality presents.

Celan's message is sent following his experience of the Holocaust, but during a continuing state of crisis caused by the endurance of anti-semitism after 1945, making his letter a more urgent document. Because of Celan's personal experiences of crisis his concerns with language relate more specifically to the German language. The transformation of the letter in the modernist *Sprachkrise* from a fictional letter whose crisis is detailed in the content of the letter to a metaphor whose focus is on the letter's temporal and spatial features (sending and receiving) underscores the sense of urgency associated with Celan's letter. The focus of Celan's letter is on its arrival with somebody in the future. In

this way, the letter's materiality forms part of the writer's considerations as the document seeks contact with another. A comment Celan made in May 1960 in a letter to Hans Bender emphasizes the importance of the material features, real or metaphorical, of the message in the communicative process:

> Handwerk — das ist Sache der Hände. Und diese Hände wiederum gehören nur *einem* Menschen, d.h. einem einmaligen und sterblichen Seelenwesen, das mit seiner Stimme und seiner Stummheit einen Weg sucht. Ich sehe keinen prinzipiellen Unterschied zwischen Hände-druck und Gedicht. (Celan, 1983, pp. 177-178)

As Andrea Scott points out this contact has to take place 'against the odds of the message's erasure through time and space' (Scott, 2008, p. 42). Due to the risk of failure, Celan's Bremen speech places the emphasis on the unlikelihood of the message's success. Adverbs such as 'vielleicht', 'irgendwo' and 'irgendwann' accompanied by the modal verb 'können' imply that the direction of the poem is unknown to the poet. The uncertainty that the message, or the poem, will ever be read is an inherent risk of the message in a bottle. Celan writes that the message is 'aufgegeben in dem gewiß nicht immer hoffnungstarken – Glauben' (Celan, 1958b, p. 11), however the hope remains that it will be read. The bottle itself is a transparent vessel inviting whoever may receive it to read the message, yet simultaneously this vessel is intended to protect the message from any external threat. The bottle has also been re-purposed for the function of carrying a message, which further stresses the urgency of the message. The intention of writing the message or the poem for Celan is to survive the external risks that poetry and language faced and continue to face, and to reach out into the future. By surviving the potential threats Celan's past can connect with another in the future. In this way, Celan's metaphor seeks to highlight the problematic nature of writing against the backdrop of crisis and potential future crisis.

In Bachmann's Anton Wildgans prize acceptance speech (1971), she further explores this sense of uncertainty and the unknown in her discussion of the relationship between the author and the reading public, and the public's possible misunderstandings of the author. Playing with metaphors explored in Celan's *Meridian* speech (1960) she too questions the role of art against the backdrop of crisis and how it can continue to exist in spite of the threats posed by modern rationality. Both writers explore poetry's role in what they both perceived as a damaged empirical reality. In this speech, Bachmann uses Celan's words from

his speeches underscoring the differences in their conceptions of the message in a bottle:

> Es ist eine seltsame, absonderliche Art zu existieren, asozial, einsam, verdammt, es ist etwas verdammt daran, und nur das Veröffentlichte, die Bücher, werden sozial, assoziierbar, *finden einen Weg zu einem Du, mit der verzweifelt gesuchten und manchmal gewonnenen Wirklichkeit.* [...] Wer einen dazu zwingt? Niemand natürlich. Es ist ein Zwang, eine Obsession, eine Verdammnis, eine Strafe. (my emphasis) (Bachmann, 2005c, p. 486)

Here, Bachmann uses Celan's notion of 'gewonnenen Wirklichkeit', as Celan once stated that 'Wirklichkeit ist nicht, Wirklichkeit will gesucht und gewonnen sein' (Celan, 1958a, p. 167). Celan's notion of reality appears to be unfixed and the empirical present reality in which he found himself in was damaged to the extent that language seemed to be no longer usable. In his Bremen speech, he suggests that the poem is directed towards a speakable reality:

> Worauf? Auf etwas Offenstehendes, Besetzbares, auf ein ansprechbares Du vielleicht, auf eine ansprechbare Wirklichkeit.
> Um solche Wirklichkeiten geht es, so denke ich, dem Gedicht.
> (Celan, 1958b, p. 11)

Celan offers no indication of when this speakable reality will be reached, he casts his poetry out far into the future. Bachmann, on the other hand, states that this reality can sometimes be achieved in the present, which she describes as a 'manchmal gewonnenen Wirklichkeit' (Bachmann, 2005c, p. 486). Here, Bachmann's notion of a message in a bottle departs from Celan's, as although her literature also strives out into the future to connect with another, this concept of reality can be reached in the reader's present tense. Bachmann's notion of a different reality that results from a meaningful connection with literature suggests that she envisioned a type of utopia. Bachmann's notion of utopia combines Celan's poetics with Robert Musil's notion of an *anderer Zustand*. The literary encounter can serve as an escape to utopia.

She makes a clear reference to Celan's Bremen speech, in which he compared the role of poetry to a message in a bottle, when she states that published works 'finden einen Weg zu einem Du' (Bachmann, 2005c, p. 486), mirroring Celan's comment that 'Gedichte sind auch in dieser Weise unterwegs' (Celan, 1958b, p. 11) and that they are on their way to an 'ansprechbares Du vielleicht'

(Celan, 1958b, p. 11). Moreover, she uses Celan's words in conjunction with the verb 'verzweifeln'; variations of this verb are used and repeated in Bachmann's discussion of Hofmannsthal's Chandos letter, in which she discusses the break down of the subject, language and object relationship. Her use of 'verzweifeln' highlights a sense of doubt, but Bachmann's doubt concerns the successful interaction between reader and text. Celan's doubts seem more extreme as they concern poetry's survival in the modern world and he doubts that his writing will ever reach the reader in the future. In this way, Bachmann's notion of the message in a bottle is more optimistic.

Celan's poetic vision is arguably directed towards a type of utopia, as the poem is on a constant journey to an unknown recipient and an unknown reality, distant from the post-1945 reality he was writing in. Bachmann, on the other hand, suggests that her ideal of reality can be reached in the present day. Celan's suggestion that 'Wirklichkeit ist nicht, Wirklichkeit will gesucht und gewonnen sein', also implies that reality is something that needs to be achieved, problematizing conventional notions of reality. The utopian reality for Bachmann is reached when the Du is able to engage meaningfully with the literature. She acknowledges that writing comes from isolation and is cast out into the future, yet if the reader can connect meaningfully with the literature, then Bachmann's utopian vision has been achieved.

In the winter semester in 1959 Bachmann gave a series of lectures on the question of poetry at Frankfurt University. In her fifth Frankfurt lecture 'Literatur als Utopie', in accordance with Celan, she suggests that language is not a reliable medium, yet in spite of this unreliability, literature is still able to exist:

> Wir werden uns zwar weiter plagen müssen mit diesem Wort, Literatur, und mit der Literatur, dem, was sie ist und was wir meinen, daß sie sei, und der Verdruß wird noch oft groß sein über die Unverläßlichkeit unserer kritischen Instrumente, über das Netz, aus dem sie immer schlüpfen wird. Aber seien wir froh, daß sie uns zuletzt entgeht, um unsertwillen, damit sie lebendig bleibt und unser Leben sich mit dem ihren verbindet in Stunden, wo wir mit ihr den Atem tauschen. Literatur als Utopie — der Schriftsteller als utopische Existenz — die utopischen Voraussetzungen der Werke — (Bachmann, 2005b, p. 348)

Bachmann writes that our lives combine with literature at times when we exchange breath with it. This breath metaphor serves as a cipher in the letter

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correspondence and is reminiscent of Celan's *Atemwende* volume, and his references to a change in breath in his *Meridian* speech. The notion of exchanging breath suggests that the reader and the literature become united. In this way, the literature becomes part of the reader's existence and the reader becomes absorbed in the literature. Literature serves as a way of escaping empirical reality and experiencing a type of utopian reality. This is not utopia in the sense of a new social order, but in the sense of a different way of experiencing and engaging with existence. In Bachmann's Anton Wildgans prize acceptance speech she adopts Celan's words used to describe the function of the message in a bottle in order to discuss the relationship between literature and reality, defining her own notion of a message in a bottle.

In Celan scholarship, the origin of the message in a bottle metaphor has been attributed to a number of writers. Ryland suggests that Celan may have engaged with André Breton's *Les Vases Communicants*. She contends that, unlike most surrealist aesthetics, that this text may have appealed to Celan, as it does not detach itself from the reality of the past. *Les Vases Communicants* explores the connections between different realms; Breton sought to show how surrealism could lift the reader from a state of despondency. Ryland writes that:

> The basic premise of Breton's treatise is that dream and reality must not be viewed as separate, but that the individual should remain aware of the constant interaction between these two realms. (Ryland, 2010, p. 51)

This notion considers the spatial features of the message as it can easily intersect realms. Gudrun Kohn-Waechter examines the path of the message in a bottle metaphor from the book of Isaiah to Edgar Allan Poe to Ossip Mandelstam, and concludes that Ossip Mandelstam's thought was the major influence on Celan's metaphor (Kohn-Waechter, 2000). Contrary to what has been argued so far, Kohn-Waechter maintains that:

> Und vor allem sind es gerade die Adressaten des Hilferufs, die Empfänger der Flaschenpost, von denen das schreibende Ich sich bedroht sieht. Die Flaschenpost-Dichtung Celans und Bachmanns sucht den Dialog mit Vernichtern. Bekanntlich setzt sich Celans Dichtung mit der Vernichtung der europäischen Juden im Nationalsozialismus auseinander, Bachmanns Spätwerk mit Todesarten von Frauen. (Kohn-Waechter, 2000, p. 212)

Although the thought of the aforementioned writers may all have contributed to Celan's conception of the message in a bottle in different ways, it seems that the influence of Martin Buber's thought on the relationship between the Du and the world is key to understanding Celan's conception of the message in a bottle. If Buber's thought was instrumental in Celan's use of the message in a bottle, then it seems unlikely that the metaphor was employed as a means of depicting a threat to the life of the writer. Here, it shall be argued that whilst the message is sent out at a risk, the overall aim of sending the message is self-realization, rather than self-destruction.

Kohn-Waechter argues that Bachmann and Celan's poetics confront the destructive tendencies in modern rationality. This view is influenced by the thought of Mandelstam whose message in a bottle poetics were based around the destruction of the sender. In his essay *Über den Gesprächspartner* (1913), the message in a bottle is directed towards an unknown reader in the future (Mandelstam, 1994). Mandelstam belonged to the avant-garde of his time, and the poetic circle of the Russian Akmeisten. The Akmeisten were concerned with establishing a new aesthetics based on clear depictions, which was considered to be lacking in symbolism. In this group, Mars was viewed as the place of higher civilization and technology. Kohn-Waechter refers to Fjodor Sologlub's essay *Totenzauber. Eine Legende im Werden* (1913) in which a poet travels into space in a man-made space ship in order to realize his dream of a life created from his artistic vision on another star. She continues that in such visions the new mankind would look to earth with the intention of destroying the old mankind. In this way, the message is sent at a risk to the life of the author and the existence of the old mankind. Another argument put forward to suggest that Celan's message in a bottle is based on this line of thought, is that he refers to the risks of modern rationality, specifically the atomic bomb, in his speech. At the end of the speech, Celan states:

> Es sind Bemühungen dessen, der überflogen von Sternen, die Men-
> schenwerk sind, der zeltlos auch in diesem bisher ungeahnten Sinne
> und damit auf das unheimlichste im Freien mit seinem Dasein zur
> Sprache geht, wirklichkeitswund und Wirklichkeit suchend.
> (Celan, 1958b, p. 11)

Although there is a clear reference to modern technology posing a threat to man, rather than suggesting that Celan seeks to confront this threat dialogically, it seems that this image simply poses a threat. Celan does not suggest that he is

making it into a conversation partner, rather the message strives towards the Du, in spite of extreme difficulty, this is part of the act of searching for reality. Here, Celan acknowledges another potential crisis or threat to man, which could pose a threat to the message's survival. It is for this reason that he outlines that the chance of the message's successful arrival is slim, yet it still travels in the hope that it will arrive.

In the second paragraph of Celan's speech, fully aware of his background and the background of his German audience, he explains that he comes from a different landscape and explains: 'Es ist die Landschaft, in der ein nicht unbeträchtlicher Teil jener chassidischen Geschichten war, die Martin Buber uns allen auf deutsch widererzählt hat' (Celan, 1958b, p. 10). Buber appears not to have escaped Celan's thought as he was composing the speech. In addition, Celan directly refers to Buber in a letter sent to Bachmann on the 5th November 1957:

> Ich habe Dir gestern drei Bücher geschickt, für die neue Wohnung. (Es ist so ungerecht, daß ich so viele Bücher habe und Du so wenige.) Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman kenne ich gar nicht, aber es war ein wirkliches Buch, es mußte Dir gehören, und außerdem liebe ich Buber. (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 67)

Celan made this reference to Buber in the above letter just a couple of months before he gave his Bremen speech in January 1958. Moreover, Celan sent Bachmann books by Buber, allowing her to share in Buber's thought.

Martin Buber's thought concerned the relationship of the self to the world. Buber's thought appealed to Celan as he saw the ideal relationship of the self to the world as dialogic. Buber distinguished the objective world, which he termed the *Es-Welt*, from the subjective and dialogic experience of the world, called the *Du-Welt*. Buber sought to actualize the objective *Es-Welt* by means of dialogue. The relationship of the Ich to the *Es-Welt* is defined by mental representation, in a quasi-Kantian sense; objects are perceived in the beholders mind and they only exist there, consequently there is no relationship to be sustained between the world and the beholder. Thus, the world exists as a monologue. In the relationship of the Ich to the *Du-Welt* no information needs to be exchanged between the beholder and the world. The Ich resides mutually and holistically with the objects in the world, the *Du-Welt* is thus characterized by dialogue (Lyon, 1971, p. 111). The barrier between the self and the world is broken down. The possibility to intersect borders is characteristic of the message in a bottle

metaphor as it has to move across spatial boundaries in order to connect with a Du.

Celan's words in the Bremen speech further allude to Buber's thought: 'Das ist, auch zeitlich, die "Besetzbarkeit" des Gedichts: das Du, an das gerichtet ist, ist ihm mitgegeben auf dem Weg zu diesem Du' (Celan, 1958b, p. 10). Celan envisions a future in which the self can exist holistically, peacefully and in dialogue with reality, this notion forms part of Celan's utopian poetic vision. For Buber, it is the creation of a dialogue that actualizes the *Es-Welt*, the aim of Buber's dialogue is to encounter 'das ewige Du', which for Buber is God (Lyon, 1971, p. 111). It is through this process that the realization of, and *not* the destruction of the self occurs. Thus, the message in a bottle metaphor should be seen as an attempt to save the writing Ich, rather than as posing a threat to its existence. According to Celan, the message in a bottle reaches out to an 'ansprechbares Du' (Celan, 1958b, p. 10) which brings the writer hope of rescue, as the connection between the text and the future Du should bring about self-realization. Placing the message in the glass bottle represents an attempt to protect the message from the external danger. This is done so that the message can survive the dangers of modern rationality and connect with a future Du.

By use of the message in a bottle metaphor, Celan searches for a solution to the post-1945 problem of poetic writing which could be defined as a utopian solution, as the poem reaches out to a reality which does not, or does not yet, exist. Reality can refer to a utopian notion of reality, beyond the empirical reality of post-1945 Europe. When Celan writes to Bachmann: 'Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman kenne ich gar nicht, aber es war ein wirkliches Buch' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 67), and he speaks of the book as being real, the book takes on a new significance against this concept of what can be termed to be real for Celan. Rather than implying that the book is empirically or factually real, Celan in fact suggests that the book is pointing towards a higher sort of reality, or a reality that he hopes for.

It is possible that the contents of Buber's books would have influenced Celan's message in a bottle metaphor, as both concepts point towards a different sort of reality that is characterized by dialogue and striving towards a Du. Whilst Ryland suggests that Breton may have influenced Celan's conception of the message in a bottle metaphor, she also acknowledges that there is no concrete evidence of Celan having engaged with *Les Vases Communicants* (Ryland, 2010, p. 51). Buber's thought on dialogue also serves as a way of conceptualizing movement between realms of experience, in Buber's case it is

the barrier between man and reality that becomes intersected. This intersection paves the way to a new reality in which man and reality exist peacefully in dialogue.

Additionally, Celan uses the term real to contrast with absolute in the *Meridian* to suggest that real poetry is possible, whereas absolute poetry is not:

> Das absolute Gedicht — nein, das gibt es gewiß nicht, das kann es nicht geben! Aber es gibt wohl, mit jedem wirklichen Gedicht, es gibt, mit dem anspruchslosesten Gedicht, diese unabweisbare Frage, diesen unerhörten Anspruch. (Celan, 1999, p. 10)

The poem cannot be absolute, but it can be termed real. Celan uses the term real to contrast with the term absolute. By doing this, the real poem must form part of a process, striving towards a Du. For Celan, the absolute poem cannot exist as a real poem as the language being used at the time it is written has been corrupted by reality and is therefore unsuitable for poetry. Poetry is an 'Erscheinungsform der Sprache' (Celan, 1958b, p. 11), therefore, poetry must become a hopeful process striving beyond its present day reality, hoping for a meaningful connection in the distant future.

2.2   The Epistolary Crisis: 'Das Briefgeheimnis' in *Malina*

Bachmann's *Malina*, despite being written in prose rather than poetry, also adopts the Flaschenpost metaphor. As will be seen, the Flaschenpost metaphor explores the question of artistic writing, *Dichtung*, post-1945 rather than poetry exclusively.

Malina depicts the protagonist's struggle to write and to send letters. Letter fragments are scattered throughout the narrative as the protagonist is unable to complete the epistolary process and release her letters into the postal system. Although the novel focusses on the letter, rather than explicitly on a message in a bottle, this does not exlude *Malina* from the conceptual concerns raised by the message in a bottle metaphor. In fact, this section seeks to demonstrate that Bachmann constructs an anti-*Flaschenpost* in the main narrative of the novel as a critical response to post-1945 Austrian society.

Although the construction of an anti-*Flaschenpost* suggests that Bachmann was not in agreement with Celan's use of the metaphor, the final section of this chapter (section 2.3) argues that Bachmann juxtaposes the anti-*Flaschenpost* of the main narrative with a utopian vision that is inspired by engagement

with literary imagination. In this way, the anti-*Flaschenpost* is used to criticize the cold rationality of post-1945 Austria and finds its opposite in the utopian moment of the novel. This utopian moment is the imagined legend of 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran', which is a work of fiction. The utopian vision is positioned against post-1945 reality.

Rather than depicting a new social order this utopian vision represents a disillusionment with a rational social order. Ní Dhúill writes:

> While utopia has always been in dialogue with reality, this dialogue became most acutely self-questioning in the twentieth century, because of the immense suffering exacted by regimes that sought to organize society according to a preconceived image of the 'common good'. Wherever utopian vision hardened into an ideological orthodoxy that would tolerate no opposition, the roots of this intolerance were sought in the utopian vision itself.
> (Ní Dhúill, 2010, pp. 159-160)

Bachmann's notion of utopia in *Malina* is a critical response to a 'rational' social order. Here, it is argued that *Malina* is based on a tension of dichotomies, the struggle of one binary opposite to suppress its other in an attempt to achieve total control. One of these dichotomies is the relationship between rationality and art. The final section of this chapter considers the moment of pure literary imagination as a juxtaposition to, and a moment of escape from, the cold rationality of twentieth-century Vienna whose social order seeks to suppress artistic imagination.

So far the message in a bottle metaphor has served as a way of conceptualizing the role of post-1945 poetry. As Celan describes, the message starts from a point of crisis and isolation and reaches out into the future towards another. Against the backdrop of crisis and uncertainty, the message is protected from external threat by the bottle, yet simultaneously its transparency invites communication with an unknown. The message is not just restricted to crossing temporal boundaries, but it also negotiates spatial boundaries. The message can intersect different realms of experience and cross divides. Edgar Allan Poe's *MS. Found in a Bottle* (1833) explores the message's potential to reach the boundaries of the known world (Poe, 1982), whereas André Breton used this motif in *Les Vases Communicants* to consider the communication between different realms and modes of perception (Breton, 1996). The message in a bottle enables the message to either intersect realities or to travel to the

borders of the known world.

In Bachmann's novel all aspects of letters, their materiality, their temporal and spatial features, and their social context are considered. This becomes particularly clear when the protagonist receives a letter from her partner, Ivan, as will be seen on page 64.[4] Unlike the message in a bottle, the letter is dependent on a social institution, a type of social order, namely the postal service. Therefore, the message is subject to a type of control. In spite of this, the letter remains conceptually similar to the message in a bottle. In fact, the message in a bottle motif originates from the letter. Kohn-Waechter argues that the first metaphor of this kind is in the book of Isaiah (Ackroyd, 1999). She suggests that 'Das Buch Jesaja ist möglicherweise der erste Text der literarischen Tradition, in der noch die Flaschenpost-Dichtung Celans und Bachmanns steht' (Kohn-Waechter, 2000, p. 212). In this book, the message in a bottle is a letter in a sealed envelope. The letter has to outlive its sender who is unable to survive the deadly waters. In this instance, the message in a bottle is associated with the death of its author. The message is necessarily concealed as the Israelites need to be prevented from understanding the message, as this would lead to their death. For this reason, the message is sealed and is not transparent in the same way as Celan's message. The concept of the message in a bottle transcends the need for an actual bottle. The basis of this metaphor as the carrier of a message and the carrier of language into unknown realms or realities enables writers to address the problematic relationship between language and reality after 1945. The message in a bottle's potential to intersect realms or realities can serve as a way of imagining a different reality and a way of reaching it.

Language is experimented with in a range of dialogic forms in *Malina*, including telephone conversations and unfinished letters. In the novel, the narrator's inability to write letters is associated with a mistrust of the postal system, resulting in her inability to communicate dialogically in her letters. The narra-

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[4]

> [. . .] und danach setze ich mich auf das Bett und halte Ivans Brief in der Hand, den er schon vor meiner Abreise abgeschickt hat, er hat es nicht vergessen, er hat die Adresse nicht verloren, ich küsse viele Male den Brief und überlege, ob ich den Rand vorsichtig aufmachen soll oder ob ich den Brief mit der Nagelschere oder dem Obstmesser aufschlitzen soll, ich schaue die Briefmarke an, ein Trachtenweib ist darauf, warum denn schon wieder? Ich möchte den Brief nicht gleich lesen, sondern jetzt zuerst Musik hören, dann lange wach liegen, den Brief halten, meinen Namen lesen, von Ivans Hand geschrieben, den Brief unter das Kopfpolster legen, ihn dann doch hervorziehen und vorsichtig aufmachen in der Nacht. (Bachmann, 1995b, pp. 477-478)

tor's problematic relationship with letters and the postal service is associated with 'das Briefgeheimnis', the significance of which is not explained explicitly. It soon emerges that letter-writing serves as a metaphor for the protagonist's own existential crisis, as the narrator too finds that she is incomplete. This incompleteness translates into an inability to finish letters. In this chapter, I will argue that the relationship of the letter to the postal service parallels the relationship of the protagonist, who is called Ich, to the social order. The postal service is a metonym for the social institutions that sought to deny Austria's involvement in Nazism and to perpetuate the myth of Austria as National Socialism's first victim. Notably, the institutions are gendered masculine while Ich and her letters are feminine. The dichotomous tensions, that were already mentioned, exist in this example as a tension between the individual and the state. The interests of each pose a threat to the existence of the other. Here, the productivity of this dichotomy will be examined as it is exists in the gender binary of male and female (Malina and Ich), and finally it also translates into a tension between rationality and artistic imagination. This tension that exists in the novel will be brought into dialogue with the message in a bottle discussion.

Existing scholarship on the use of dialogue and the postal system in *Malina* provides a wealth of insights into the ways in which the epistolary process: the writing, sending and receiving of letters, contributes to the overall themes of the novel. The perspectives that inform this reading include Sigrid Weigel's examination of the types of correspondence in the novel, which draws on some of Derrida's insights and considers the function of the Du (Weigel, 1999). Richard Heinrich's study of the novel relates the 'Briefgeheimnis' to Poe's *MS. Found in a Bottle*, in this way he associates Ich's problematic relationship to letters with the message in a bottle (Heinrich, 2005). Rather than just examining the dialogic forms, Sunka Simon considers that the postal service, in fact, stands for what she terms 'male orders'; she suggests that the control of the postal service over letters signifies the control of men over women (Simon, 2002). However, this comes into conflict with Stephanie Bird's analysis of the feminist reception of *Malina*, as she suggests that the gender binary in the novel has been overstated, it is often instead read as a dichotomy of the sexes (Bird, 2003). One of the most informative studies on the postal system in *Malina* is Kohn-Waechter's examination of the Heideggarian influence on the novel. She examines the parallels between the novel's 'Zustellung der Post' and Heidegger's 'Zustellung des Grundes' in order to uncover 'das Briefgeheimnis' in the novel (Kohn-Waechter, 1991).

This reading of the novel will take into account the existing scholarship, but it will attempt to analyse *Malina* as a response to the message in a bottle metaphor. A full analysis of the productivity of the message in a bottle metaphor in Bachmann's work is currently lacking in Bachmann scholarship. Heinrich's study acknowledges that the message in a bottle is significant, yet he suggests that Bachmann's concept of the message in a bottle is exactly the same as Celan's: 'Die Auffassung von Sinn und rhetorischer Struktur des Flaschenpost-Motivs ist bei Bachmann, ich habe es schon angedeutet, völlig gleich' (Heinrich, 2005, p. 31). As has already been suggested, there are temporal differences in their use of the motif, which in turn, result in different conceptions of a utopian horizon. This chapter argues that Bachmann and Celan's notions of the message in a bottle have subtle but significant differences.

In *Malina*, the female protagonist is named Ich, however, this name does not guarantee her autonomy. Paradoxically, her existence depends on her male counterpart, Malina, with whom she lives: 'Ich bin Malinas Geschöpf' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 403). It is even Malina's name that becomes the title of Ich's narrative. Her partner Ivan is portrayed as being unaware of Ich's dependency on Malina. However, Ivan also plays a role in Ich's struggle for self-identification. Over the couse of the novel Ich repeatedly attempts and fails to write letters. Not only is she is unable to finish letters, but she also develops a suspicion of the postal service.

In the opening chapter, the protagonist's inability to write letters is linked to a problematic relationship to time. The protagonist's letters never find their way out of the present tense and into the future, and thus they never connect with a Du. Not only does Ich's name highlight her lack of autonomy, but it also draws attention to her inability to assume the position of Du. From the outset, Ich's name implies an inability to effectively communicate; this leads to a discussion of her inability to participate in the epistolary process. Celan's message in a bottle concept is based on the action of striving into the future and towards a Du that provides the writer with the hope of self-realization. Ich's letters never venture out of their isolation into the future and towards a Du, instead she depicts her letters as torn-up fragments in the bin:

> Nur die Zeitangabe mußte ich mir lange überlegen, denn es ist mir
> fast unmöglich, "heute" zu sagen, obwohl man jeden Tag "heute"
> sagt, ja, sagen muß, aber wenn mir etwa Leute mitteilen, was sie
> heute vorhaben — um von morgen ganz zu schweigen —, bekomme

ich nicht, wie man oft meint, einen abwesenden Blick, sondern einen
sehr aufmerksamen, vor Verlegenheit, so hoffnungslos ist meine Beziehung
zu "heute", denn durch dieses Heute kann ich nur in höchster Angst
und fliegender Eile kommen und davon schreiben, oder nur sagen, in
dieser höchsten Angst, was sich zuträgt, denn vernichten müßte man
es sofort, was über Heute geschrieben wird, wie man die wirklichen
Briefe zerreißt, zerknüllt, nicht beendet, nicht abschickt, weil sie von
heute sind und weil sie in keinem Heute mehr ankommen werden.
(Bachmann, 1995b, p. 277)

Like Celan, Bachmann focuses on the functionality of the letter as opposed
to the letter's content. The letter is described in terms of its materiality and
temporality. The letters are written with speed so that they stay as close to the
present tense as possible. Moreover, they parallel the protagonist's relationship
to time, as she describes her embarrassment at not being able to plan for things
to do in the day. Like the letters Ich is stuck in the present tense, unable to
conceive of the future. Ich's hopeless relationship to time is emphasized by the
capitalization of the 'H' in every instance of 'Heute', which suggests an enduring
present tense. The depiction of unsent letters in *Malina* departs from Celan's
metaphor as the message never ventures out into the future. Moreover, the
destruction of the message as soon as it is written further contrasts with the
protective function of the bottle with its transparency that invites a reader.

These letters are described as real, 'wie man die wirklichen Briefe zerreißt,
zerknüllt, nicht beendet, nicht abschickt, weil sie von heute sind' (Bachmann,
1995b, p. 277). As was shown in the previous section, when Celan suggests in
his *Meridian* speech that poems cannot be absolute but that they can be real,
the implication is that real poems are sent out of the present tense and into
the future, towards an 'ansprechbare Wirklichkeit' (Celan, 1958b, p. 11). Ich's
real letters contrast with Celan's notion of real poems as they remain in the
present tense in the bin. Ich's real letters are the exact opposite of this, they
stay in the present tense, with an Ich rather than a Du, and their author's self
remains incomplete. Rather than achieving self-realization, the author of the
letter is dependent on her male counterpart for her existence. Ich's torn-up letter
fragments in the bin mirror their author's fragmented self. A further departure
from Celan's message in a bottle is that Ich's letters are illegible, rather than
being accessible for anyone to read, they are left torn apart. In these ways,
Bachmann constructs the main body of text in *Malina* as an anti-*Flaschenpost*.

Ich's relationship to her letters is defined by impossibility, the impossibility of writing and sending. One night she stays up the entire night composing long letters that she is neither able to finish nor to send. She signs the letter 'Eine Unbekannte' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 407) and leaves the date unmarked. These features of her letters hint at the message in a bottle metaphor, as again it is the date that causes her concern. Famously, in the *Meridian*, Celan explains that every poem has its 20th January, its own historical reference point. Notably, 20th January refers to the Wannsee conference and also the day on which Lenz decided to go into the mountains. Moreover, Celan's discussion in his Bremen speech stresses that the message arrives with an unknown recipient. Again Bachmann reverses Celan's use of the motif as it is the writer who is the unknown, writing from an unknown point in time. Whilst Ich is able to identify who the message is being written to, it is her own self that she unable to recognise. Following her attempts to compose three more letters, the very next description is of the letters' destruction:

> Die zerrissenen Briefe liegen im Papierkorb, kunstvoll durcheinandergebracht und vermischt mit zerknüllten Einladungen zu einer Ausstellung, zu einem Empfang, zu einem Vortrag, vermischt mit leeren Zigarettenschachachteln, überstäubt von Asche und Zigarettenstummeln. (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 552)

The letters are artistically torn apart. As was seen in the very first passage, Ich's attention is drawn to the materiality of the letter. These considerations highlight that it is the relationship between language and form that is being considered and not just the content of the message. This same fascination with materiality is depicted later on in the novel when Ich receives a letter from Ivan, instead of reading the message she examines the physical object:

> [. . .] und danach setze ich mich auf das Bett und halte Ivans Brief in der Hand, den er schon vor meiner Abreise abgeschickt hat, er hat es nicht vergessen, er hat die Adresse nicht verloren, ich küsse viele Male den Brief und überlege, ob ich den Rand vorsichtig aufmachen soll oder ob ich den Brief mit der Nagelschere oder dem Obstmesser aufschlitzen soll, ich schaue die Briefmarke an, ein Trachtenweib ist darauf, warum denn schon wieder? Ich möchte den Brief nicht gleich lesen, sondern jetzt zuerst Musik hören, dann lange wach liegen, den Brief halten, meinen Namen lesen, von Ivans Hand geschrieben, den

Brief unter das Kopfpolster legen, ihn dann doch hervorziehen und vorsichtig aufmachen in der Nacht. (Bachmann, 1995b, pp. 477-478)

The content of the letter is not what is considered important, it is the physical contact with the letter. When she is called for dinner, she quickly opens the letter ignoring its content: 'Ich sehe keine Anrede, es stehen überhaupt nur eins, zwei, drei, vier, fünf, sechs, sieben, acht Zeilen — genau acht Zeilen — auf dem Blatt, und unten auf dem Blatt lese ich: Ivan' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 478). Moreover, the question 'ich schaue die Briefmarke an, ein Trachtenweib ist darauf, warum denn schon wieder?' suggests that the letter is gendered feminine in line with the stereotype stemming from the 18th-century notion of *Natürlichkeit*, which considered letter-writing to be natural and feminine.

Before writing the three aforementioned unfinished letters, Ich discusses her relationship to Ivan and an interrelation of textual fragmentation and self-fragmentation emerges. Ich considers her relationship to Ivan and Malina. Rather than contemplating these relationships in a social sense, she views them as an extension or completion of herself. She states that she does not wish to lead Ivan into confusion 'aber für ihn wird nie sichtbar, daß ich doppelt bin. Ich bin auch Malinas Geschöpf.' Following this, she considers her relationship to Ivan. Whilst this relationship informs her understanding of herself, she can separate herself from Ivan:

In einem Moment heißt es: Ivan und ich. In einem anderen Moment: wir. Dann gleich wieder: du und ich. Zwei Wesen sind es, die nichts miteinander vorhaben, nicht die Koexistenz wollen, keinen Aufbruch woandershin und in ein anderes Leben, nicht Abbruch, keine Vereinbarung auf eine vorherrschende Sprache.
(Bachmann, 1995b, p. 403)

Ich does not exist independently of Malina, the co-existence, as we find out at the end of the novel, is what sustains her. Ich can only conceive of herself in relation to her other. Her desperate attempts to write full letters, following this contemplation of her relationships, thus fail. She can only write half a letter as she is only half herself. Notably, her letter fragments are positioned artistically in the bin. Moreover, the image of the *Trachtenweib* on the letter hints at a further dichotomy which emerges over the course of the novel, femininity and masculinity. The *Trachtenweib*'s appearance on the letter hints at its association with the letter and artistic expression.

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Following this speculation about her relationship to Malina and Ivan, Ich begins writing letters, first of all to 'Herr Ganz' whose name she tries to consider using different vowels or to pronounce 'mit einer dialekthaften Färbung' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 404) in order to avoid imagining the totality that his name implies. She writes:

> Ich hätte mich vorsehen müssen, schon Ihres Namens wegen, mit dem Sie weiter in mein Leben einfallen und es strapazieren über Gebühr. Hätten Sie doch Kopecky oder Wiegele geheißen, Ullmann oder Apfelblöck — ich hätte ein ruhigeres Leben und ich könnte Sie über lange Strecken vergessen. (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 405)

The final letter that she writes is to Herr Präsident, the letter remains incomplete and finishes with an explanation:

> Mein Brief an Sie kann kein ganzer Brief werden, auch weil mein Dank für Ihre guten Wünsche nur aus einem halben Herzen kommt. Es sind aber unzumutbare Briefe, die man bekommt, und Briefe, mit denen man sie beantwortet, sind auch niemand zumutbar. (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 410)

She explains to Herr Präsident that she cannot finish writing as her thanks for his good wishes only come from half a heart. A correlation between content, materiality and the writer emerges, all of which are incomplete or fragmented. The act of finishing to write the letter or the act of sending the letter would be to complete the epistolary process. The suggestion is that Ich is incapable of sending herself into the future and connecting with a Du, this is a reversal of Celan's message in a bottle metaphor. Another dimension of Ich's inability to write and send letters stems from an unwillingness to release her letters to the postal system.

Simon suggests that Ich's inability to write and send letters is because she fears and avoids narrative closure (Simon, 2002, p. 34). As we find at the end of the novel the narrative closes with Ich disappearing into a wall as the male component of the Ich-Malina duality triumphs. In Malina's destruction of Ich, he tears up some of her letters: 'er zerreißt ein paar Briefe, er wirft mein Vermächtnis weg, es fällt alles in den Papierkorb' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 693). The dialectical relationship of Malina and Ich becomes one of master and slave. Malina finally asserts his dominance over Ich and permanently silences her.

Simon comments that the tearing apart of Ich's letters signifies patriarchy's silencing of the female voice. She also writes that:

> Bachmann plays with the illusion of a closed, hermetically sealed phallocentric narratological system that engulfs any "other" into its framed totality. The narrative world of *Malina*, however, constitutes a mimetic transcription, not a transgression of the represented worlds'. (Simon, 2002, p. 34)

Bird however notes that in *Malina* women also play a part in the silencing of Ich, such as in the dream sequences as the mother is also implicated in the violence towards Ich (Bird, 2003, pp.64-95).

For the rest of this section, the gender binary is viewed as a construct that does not condemn the relationship between men and women, but that serves as a way of underscoring the social order's dominance over the individual. The state institutions are gendered masculine and the individual is gendered female. This gender binary is also shown to function as a dichotomy of modern rationality and art, as modern rationality is gendered masculine and art is gendered feminine.

By use of the letter form, Bachmann uses a form of writing that has traditionally been viewed as a feminine form. This contrasts with the postal system, the masculine component, which symbolises state institutions and state control. This gender binary has many functions, it is the binary of Malina and Ich, the state institutions and the individual, and the postal service and the letter, and modern rationality and art. Moreover, towards the end of this chapter it will be argued that Bachmann employs this binary to criticize the cold rationality of Heideggarian thought by showing how art allows for meaningful experiences that are not available through rational thought.[5] Both male and female actors in the novel serve to cement the state's sovereignty over the individual. Frau Jellinek has the job of the secretary, as she can easily send letters and act out the epistolary process, in other words, she conforms to the larger social structures and institutions.

Before Malina's final destructive act, Ich asks:

> Was willst du mit meinem Vermächtnis? Was meinst du damit? Ich möchte das Briefgeheimnis wahren. Aber ich möchte auch etwas hinterlassen. Verstehst du mich denn absichtlich nicht?
> (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 682)

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[5]See section 2.3

The 'Briefgeheimnis' is a response to the problem of the post; it is the act of holding onto the letters. Weigel reads the 'Briefgeheimnis' as 'die Chiffre für den Zusammenhang von Psychoanalyse und postalischer Technologie, um den es in Bachmanns Roman ebenso geht wie in Derridas 'Postkarte' (Weigel, 1999, p. 552). According to Weigel:

> Der Umlauf der Anredeformel Du, d.h. Die postalische Zirkulation einer intimen Apostrophe, wird von der Schriftstellerin als unerträglich erlebt und ist dafür verantwortlich, daß ihre Briefe nicht den Weg der Verschickung gehen, sondern den Weg des Abfalls.
> (Weigel, 1999, p. 552)

The intimacy of a letter written to a Du is threatened by the possibility of losing its way or being read by an unintended recipient. Weigel notes that Ich's fear of sending letters stems from the 'Untrennbarkeit von intimer und öffentlicher Schrift' (Weigel, 1999, p. 553). Moreover, she associates the 'Briefgeheimnis' with psychoanalysis and postal technology, both of which are concerned with moving messages from one realm to another. Psychoanalysis deals with accessing repressed thoughts that move from the unconscious to the conscious while letters move from past to present. This movement between realms is characteristic of the message in the bottle. As the 'Briefgeheimnis' is associated with letters, it is also bound to the female Ich, in this way, psychoanalysis relates to the post. Ich's attempts to keep letters therefore come into conflict with the postal service which relates to the male Malina, and the Austrian institutions that seek to exercise control over the individual. Holding on to letters signifies an act of rebellion against the social order. Significantly, Malina works for the museum, an institution that has control over narratives of the past. The postal service is a system of control, and Ich refuses to release her letters into this system.

The third and final chapter of *Malina* 'Von letzten Dingen' begins with a description of Ich's attitude towards postmen, which leads to an explanation of the postal crisis and also the 'Briefgeheimnis'. This part of the novel contains references to Heidegger's thought, as will be shown, unpacking these references sheds light on the 'Briefgeheimnis' and the problem of the post. In this chapter, Ich explains that she has always had a soft spot for the postmen. She is always keen to thank them for express letters and telegrams, but she cannot thank them as she would like for the letters that are never delivered. She then explains that she is grateful to the postmen who cycle or travel on their motorbikes and who

climb up narrow staircases without any certainty that the addressee will be at the destination, or certain of how many schillings that the addressee has to pay. Bachmann phrases this as 'in der größten Unsicherheit, ob der Weg sich gelohnt hat' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 568). These words 'größten Unsicherheit' and 'Weg' resonate with Celan's Bremen speech in which he states that the message is 'aufgegeben in dem — gewiß nicht immer hoffnungstarken — Glauben' (Celan, 1958b, p. 11). Bachmann associates the letters with the message in a bottle tradition. She also makes Ich the reluctant Du of these letters. As was seen with the letter from Ivan, Ich was unable to read the text, as she was unable to assume the position of Du. Ich analyses the relationship between the postman and the letters, and then disposes of the letters straight away, again avoiding becoming the Du. She places particular emphasis on valuing the express letters which arrive quickly after the message has been written. In another instance, the postman says 'Sie bekommen aber sicher nur schöne Post, und an der trag ich mich schwer!' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 568) to which Ich responds:

> Ja, schwer tragen Sie, aber wir werden erst einmal nachsehen, ob
> Sie wirklich die schöne Post bringen, leider muß ich manchmal unter
> Ihrer Post leiden, und Sie leiden eben auch für meine Post.
> (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 568)

Because of her mistrust of this postman she puts the letters straight into the bin. She mistrusts the postmen — actors of the social order — and therefore she refuses to become the Du of the letters. Ich's refusal to participate in the epistolary process represents a refusal to conform to the social order. Her problematic relationship to the postal system prevents the journey of the message in a bottle, as her messages stay in the present and cannot move between space or time.

Ich then tells the story of a postman called Otto Kranewitzer who she considered to understand the 'Briefgeheimnis'. Otto Kranewitzer was arrested for not having delivered the post. For months he kept the post piled up to the ceiling in his apartment, eventually having to sell his furniture to make room for all the letters and parcels. He never opened the packages nor the letters, he just kept them piled up and sealed in the apartment. Ich describes that in every job there is one person who will fall into doubt or conflict:

> Gerade das Briefaustragen bedürfte einer latenten Angst, eines seis-
> mografischen Auffangens von Erschütterungen, das sonst nur höheren

und höchsten Berufen zugestanden wird, als dürfte es nicht auch eine Krise der Post geben, für sie kein Denken-Wollen-Sein, kein skrupulöses und erhabenes Entsagen, [. . .] (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 571)

According to Ich there was nobody more capable of recognising the problem of the post. Others who only recognise a letter simply as a letter and a piece of printed writing simply as a piece of printed writing are unable to understand this problem. It was this occurrence which led her to understand the meaning of the 'Briefgeheimnis':

Seither weiß ich, was das Briefgeheimnis ist. Heute vermag ich schon, es mir ganz vorzustellen. Nach dem Fall Kranewitzer habe ich meine Post aus vielen Jahren verbrannt, danach fing ich an, ganz andere Briefe zu schreiben, meistens spät nachts, bis acht Uhr früh. Auf diese Briefe, die ich alle nicht abschickte, kommt es mir aber an. Ich muß in diesen vier, fünf Jahren etwa zehntausend Briefe geschrieben haben, für mich allein, in denen alles stand. Ich öffne auch viele Briefe nicht, ich versuche, mich im Briefgeheimnis zu üben, mich auf die Höhe dieses Gedankens von Kranewitzer zu bringen, das Unerlaubte zu begreifen, das darin bestehen könnte einen Brief zu lesen. (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 573)

As the postal service serves as a metonym for the social order, Otto Kranewitzer's decision to keep the letters represents an act of rebellion against the social control over the flow of information. So, when Ich suggests that the Briefgeheimnis is an action 'ich versuche, mich im Briefgeheimnis zu üben' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 573), what is meant is that she tries to rebel against the postal system, or rather the social order.

Kohn-Waechter argues that the problem of the post was influenced by Heidegger's lecture *Der Satz vom Grund* (Heidegger, 2006). To illustrate this she refers to Leibniz' formulation of the problem:

Und zwar nennt Leibniz das 'principium rationis' wiederholt ein "principium reddendae rationis". Dieses Verb impliziert Heidegger zufolge, daß die Post, genauer die Zustellung der Post, von Leibniz als ein Paradigma rationalen Denken ausgesprochen wurde. (Kohn-Waechter, 1991, pp. 554-555)

This statement 'principium reddendae rationis' is the foundation of the *Satz vom Grund*. All sentences that are not sufficiently reasoned fall into the role of

the victim: 'Ihnen wird das "sein" abgesprochen, sie werden zu "nichts" erklärt, also buchstäblich ver-nichtet; denn "Nichts ist ohne Grund"' (Kohn-Waechter, 1991). The death of the female letter-writer at the end of the novel highlights male rationality's domination that wipes out the feminine, which here, I contend, also stands for artistic expression. 'Nichts ist ohne Grund,' that which is without reason becomes nothing in *Malina*. Kohn-Waechter additionally refers to a passage from the novel that explicitly uses Heideggarian terminology:

> Da ich den Kopf hängen lasse, sagt Ivan: Du hast eben nichts, wofür
> du dasein mußt! [...] Aber Malina sollte mir helfen, nach einem
> Grund für mein Hiersein zu suchen, da ich keinen alten Vater habe,
> dessen Stütze ich im Alter sein muß. (Kohn-Waechter, 1991)

Ich's fragmented existence suddenly appears also to be related to Heideggarian notions of *Dasein* and *Grund*, an idea most forcefully displayed at the end of the novel with the disappearance of the protagonist, which enacts the idea that 'Nichts ist ohne Grund'. That which is without reason becomes nothing in literal terms.

Bachmann's novel subtly critiques Heideggarian ontology. This is not to reduce this complex novel to a philosophical critique of Heidegger. Rather this analysis builds on Kohn-Waechter's comments. Moreover, Bachmann's critique of Heidegger's rationality serves to defend literary and artistic production from concepts that exclude anything that is outside of reason and rationality. In Bachmann's draft of her prize acceptance speech *Ein Ort für Zufälle* (1964), she explains that art explores emotions and human experience in a way that is not possible in rational discourse. Her critique of Heidegger within an aesthetic form, serves to support her claim. Moreover, as has already been seen, Bachmann criticized letters that had been used by an European elite, and that ignored the thoughts and feelings of ordinary people.

Bachmann's construction of the self parodies features of Heidegger's *Dasein* [being] in his *Sein und Zeit*, in which he sets out to investigate the sense of being, which he considered to have been ignored in philosophical works on ontology.[6] Heidegger investigates the relationship between *Dasein* and the self and the relationship of *Dasein* to the world. Heidegger sought to demonstrate that

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[6]Bachmann attempted to undermine Heiddeger's philosophy in her doctoral thesis 'Die Kritische Aufnahme der Existentialphilosophie Martin Heideggers'. In her thesis she came to the conclusion that philosophical discourse was unable to speak meaningfully about the world and that it cannot adequately articulate human experience. Bachmann concluded that it is only art that can adequately depict these experiences.

Dasein and man eventually become a single identity. Here, it will be argued that Bachmann genders *Dasein* feminine in *Malina* and that the Ich-Malina dichotomy subtly critiques Heidegger's *Dasein*-Man relationship. Heidegger's *Dasein* is constructed of a fragmentary triad of components: *Befindlichkeit* [how one finds oneself], *Verstehen* [understanding] and *Verfallen* [fall]. I intend to show that the three components that inform *Dasein* are embodied in Ivan, Malina and Ich and that this relationship is inscribed into the narrative structure of the novel.

In the fourth chapter of his treatise, Heidegger contends that *Dasein* has no self; this concept of self and being (man) is mimicked in *Malina*. *Dasein*'s sense of self is informed by external influences. In *Malina*, Bachmann depicts the protagonist's inability to grasp a stable notion of self; the external influences that inform her sense of self in post-war Vienna, such as patriarchal and fascist influences, restrict her ability to identify herself. The external influences are depicted as an authoritarian institution that tries to repress the past, presumably to perpetuate the myth of Austria as National Socialism's first victim. Bachmann, also depicts *Dasein* [Ich] as struggling to discover a self, perhaps ironically naming the protagonist Ich.

The three 'movements' of *Dasein* as outlined by Heidegger mirror the textual construction of *Malina*. The three movements of *Malina* 'Glücklich mit Ivan', 'Der Dritte Mann' and 'Von Letzten Dingen' are not only represented by the characters Ivan, Malina and Ich, but also share similarities with Heidegger's construction of *Dasein*: *Befindlichkeit*, *Verstehen* and *Verfallen*. *Befindlichkeit* signifies the existential phenomenon of finding oneself in the world, it encompasses the sensation of being thrown into existence. *Verstehen* is the process of developing the self and self-awareness, it signifies possibility. It becomes a hermeneutic process of self-identification. The final part of *Dasein*, called *Verfallen*, refers to the quotidian concerns of the self. The two former movements function with *Verfallen*, they come into play in the everyday aspects of the self. However, each movement signifies a separate fragmentary component of *Dasein* (the individual). In accordance with this, Ivan and Malina are described as extensions of Ich and they inform her everyday existence. At the end of the novel, Ich is depicted as *Verfallen* in her fall, as the novel in some ways functions as a study of the factors that lead to the fall of the protagonist. Ivan is associated with the everyday aspects of Ich's life and Malina is concerned with the hermeneutic process, understanding the self. The episodes in the second chapter in which Malina consoles Ich during her night terrors can be read as

the hermeneutic process of trying to learn about the self (notably, the Ich). It is during these episodes that Malina attempts to gain an insight into the self. Following one of the episodes Malina is insistent on learning who Ich's father is, even after she maintains that she does not know:

> Malina: Willst du ausweichen, willst du schlau sein?
> Ich: Vielleicht. Ich möchte auch dich einmal hinters Licht führen. Sag mir eines. Warum bist du draufgekommen, daß mein Vater nicht mein Vater ist.
> Malina: Wer ist dein Vater?
> Ich: Ich weiß es nicht, ich weiß es nicht, wirklich nicht. Du bist der Klügere, du weißt doch immer alles, du machst mich noch ganz krank mit deinem Alleswissen. Macht es dich nicht selber oft krank? Ach nein, dich nie. Wärm die Füße, ja, danke, nur meine Füße sind eingeschlafen.
> Malina: Wer ist er? (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 507)

Ich questions Malina's constant need for knowledge, the need to know more about Ich. According to Heidegger, the structure that serves to unify *Dasein* is care. Even during the intense questioning the relationship is still shown to contain elements of care 'Wärm die Füße, ja, danke, nur meine Füße sind eingeschlafen' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 507). At the end, the male component [Malina] brings about the fall of the feminine Ich. This ties in with Heidegger's own claim that *Dasein* has no self. Man systematically causes the destruction of self. Ich acts against the system, as she does not participate in the epistolary process, rationality, and thus exhibits characteristics of an autonomous self, which leads to the collapse of *Dasein*. In Heidegger's view, *Dasein* (man) and self (Ich) are supposed to form an autonomous entity. The final line of the novel 'Es war Mord' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 695) is deliberately ambiguous. The death of Ich could result in the death of man as well, or it is simply the death of man's sense of self. It is the hermeneutic part of *Dasein* which eventually realizes that the female part presents a threat to the status quo. Her inability to repress the past acts against the interests of man and reason. Man is depicted in Ich's dream sequences as dominant masculinity, the dictator, the father figure, and patriarchy. The risk that Malina identifies is that Ich does not take part in the epistolary process, she does not contribute to the circulation of acceptable information. Her inability to fully repress the past means that she is unable to circulate the national myth. It is the denial of the past that prevents the

message in a bottle, as this metaphor signifies the joining of past, with present and future.

Malina is always present when Ich wakes up to ask her questions. This corresponds with Weigel's comment that postal technology and psychoanalysis function in a similar way. Here, Malina assumes the role of the psychoanalyst. Ich's nightmares also contain references to the struggle to write letters:

> weder die Frau noch mein Vater haben es bemerkt, sie vergiften mich, es ist furchtbar, ich muß einen Brief schreiben, es entstehen lauter Briefanfänge, die ich verstecke, in der Handtasche, in der Lade, unter dem Kopfpolster, aber ich muß schreiben und einen Brief aus dem Haus bringen. Ich fahre zusammen und lasse den Kugelschreiber fallen, denn mein Vater steht in der Tür, längst hat er das erraten, er sucht alle Briefe, er nimmt einen aus dem Papierkorb heraus und schreit: Mach den Mund auf! Was soll das heißen! Den Mund auf, sag ich! (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 530)

The feared father figure only appears in the dream sequences, thus rendering this dictator figure a manifestation of Ich's unconscious nightmares. The letters serve as material documents of a nightmarish past. The role of the psychoanalyst and the postman is essentially the same, it involves the systematic repression of the past at the level of the individual. Malina's role as the psychoanalyst is another way of controlling the information that moves from the past into the present, from the unconscious into the conscious. The efforts of the father figure to silence Ich and to prevent her from writing the letters represents a national attempt to repress the past. The postal system stands for the Austrian media institutions that controlled the flow of information and the memories that are or are not allowed into the national consciousness.

At the end of the novel, Malina destroys Ich's letters, while she attempts to preserve them. It is Malina's task to destroy these documents of the past, and the memories that may be contained within them. The main narrative — or, master narrative — of the novel therefore functions as an anti-*Flaschenpost*. Although alternative dialogues are enabled within the master narrative, it is the written texts which pose a threat to the social order. The authoritarian social systems prevent any trace of the past from entering into the present or future national consciousness. In this way, Ich finds herself in an enduring state of crisis, depicted as an ongoing 'Heute'. It is the destruction of the letters, and the resulting impossibility of remembering the past, that leads to the death of

the sense of self. In the dichotomies of man and self, state and individual, post and letter, man triumphs over the self.

2.3 The Utopian Vision of 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran'

The gender binary in *Malina* offers insights into a range of other tensions in the novel, as it parallels the tensions between man and the self, the Austrian institutions and the individual, and also reason and art. Here, it is argued that the rationality and reason associated with man and the institutions finds its opposition in artistic expression. Thus, when the narrator describes Ich's letters as lying 'im Papierkorb, kunstvoll durcheinandergebracht' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 552), it becomes apparent that the female self and the letter are also associated with art, contrasting with Malina who works for the museum, and who is interested in facts and reason. At the end of the novel, even these notions of reason and empirical reality are problematized as the protagonist disappears into a wall.

The tension between art and reason underscores reason's deficiencies as it is unable to evoke the experiences gained through engagement with art. This binary forms part of the message in a bottle discussion, as the reason-based reality is characterized by an anti-*Flaschenpost*, whilst an imagined literary reality in the protagonist's imagined story 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' depicts the message in a bottle motif as unrestrained by reason. It is the artistic imagination that is able to transcend the reason-based reality of post-1945 Vienna. Moreover, this moment of literary escape occurs in the present tense. In this way, 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' depicts Bachmann's notion of a literary utopia. The protagonist's moment of artistic expression corresponds with Bachmann's 'manchmal gewonnene Wirklichkeit' (Bachmann, 2005c, p. 486) in her Anton Wildgans prize acceptance speech; the protagonist experiences a different reality as she conceives of a piece of literature.

The novel contains experiences of different 'realities'. For example, there are the nightmare sequences along with 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran', a fictional reality which exists in the imagination. In scholarship the 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' passage has been treated as Bachmann's depiction of a feminist utopia,[7] however here, this passage will be read

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[7]As an example of this see Achberger's article *Beyond Patriarchy: Ingeborg Bachmann*

as the artistic counterpart to the rational social order of post-1945 Austria. It will also be argued that in contrast to the anti-*Flaschenpost* of the main narrative that the message in a bottle serves the purposes of the literary and utopian reality in 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran'.[8]

Before the final analysis of the message in a bottle motif, some of Bachmann and Celan's letters dealing with notions of reality require analysis. Aspects of Bachmann's and Celan's thought on the message in a bottle, and in turn notions of literary and poetic reality, may have developed in their correspondence. Certain motifs are repeated, develop in the correspondence, and eventually find their place in the published literature. For example, early on in the correspondence the image of the sea and dreams were used to portray a sense of loss in empirical reality, and to suggest that this reality is dream-like. In a letter written to Celan on 24th November 1949 Bachmann explains to Celan that she wishes that she could help him out of difficulty. She first does this by using the metaphor of a boat rescuing a person from sea:

> Ich sehe mit viel Angst, wie Du in ein grosses Meer hinaustreibst, aber ich will mir ein Schiff bauen und Dich heimholen aus der Verlorenheit. Du musst nur selbst auch etwas dazutun und es mir nicht zu schwer machen. Die Zeit und vieles ist gegen uns, aber sie soll nicht zerstören dürfen, was wir aus ihr herausretten wollen. Schreib mir bald, bitte, und schreib, ob Du noch ein Wort von mir willst, ob Du meine Zärtlichkeit und meine Liebe noch nehmen kannst, ob Dir noch etwas helfen kann, ob Du manchmal noch nach mir greifst und mich verdunkelst mit dem schweren Traum, in dem ich licht werden möchte. (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 14)

Bachmann uses a semantic field of terminology associated with rescue. She expresses her desire to help Celan to lose the sense of being lost and drifting into a great expanse. As with the message in a bottle motif, the sea is associated with danger and a sense of loss and estrangement. Bachmann uses the rescue metaphor to advise that they can salvage from their time what they want, thereby finding the positive within negative experiences. Bachmann here implies that the act of reaching out to another can result in Celan being saved from the

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and Fairytales: 'Women's sovereignty has been known in the past, just as the Princess used to fly freely on her horse before her land was invaded and she lost her reign; and it will only be known again in the future as the Kagran fantasy predicts' (Achberger, 1985, p. 216).

    [8]For more details on the motifs used in *Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran*, see Marion Schmaus' chapter *Eine Poetologie des Selbst/Mordes: Überlegungen zur Wahlverwandtschaft zwischen Ingeborg Bachmann und Paul Celan* (Schmaus, 1998).

sensation of being lost and alone. In the following paragraph a range of motifs are evoked which are constantly re-employed in a variety of ways throughout the correspondence. Notably, the dream motif has negative connotations associated with its possibility to cast darkness over Bachmann through Celan's experience of the dream. The idea of connecting with another in writing is depicted as being a positive action. Bachmann expresses a wish to be the light in this period of darkness.

In a later letter written on 10th June 1950 Bachmann re-employs the same motifs, but the idea of the dream develops and is depicted as a space. There is the suggestion that there are multiple realities, and multiple experiences in which they can connect with one another. The dream metaphor is even depicted in a more positive light, as the dreams are spaces that Bachmann hopes they can travel to:

> So will ich nur viele, viele Gedanken vorausschicken und hoffen, daß
> wir bald auf ein Wasser sehen, das wieder an Indien grenzt und an
> die Träume, die wir einmal geträumt haben.
> Aber wenn Du nicht mehr kannst oder schon in ein nächstes Meer
> getaucht bist, hol mich, mit der Hand, die man für andere frei hat!
> (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 16)

The use of the image of water as transporting them to the edge of a certain place, or a certain type of reality, foreshadows the use of the message in a bottle motif in their later work. In this letter, Bachmann does not just suggest that she wishes to help Celan out of the water as was mentioned in the first letter, but that she wishes to join him in his reality, 'hol mich, mit der Hand' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 16). The water imagery is used in a discussion about travelling to borders and joining Celan in his reality, which develops the use of these motifs from the previous letter. Notably, she also states that the water borders India 'das wieder an Indien grenzt und an die Träume' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 16). In the letter correspondence there is a tendency on the part of Bachmann to cast Celan as Other. He is frequently depicted as an exotic stranger, or as the unknown, thus the intention of travelling to the border is to connect with an unknown. In this instance, it is Celan who embodies the characteristics of the unknown and strange for Bachmann.

In a letter sent from Vienna on 27th September 1950 Bachmann again associates her experiences of reality with an inescapable dream. In the correspondence, the dream motif appears to have two functions. It can present a variety

of realities and experiences, but at other times, it is used to associate empirical reality with a nightmarish dream:

> Ich freue und fürchte mich abwechselnd auf das Kommende; die Furcht überwiegt noch. Versuche bitte, gut zu mir zu sein und mich festzuhalten. Manchmal glaube ich, alles ist ein verworrener Traum, und es gibt Dich gar nicht und Paris nicht und nur die mich zermalmende, schreckliche, hundertköpfige Hydra Armut, die mich nicht loslassen will. (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 20)

The dream motif is used as a way of doubting that there is any stable notion of reality. In a conversation about Celan's poetry, Bachmann further questions the relationship between dreaming and empirical reality in a letter written on 28th October 1957, which shortly follows their decision to re-start their romantic relationship in September 1957. In this letter she suggests that what concerns real life is also relevant for the dreamers, problematizing the notion of reality by constructing the notion of a dream reality:

> Die Ergänzung, sagst Du, muß heißen "Ins Leben". Das gilt auch für die Geträumten. Aber sind wir nur dir Geträumten? Und hat eine Ergänzung nicht immer stattgehabt, und sind wir nicht schon verzweifelt im Leben, auch jetzt, wo wir meinen, es käme auf einen Schritt an, hinaus, hinüber, miteinander?
> (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 62)

'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' uses some of the images and metaphors that are explored in the letter correspondence. Most notably, the final lines of the story 'Ich weiß ja, ich weiß!' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 357) respond directly to Celan's words in the letter correspondence. Celan occasionally used the formulation, or variations of the formulation 'Du weißt, Ingeborg, Du weißt ja' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 116). In this way, the legend of the princess of Kagran marks the end of Bachmann's literary correspondence with Celan. Many of the images in the story can be found in an early letter from Bachmann to Celan written on 24th June 1949. In this way, the end of their relationship is marked by reference to the start of their literary and personal relationship. In the following letter, the images describing Celan are repeated in the fairytale:

Du Lieber,

weil ich so garnicht daran gedacht habe, ist heute, am Vortag — im vergangenen Jahr war es doch auch so — Deine Karte richtig ange-flogen kommen, mitten in mein Herz, ja es ist so, ich hab Dich lieb, ich hab es nie gesagt damals. Den Mohn hab ich wieder gespürt, tief, ganz tief, Du hast so wunderbar gezaubert, ich kann es nie vergessen. Manchmal möchte ich nichts, als weggehen und nach Paris kommen, spüren, wie Du meine Hände anfasst, wie Du mich ganz mit Blumen anfasst und dann wieder nicht wissen, woher Du kommst und wohin Du gehst. Für mich bist Du aus Indien oder einem noch ferneren, dunklen, braunen Land, für mich bist Du Wüste und Meer und alles was Geheimnis ist. Ich weiss noch immer nichts von Dir und hab darum oft Angst um Dich, ich kann mir nicht vorstellen, dass Du ir-gend etwas tun sollst, was wir andern hier tun, ich sollte ein Schloss für uns haben und Dich zu mir holen, damit Du mein verwunschen-der Heer drin sein kannst, wir werden viele Teppiche drin haben und Musik, und die Liebe erfinden.

Ich habe oft nachgedacht, "Corona" ist Dein schönstes Gedicht, es ist vollkommene Vorwegnahme eines Augenblicks, wo alles Marmor wird und für immer ist. Aber mir hier wird es nicht "Zeit". Ich hungre nach etwas, das ich nicht bekommen werde, alles ist falsch und schal, müde und verbraucht, ehe es gebraucht wurde.

Mitte August will ich in Paris sein, ein paar Tage nur. Frag mich nicht warum, wozu, aber sei da für mich, einen Abend lang oder zwei, drei. Führ mich an die Seine, wir wollen so lange hineinschauen, bis wir kleine Fische geworden sind und uns wieder erkennen.

Ingeborg (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 11)

The images and metaphors that appear in this letter also appear in 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran'. In this letter, Bachmann refers to poppies and flow-ers, the notion of Celan as foreign and exotic, and the idea that she is able to protect him. Moreover, she praises Celan's poem 'Corona' for evoking eter-nity, which corresponds with the princess's first impression of the stranger in the fairytale which is described as: '*sie sah den unendlichen dunklen Himmel Asiens*' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 350). Not only does this reference suggest that Celan conjures up notions of eternity for her, but Celan is also characterized as a dark and unknown expanse. This image first appears in the letter corre-

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spondence 'Für mich bist Du aus Indien oder einem noch ferneren, dunklen, braunen Land, für mich bist Du Wüste und Meer und alles was Geheimnis ist' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 11). Celan's fictional character is described as appearing before the princess in '*einen langen schwarzen Mantel*' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 350) and as he wraps both characters in his coat the description turns to '*Sie waren schwärzer als schwarz in der Nacht*' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 350). The use of the comparative stresses the intensity of this encounter with the other. In the following passage the description of the dark expanse is accompanied by the image of a star:

> *Tief in der Nacht, da meinte sie, eine Stimme zu hören, die sang und sprach nicht, die raunte und schläferte ein, dann aber sang sie nicht mehr vor Fremden, sondern klang nur noch für sie und in einer Sprache, die sie bestrickte und von der sie kein Wort verstand. Trotzdem wußte sie, daß die Stimme ihr allein galt und nach ihr rief. Die Prinzessin brauchte die Worte nicht zu verstehen. Bezaubert stand sie auf und öffnete ihr Zelt, sie sah den unendlichen dunklen Himmel Asiens, und von dem ersten Stern, den sie erblickte, fiel eine Sternschnuppe herab. Die Stimme, die zu ihr drang, sagte ihr, sie dürfte sich etwas wünschen, und sie wünschte es sich von ganzem Herzen. Vor sich sah sie plötzlich, in einen langen schwarzen Mantel gehüllt, einen Fremden stehen, der nicht zu den roten und blauen Reitern gehörte, er verbarg sein Gesicht in der Nacht, aber obwohl sie ihn nicht sehen konnte, wußte sie, daß er um sie klagt und für sie voller Hoffnung gesungen hatte, mit einer nie gehörten Stimme, und daß er gekommen war, um sie zu befreien.*
> (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 350)

Although Bachmann warned against reading her characters as representing the author, features of the relationship between the princess and the stranger mirror aspects of Bachmann and Celan's own poetic correspondence. Some of the motifs and metaphors found in their literary work are developed and transformed in the letter correspondence or even originate from there.

There is a marked difference in the way in which the rescue metaphor is employed in the fairytale and in the letters. In the letters Bachmann characterizes herself as someone who can protect or save Celan. In the fairytale it is Celan's character who rescues the princess. In one instance in the correspondence Bachmann suggests that she can pull him from a sea of isolation. In the previous

letter, Bachmann depicts herself as taking an active role in the relationship: 'ich sollte ein Schloss für uns haben und Dich zu mir holen' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 11). In the legend Celan's character rescues the princess and brings her hope, she asks '*wie heißt du, mein Retter?*' following a description of Celan's character as:

> *[. . .] aber obwohl sie ihn nicht sehen konnte, wußte sie, daß er um sie geklagt und für sie voller Hoffnung gesungen hatte, mit einer nie gehörten Stimme, und daß er gekommen war, um sie zu befreien.*
> (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 350)

The notion of the encounter with the unknown stranger as setting the protagonist free further reminds the reader of Celan's *Meridian* speech, in which he suggests that engaging with art can set the subject free. In the speech he poses the question 'Die Kunst erweitern?' (Celan, 1999, p. 10) and responds with 'Nein. Sondern geh mit der Kunst in deine allereigenste Enge. Und setze dich frei' (Celan, 1999, p. 11). This utopian vision of engaging with art and making an encounter is depicted in 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' as it is her encounter with the unknown in a literary vision that sets her free. This description of the Celan-like figure as the princess's rescuer is also tied to the message in a bottle motif as the story depicts waters and borders that pose a threat to the princess. It is the unknown stranger who is tasked with rescuing the princess from the waters. The story thematizes the message in a bottle, as repeated references are made to water and crossing boundaries or a lack of boundaries.

'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' begins from a point of crisis and battle imagery is evoked; the princess begins by mentioning the lack of borders:

> *Ihre Gefolgsleute beredeten und baten sie, zurückzubleiben, denn das Land, in dem sie waren, an der Donau, war immer in Gefahr, und Grenzen gab es noch keine, wo später Raetien, Markomannien, Noricum, Moesien, Dacien, Illyrien und Pannonien waren.*
> (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 348)

In accordance with the message in a bottle motif, the water is associated with danger. Further on in the novel, the princess is met by the dark stranger who rescues the princess. After he leaves her, borders appear in the land and water:

und sie sah nicht die March, die sich hier in die Donau stiehlt, und
noch weniger wußte sie, daß hier einmal eine Grenze durchs Wasser
gezogen würde, zwischen zwei Ländern mit Namen. Denn es gab
damals keine Länder und keine Grenzen dazu.
(Bachmann, 1995b, p. 352)

The discussion of crossing borders eventually leads to a meeting of the living princess with the dead stranger. They meet at the border of the living and the dead and before the stranger must return, the princess states: '*Ich weiß wir werden einander wiedersehen*' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 355). The stranger responds by saying: '*Wo? Fragte der Fremde lächelnd, und wann? denn wahr ist der endlose Ritt*' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 355). These two perspectives reflect both Bachmann and Celan's different visions regarding the message in a bottle. Bachmann's utopia can be reached in the present day as a successful encounter between reader and writer, whereas Celan's message is sent out far into the future towards an unknown reader, his message is sent out on an endless journey. Therefore, the stranger's response is to ask where and when this encounter could take place. When the princess suggests either a time or a place the stranger questions what the time means and what the place is: '*Was sind Stadt und Straße? fragte der Fremde betroffen*' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 356). These questions relate to Celan's uncertainty regarding the possibility that an encounter could ever be made in the future between his poem and the unknown future reader.

At the end of the story it is discovered that this legend had never been written. It represents a moment of literary exile for the protagonist. Before the imagined story appears in the novel, Ich contemplates buying an old writing desk from an antique shop and writing with a quill and ink in an old fashioned style. Before she imagines this story she makes a critical remark on the use of dates: 'aber dann will ich noch eine ungeheuerliche lateinische Jahreszahl hinschreiben, ANNO DOMINI MDXXLI, aus der kein Mensch je klug werden wird' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 347). The protagonist describes the use of the latin date as 'ungeheuerlich,' as she subtly critiques European rationality before immersing herself in an imaginative world '[. . .] und verstecken könnte ich mich in der Legende einer Frau, die es nie gegeben hat' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 347). Following the story it is revealed that Ich never wrote a word:

Das Schreibpult habe ich nicht gekauft, weil es fünftausend Schilling
gekostet hätte und aus einem Kloster kommt, auch das stört mich,

> und darauf schreiben hätte ich doch nicht können, weil es Pergament
> und Tinte nicht gibt [. . .] (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 357).

The protagonist is not able to write a story herself, instead she imagines the fairytale.

The notion of reality is problematized, not only in the novel, but also within the imagined story itself. The novel depicts types of reality, such as, empirical reality, dream reality and a literary, imagined, reality. The fairytale also continues to problematize this concept.

The references to poppies made in Bachmann's letter 'Den Mohn hab ich wieder gespürt, tief, ganz tief, Du hast so wunderbar gezaubert, ich kann es nie vergessen' and later in Celan's most famous volume of poems 'Mohn und Gedächtnis' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 11) are also used in the fragment. Notably, following the authors first encounter in 1948, Celan filled Bachmann's student room with poppies (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 251). The significance of this motif is developed throughout their relationship in their writing. In the fariytale, the poppy image represents the merging of the two realities, the realm of the living and the dead. The princess sees a light ahead of her and fears it as she realizes that it is a supernatural light, as she goes closer it becomes clear that what she sees before her is in fact a poppy:

> *Es war kein Licht, es war eine Blume, gewachsen in der entfesselten*
> *Nacht, röter als rot und nicht aus der Erde gekommen. Sie streckte*
> *die Hand nach der Blume aus, da berührte ihre Hand zugleich mit*
> *der Blume eine andere Hand.* (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 354)

The images used here highlight the intensity of the colour. This description is followed by the depiction of the stranger as '*Er war schwärzer als vorher das Schwarz um sie*' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 354); both colours allude to the poppy. The descriptions are both vivid and vague as we find that the princess is '*bezaubert*' and '*bestrickt*', and that she was in a '*totenähnlichen Schlaf*' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 354). This is following the image of the stranger lying the flower on the princess '*er legte ihr die Blume wie einer Toten auf die Brust*' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 354). The poppy, through its association with opium, is also linked to dream-like and death-like states. Moreover, it is associated with Morpheus who was the dream messenger of the Gods who slept in a cave full of poppy seeds and who could enter into people's dreams to communicate divine messages. This image highlights how the poppy motif functions similarly to the

message in a bottle motif. It represents the possibility of moving between different realms of experience. In particular the Morpheus association ties in with ideas explored earlier in this thesis such as the notion of *Les Vases Communicants*, the poppy functions as a metaphor for the possibility of communicating with those in a separate space or reality. In the fairytale, it enables the living princess to communicate with the dead stranger. As the princess wakes from the death-like sleep, she and the stranger are able to speak, following a period of speechlessness.

Notably, Bachmann scatters this conversation with references to their poetic correspondence. For example, when the stranger asks '*Was ist ein Jahrhundert?*' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 356) The princess replies as follows: '*Die Prinzessin nahm eine Handvoll Sand und ließ ihn rasch durch die Finger laufen*' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 356), which refers also to Celan's *Der Sand aus den Urnen* volume of poems (Celan, 2003). Immediately after the princess awakens from her sleep she begins talking to the stranger and the pair 'sagten sich Helles und Dunkles' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 355), which is reminiscent of Bachmann's poem 'Dunkles zu sagen' a poem whose title comes from a line of Celan's 'Corona', a poem she praised in her letter to him 'Ich habe oft nachgedacht, "Corona" ist Dein schönstes Gedicht, es ist vollkommene Vorwegnahme eines Augenblicks, wo alles Marmor wird und für immer ist.' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 11). In 'Corona', Celan wrote:

> wir sehen uns an,
> wir sagen uns Dunkles,
> wir lieben einander wie Mohn und Gedächtnis
> (Celan and Wiedemann, 2003, p. 30)

In *Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran* Bachmann changes Celan's words to '*Sie sagten sich Helles und Dunkles*', as at that moment two realities meet, the living and the dead. In Celan's *Corona* the line 'wir lieben einander wie Mohn und Gedächtnis' is followed by images which evoke ideas of sleep and death:

> wir schlafen wie Wein in den Muscheln,
> wie das Meer im Blutstrahl des Mondes.
> (Celan and Wiedemann, 2003, p. 30)

As Celan evokes a reality removed from the rational post-1945 in Corona, so does Bachmann in 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran'. Significantly,

towards the end of Corona Celan presents the reader with an irrational image 'Es ist Zeit, daß der Stein sich zu blühen bequemt,'. It is only in the poetic imagination that this image can exist. Throughout the poem, Celan depicts a world of representation rather than empirical reality. For example in the following lines Celan depicts representations of existence, through a mirror or in a dream:

> Im Spiegel ist Sonntag,
> im Traum wird geschlafen,
> der Mund redet wahr. (Celan and Wiedemann, 2003, p. 30)

Poetic language can only exist in an irrational realm, removed from the cold rationality of post-1945 Europe.

'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' also depicts the sun standing high in the sky. This image alludes to Celan's *Meridian* as the past meets the present through the meeting of the dead and the living (see chapter 3):

> *Die Sonne stand schon hoch am Himmel, als der Fremde die Prinzessin aus ihrem tötenähnlichen Schlaf weckte. Er hatte die wahren Unsterblichen, die Elemente, zum Schweigen gebracht. Die Prinzessin und der Fremde begannen zu reden, wie von alters her, und wenn einer redete, lächelte der andere. Sie sagten sich Helles und Dunkles. Das Hochwasser war gesunken, und ehe die Sonne unterging,*
> (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 354)

The water posing the danger to the princess sinks and the sun begins to descend, symbolizing the stranger's return to the realm of the dead. The princess begs the stranger to stay with her and he replies 'Geduld, habe Geduld, denn du weißt ja, du weißt' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 355). Bachmann uses Celan's own words and places them in the legend. In this utopian vision, Celan is the Du who the author reaches out to, who is depicted as bringing her hope and freeing her. In this moment, not only is Bachmann's own literary utopia realized, but also Celan's poetic notion of a meridian. The fairytale ends with the princess restating Celan's words as 'Ich weiß ja, ich weiß!' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 357) as a final affirmation.

Chapter 3

The Influence of Georg Büchner's *Lenz* and *Dantons Tod* on Bachmann's and Celan's Poetics

78, rue de Longchamp — Paris, den 21. September 1963

Liebe Ingeborg,

ich hatte Dich, als ich in der Zeitung las, Du seist in Rußland gewesen, sehr um diese Reise beneidet, zumal um den Aufenthalt in Petersburg. Aber kurz danach, Ende August, erfuhr ich in Frankfurt von Klaus Wagenbach, daß das gar nicht stimme, daß es Dir vielmehr gar nicht gut gegangen sei und Du eben erst wieder aus dem Krankenhaus zurück seist. — Ich wollte Dich darauf anrufen, aber Du hattest noch kein Telephon.

Jetzt schreibe ich Dir, ein paar Zeilen nur, um Dich ebenfalls um ein paar Zeilen zu bitten. Laß mich doch bitte wissen, wie es Dir geht.

Ich habe ein paar nicht ganz erfreuliche Jahre hinter mir — 'hinter mir', wie man so sagt.

In den nächsten Wochen erscheint ein neuer Gedichtband von mir — Verschiedenes ist da mit einverworben, ich bin mitunter, denn das war so gut wie vorgeschrieben, einen recht "kunstfernen" Weg

gegangen. Das Dokument einer Krise, wenn Du willst — aber was wäre Dichtung, wenn sie nicht auch das wäre, und zwar radikal?

Schreib mir also bitte ein paar Zeilen.

Ich wünsche Dir alles Gute, Ingeborg

Herzlich

Paul (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, pp. 158-159)

This letter was received by Bachmann following having been admitted to the Martin-Luther hospital in Berlin for psychiatric care. Following her separation from Max Frisch, her mental health worsened and around July and August 1963 she sought treatment. Celan also underwent psychiatric treatment in a clinic in Paris around the start of 1963 as a result of the accusations of plagiarism that he had faced from Claire Goll (McMurtry, 2012, p. 117). The above letter brings the discussion of personal crisis into dialogue with the problem of artistic expression. Celan's comment 'Das Dokument einer Krise, wenn Du willst — aber was wäre Dichtung, wenn sie nicht auch das wäre, und zwar radikal?' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 159) suggests that poetry needs to encompass subjective experiences of crisis. Notably, Celan's final claim that poetry needs to be radical follows a reference to Georg Büchner's *Lenz*, as Celan writes that his latest volume of poems, a reference to *Die Niemandrose*, which was published at the end of October 1963, had gone 'einen recht "kunstfernen" Weg' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 159). This quotation not only refers to Büchner's *Lenz*, but also to Celan's use of *Lenz* in his *Meridian* speech in 1960. In the *Meridian* Celan discusses *Lenz*, and also *Dantons Tod*, as a way of exploring how Büchner's poetics are relevant to the post-1945 crisis of poetic writing. This chapter will examine the significance of the 'kunstfernen Weg' through an exploration of the poets' engagement with the works of Georg Büchner.

Both Bachmann and Celan were recipients of the Georg Büchner prize. On receiving this prize in 1960, Celan famously gave his acceptance speech *Der Meridian*, and Bachmann wrote the speech *Ein Ort für Zufälle* on receiving the prize in 1964.

Bachmann's draft version of the speech contains some of the same images from *Lenz* that Celan discusses at length in the *Meridian*, including the 'recht "kunstfernen" Weg' mentioned in the above letter (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, pp. 158-159). In the *Meridian* Celan sets out to define his poetics and draws on specific moments in works of Büchner in order to illustrate the role of poetry

after 1945. Understanding these moments in Büchner's work, and more specifically Celan's engagement with them, is crucial to fully understanding Celan's *Meridian* and Bachmann's engagement with both Celan's speech and Büchner's writing.

Whilst the respective speeches have each been given considerable attention in scholarship (Müller-Sievers, 2004; Levine, 2007; Webber, 2007), relatively little has been written on the interrelation of Bachmann and Celan's readings of Büchner and the correspondence that surrounds their uses of his works. Hans Höller has written about Celan's engagement with Bachmann's *Ein Ort für Zufälle*, in particular in Celan's poem 'DU LIEGST', which Peter Szondi reads as having been inspired by a visit that Celan made to Berlin (Höller, 1987, p. 222). Höller's analysis of Celan's engagement with *Ein Ort für Zufälle* mainly focusses on Bachmann's and Celan's critical analyses of Berlin in the 1960s (Höller, 1987, p. 224).

Ein Ort für Zufälle was written during a year that Bachmann spent in West Berlin in April 1963 having been granted a scholarship from the American Ford Foundation's 'Artists-in-residence' programme (McMurtry, 2012, p. 88). The speech depicts the excessive consumption that she witnessed there during the *Wirtschaftswunder* years from the perspective of a patient in a hospital (Webber, 2007, p. 112).

Sigrid Weigel acknowledges the ways in which Bachmann's *Ein Ort für Zufälle* drafts engage with Celan's reading of *Lenz*:

> Die eigentlichen Vorarbeiten an der Büchner-Preis-Rede werden aber durch die Bezüge zu Büchners Schriften signalisiert – 'Lenz bei Oberlin' und 'ach, die Kunst'. Diese zitieren neben Büchner zugleich Paul Celans Formulierung vom "Weg der Kunst" aus dessen vier Jahre zuvor gehaltener Büchner-Preis-Rede (Weigel, 1999, p. 378)

Weigel notes that Bachmann places the emphasis of her engagement with *Lenz* and the 'kunstfernen Weg' on illness contrasting with the emphasis of Celan's speech (Weigel, 1999, p. 378):

> laßt uns auf dem Kopf stehen, auf einem kunstfernen Weg, der einmal einmünden kann, dort wo wieder Kunst kommt. Hinzukommt, gleich hinzukommt, wenn die ausgebrannten Stellen verheilen, [...] Die Kunst kommt erst nach dem zweiten Tod, nach der zweiten Unschuld. (Weigel, 1999, p. 378)

In the draft of her speech, Bachmann uses some of the same images from *Lenz* that are depicted in the *Meridian* as a way of exploring the role of art against a backdrop of crisis and personal disturbance. Bernhard Böschenstein, like Weigel, highlights the differences in the ways in which Bachmann and Celan explore Büchner's *Lenz* in their speeches:

> Celan exploriert den Ort der Dichtung, Ingeborg Bachmann den Ort der Krankheitsbezeugung. Beider Explorationen gründen in derselben geschichtlichen Situationen, zu deren Erkundung Lenzens Krankheit eine Hinführung ermöglicht. Der Stand auf dem Kopf vollzieht die Umkehrung von Himmel und Abgrund, die die neue Wirklichkeit erzwingt. (Böschenstein, 2000, p. 262)

The reference to Büchner's *Lenz* in the letter at the start of this chapter written in 1963 implies that Celan believed that Bachmann either shared or understood his interpretation of Lenz's 'recht "kunstfernen" Weg'. However, this letter was written before Bachmann gave her own Büchner Prize acceptance speech in 1964. Most clearly, it is in the draft version of her speech, *Ein Ort für Zufälle*, where Bachmann too engages with Lenz's 'recht "kunstfernen" Weg', also bringing it into dialogue with the post-1945 crisis of poetic expression.

This chapter seeks to highlight the influence of Celan's engagement with Büchner's work on Bachmann's literature, and to examine where their thought intersects and diverges on issues of poetic renewal and poetic writing after 1945. First of all, this chapter will analyze Celan's reading of Büchner's *Lenz* and *Dantons Tod*. Whilst Celan acknowledges Büchner's *Leonce und Lena* and *Wozzeck* in the *Meridian*, it is *Dantons Tod* and *Lenz* that receive the most critical attention. Because of Bachmann and Celan's mutual engagement with Büchner, this chapter will need to disentangle layers of interpretation, as Bachmann's reading of Büchner may also represent an engagement with Celan's thought.

In Celan's letter to Bachmann, his reference to *Lenz* associates art with personal crisis. As is discussed further on in this chapter, *Lenz* combines subjective experiences of crisis with considerations on the role of art. In order to better understand the situation of crisis against which Celan was writing and conceiving of the *Meridian* in the late 1950s, earlier letters which deal with accusations of plagiarism and which cast Celan as other will be examined. This includes the anti-Semitic review of his work by Günter Blöcker, published on 11th October 1959 in *Der Tagesspiegel*, which caused him great distress. Celan's prose piece *Gespräch im Gebirg* which was published in 1959, not long before he gave his

Meridian speech, will also be considered against this backdrop. In addition, this will lead onto a discussion on Bachmann's interpretations and uses of *Gespräch im Gebirg* and the *Meridian* in *Undine geht*.

In *Undine geht* Bachmann distorts images and conversations found in *Gespräch im Gebirg* and places them in the context of a story about a water nymph, using a trope that dates back to the fourteenth-century Stauffenberg saga. Moreover, she places discussions and images from the *Meridian* in the story. By doing this, Bachmann establishes a literary dialogue with Celan based on her reading of his discussion in the two texts. *Undine geht* depicts some of Bachmann's considerations on issues of poetic renewal and artistic expression. As will be discussed further on in this chapter, *Undine geht* is stylistically similar to Celan's *Meridian*, however, it is the object [art] of Celan's speech that gains the narrative agency and renders man, the former subject, the object of her speech. By doing this, Bachmann presents a response to man from art by establishing a dialogue between them, whilst also communicating with Celan.

In order to consider Büchner's influence on Celan's and Bachmann's poetics, it is necessary to carefully consider the works that the two authors discuss in their literary correspondence. The two most significant texts are *Dantons Tod* and *Lenz*.

Dantons Tod was written in 1835 and is set during the French Revolution. By setting it against this backdrop, a time when state-sanctioned violence was common, Büchner depicts a constant and urgent state of crisis. In a letter to his fiancé in 1834 he wrote:

> Ich studiere die Geschichte der Revolution. Ich fühlte mich wie zernichtet unter dem gräßlichen Fatalismus der Geschichte. Ich finde in der Menschennatur eine entsetzliche Gleichheit, in den menschlichen Verhältnissen eine unabwendbare Gewalt, Allen und Keinem verliehen. Der Einzelne nur Schaum auf der Welle, die Größe ein bloßer Zufall, die Herrschaft des Genies ein Puppenspiel, ein lächerliches Ringen gegen ein ehernes Gesetz, es zu erkennen das Höchste, es zu beherrschen unmöglich. (Jacobs, 1996, p. 3)

In this letter Büchner depicts a sense of helplessness, describing the fatalism of history and a sort of continuity or sameness that forms part of human nature. Margaret Jacobs suggests that this letter shows that Büchner held the view that people's 'ineffectiveness reduces them [. . .] to puppets and removes all greatness and heroism from the historical scene' (Jacobs, 1996, p. 3).

Dantons Tod presents a range of political groups, one led by Robespierre who maintains his position of power by killing leaders of opposition groups, and Georges Danton, who poses a threat to Robespierre, even though he had become politically apathetic. Over the course of the play, Danton and his friend Camille Desmoulins are sentenced to death for leading the opposition. Before Danton's planned execution, his wife Julie poisons herself and on the day of the execution Camille's wife, Lucile, calls out 'Es lebe der König!' as Camille is about to face the guillotine (Büchner, 1971). This is the moment in the play that is discussed at length by Celan, and which Bachmann then reinterprets from Celan's speech in *Undine geht*. By shouting out 'Es lebe der König!' in front of the revolutionary forces, Lucile's death is guaranteed. Rather than suddenly confessing her allegiance to the ancien régime, Lucile's outburst is unexpected and marks a break in the continuity. The events leading up to the death of her husband are suddenly interrupted by this unexpected outburst. In Büchner's letter to his fiancé he criticized the dreadful sameness, or continuity, that he saw in human nature. In this act, Lucile breaks with the anticipated pattern of events, thereby breaking with the continuity.

Notably, Lucile is a character who is unable to fully master language. John B. Lyon points out that: 'Earlier in the drama Lucile manifests her view of language as an immediate sensory phenomenon rather than a semantic or syntactic one' (Lyon, 1996, p. 108). Lucile claims that she enjoys listening to her husband speak, although she can't always understand the meaning of his words. Lyon further states that 'Büchner portrays Lucile as insane precisely through her attempt to find a physical constituent of a linguistic phenomenon' (Lyon, 1996, p. 109); he gives the example of Lucile trying to understand the meaning of the word dying by looking at the impression that it leaves on the faces of others. In this way, Lucile's unconventional relationship to language is presented as symptomatic of some kind of mental disturbance, or even insanity. However, towards the end of the play it is Lucile's words that mark a break with the continuity, and signify a radical change. The portrayal of Lucile in *Dantons Tod* is similar to Büchner's depiction of the protagonist Lenz, in his novella *Lenz*. Celan uses these two examples to consider the role of art against a backdrop of urgent crisis, as these two examples also suggest that there is a relationship between language, crisis, and psychological illness. A discussion of Büchner's protagonist Lenz also enables an exploration of crises of language and cognition in the post-1945 context from positions of mental disturbance, and also exile.

Büchner's *Lenz* is based on a report from 1778 by Pastor Johann Friedrich

Oberlin [or John Frederick Oberlin] documenting his encounter with the psychologically disturbed poet, Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz, a friend of Goethe (Mahoney, 1984, p. 396). *Lenz* describes the journey of a former poet who ventures into the mountains away from his former life. The story documents Lenz's psychological struggle in the mountains marked by a crisis of language and perception as he leaves his known world behind. In the mountains, he stays with a priest called Oberlin and his family, with whom he shares a mutual acquaintance, who is simply referred to as the salesman. The flow of the narrative is, however, broken midway as the salesman arrives at Oberlin's mountain home where Lenz is staying nearby. At first Lenz is hesitant about the salesman's presence in the mountains, as this sudden intrusion of his former life startles him. However, Lenz's appearance soon changes from that of a distressed poet into an articulate interlocutor as he discusses literature and art, and he suddenly finds himself 'in guter Stimmung' (Büchner, 1984, pp. 14-15). Lenz's conviction that art should serve as a mimetic transcription of the beauty of nature forms the basis of his argument in his discussion with the salesman. This part of the narrative, termed the *Kunstgespräch*, represents a return to Lenz's former mind-set before entering the mountains. Following the salesman's departure, Lenz falls back into a dream-like state of distress. On his journey, it is the moment of artistic reflection with a man from his former life that induces a momentary state of clarity, or relief from the crisis he found himself in.

The *Kunstgespräch* provides the only insight into what Lenz, the fictional poet, was like before the moment when he left his familiar world behind and ventured into the mountains. Rüdiger Görner comments that the oscillation between Lenz's usual conscious state and the dream-like state that he falls into in the mountains highlights 'crossovers between reflection and insanity' (Görner et al., 2010, p. 139). This suggestion implies that the Lenz of the *Kunstgespräch* is the sane Lenz, whilst Lenz the wanderer in the mountains is the mentally unstable Lenz, an idea that Celan explores critically in the *Meridian*. The apparent break in the narrative continuity, served by the *Kunstgespräch*, is simply an insight into what the fictional Lenz was like before his adventure. Therefore, it is in fact his decision to leave the known world behind which marks a break in the continuity as his reality, or perception of his reality, is completely transformed.

In both Celan's speech and Bachmann's draft version of her speech, the reader's attention is drawn to this pivotal decision in the opening lines of *Lenz*. Büchner allows the reader a privileged insight into Lenz's thoughts as he enters

into the mountains for the first time: 'Müdigkeit spürte er keine, nur war es ihm manchmal unangenehm, daß er nicht auf dem Kopf gehn konnte' (Büchner, 1984, p. 5). This moment marks the beginning of Lenz's crisis as he leaves his known world behind; here, Lenz becomes an outsider in this unfamiliar territory. This journey into the mountains is often interpreted as depicting Lenz's collapse into a psychological illness, in part because of Büchner's medical background and his interest in brain anatomy (Crighton, 1998; Görner et al., 2010; Heinkel, 2010). In these ways, Lenz's decision to leave his known world behind can be associated with themes of mental disturbance and exile. Lenz's sudden decision to leave his familiar world behind and the desire to turn onto his head represents another absurd occurrence in Büchner's work. It is this decision that is similar to Lucile's decision to cry out 'Es lebe der König!' as it is unexpected. As will be explored in the next section, Celan reads these moments as expressions of the absurd.

Lenz's experience of venturing into an unknown territory, with the recognition that the language with which he was once so familiar is failing him, may have resonated with Bachmann and Celan. *Lenz* depicts a poets struggle with language whilst in a state of enduring crisis. The poet's lack of agency and authority over language is given emphasis in Büchner's writing. The poet lacks an authorial voice and his thoughts are conveyed to the reader via a third person narrative, in which Büchner allows the reader access to his thoughts. The poet becomes the object of his own story and subject to the invasive authority of the narrative voice. This failure to master language is symptomatic of Lenz's psychological fragility. He suffers from his dreams and the confusing oscillation between dream-like unconsciousness and empirical consciousness, often interpreted as an oscillation between states of sanity and insanity.

Lenz's desire to turn on his head signifies that the poet has to take a new and radically different direction far away from the known reality. This image of the poet venturing into the unknown reality resonates with Celan's notion of the message in the bottle, as after 1945 writing poetry is associated with venturing towards the unknown. The final part of Böschenstein's claim (see page 87) that the image of Lenz turning on his head is used to reveal a new perspective on reality, or a new reality, is most clearly outlined in Celan's *Meridian* speech. In his speech, he uses moments from some of Büchner's works to exemplify his vision of a poetics that is based on his notion of a meridian. Celan considered the meridian as reflection and aspiration combined. The meridian is past, present and future; the combination of contemplation on the past, stasis and possibility.

In Celan's view, one of the tasks of the poet is to use a form of expression that brings the past into dialogue with the future.

3.1 Celan's *Meridian*

In his speech, Celan explains what is meant by the meridian by distinguishing between *Kunst* [art] and *Dichtung* [poetry and prose] as two wholly different types of artistic expression (Celan, 1999). Notably, the texts that he identifies as being meridianal, and therefore *Dichtung*, include *Dantons Tod* and *Lenz*. The terms *Kunst* and *Dichtung* are not used to discuss artistic form, rather *Dichtung* denotes a more counter-discursive and socially engaged form of writing than *Kunst*.

In the *Meridian*, Celan suggests that the function of *Kunst* is to maintain the status quo and the literary continuity, whereas in contrast *Dichtung* is radical. In Celan's letter to Bachmann he claims that his poetry has moved away from art, in the sense of *Kunst*, and by doing so, it has become radical: 'einen recht "kunstfernen" Weg gegangen. Das Dokument einer Krise, wenn Du willst — aber was wäre Dichtung, wenn sie nicht auch das wäre, und zwar radikal?' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 159) *Dichtung* does not follow the linear continuity that Celan considers to be characteristic of *Kunst*'s relationship to time. *Dichtung* brings past and future together rather than linearly moving away from the past. He also states that the speech he is giving is a meridian: 'Ich bin, auch hier, in Ihrer Gegenwart, diesen Weg gegangen. Es war ein Kreis' (Celan, 1999, p. 11). This notion contains the temporal considerations that inform the message in a bottle metaphor. *Dichtung* is sent out into the future to make a connection, yet this results in the self-realization of the author. Although the message travels forward, the intention is that through an encounter with another in the future, the realization of the author who sent that same message in the past is achieved.

The *Meridian* draws attention to the radical moments in Büchner's *Lenz* and *Dantons Tod*, and Celan defines each of these moments of interruption as a *Gegenwort* [a counter-discursive act]. Throughout the speech, Celan makes the claim that these moments of interruption in Büchner's work are still relevant in the present day and are also relevant to the post-1945 crisis. Notably, the term *Gegenwort* is visually and audibly similar to 'Gegenwart'. As will be seen through an analysis of Celan's considerations on Büchner's works, the *Gegenwort*

is an immediate interruption in the present that continues to be relevant in future present moments. So, by making a distinction between poetry and art, Celan introduces his notion of a *Gegenwort*, and is able to explain why it is that poetry needs to be radical. *Kunst* serves to maintain the continuity, which *Dichtung* sets out to cause a rupture in.

Celan's suggestion that there needs to be a break in the continuity corresponds with Bachmann's view that crisis is immediate and present post-1945. Breaking with the status quo is a means of countering the ever-present state of crisis. In this light, continuity and crisis are almost synonymous, yet the continuity is complicit in perpetuating the sense of crisis. Bachmann underscores this sense of enduring crisis in her draft version of *Ein Ort für Zufälle* in which she states that the threat to mankind occurs not only during periods of war:

> Und die Bedrohung findet nicht statt im Krieg, nicht in den Zeiten der nackten Gewalt, des dominierenden Überlebens, sondern vorher und nachher, also im Frieden, und ich hatte wahrhaft nur eine Ahnung, keine Gewißheit, als ich nach dem Krieg zu denken anfing und mit dem Überlebenwollen aufhörte, es schien ja garantiert, da kam mir die Ahnung, daß der Friede für uns schwere wäre.
> (Bachmann, 1995a, p. 176)

This sense of crisis is depicted as not just relating to physical violence, but it continues in society, even following periods of violence. As was seen in *Malina*, 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' fragment represents a break in the narrative continuity. The moment of escape into literary imagination signifies a brief rupture in the continuity, the enduring state of crisis. Temporally, this rupture exists in the immediate present and the moment of utopia is achieved through encountering the stranger. In these ways, Bachmann appears to engage with Celan's notion of art, although she doesn't use the term *Dichtung*, as being radical in her novel. The sense of crisis in the present tense can be punctuated by immediate moments of poetic or literary relief. These notions of breaking the poetic, literary or historic continuity are markedly similar to Walter Benjamin's line of thought concerning the role of art in *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*, in which he states:

> Der Historismus benügt sich damit, einen kausalnexus von verschiedenen Momenten der Geschichte zu etablieren. Aber kein Tatbestand ist als Ursache eben darum bereits ein historischer. Er ward das,

posthum, durch Begebenheiten, die durch Jahrtausende von ihm ge-
trennt sein mögen. Der Historiker, der davon ausgeht, hört auf, sich
die Abfolge von Begebenheiten durch die Finger laufen zu lassen wie
einen Rosenkranz. (Benjamin, 2007, p. 139)

Punctuating the historical, literary, or artistic continuity in the immediate
present with a counter-discursive and critical form of art corresponds with Bach-
mann and Celan's attitudes towards the role of art. Rather than being an atti-
tude symptomatic of the post-1945 crisis of poetic writing, Celan identifies this
role as relevant throughout history; in particular, he identifies such moments in
Büchner's works.

The moments in Büchner's works that Celan identifies as meridianal are
frequently manifest in the image of a head. For Büchner's doctoral research,
he wrote an anatomical treatise, *Mémoire sur le système nerveux du barbeau*
(1836) [A report on the nervous system of the barbel]. In his dissertation, he
endeavoured to shed light on why the cerebral spheres of the brain need to be
symmetrical. Michael Levine points out that a major consideration for Büchner
was how to understand the brain's relationship to the spinal cord in the barbel,
and how the brain can be distinguished as separate from the spinal cord (Levine,
2007, p. 582). Knowledge of Büchner's preoccupation with questions of brain
anatomy provides further insights into his literary endeavour. His interest in
the relationship between the brain and the spinal cord is explored in *Lenz* in
which Lenz's initial desire to walk on his own head is followed by a sensory crisis.
This change of perspective could perhaps also be described as a an experience
of heightened sensory awareness, as his sensory experience cannot find adequate
linguistic articulation. Celan refers to this moment in his *Meridian* speech, he
states that whoever wishes to walk on their head has the sky as an abyss beneath
them:

"...nur war es ihm manchmal unangenehm, daß er nicht auf dem
Kopf gehn konnte." Wer auf dem Kopf geht, meine Damen und
Herren, — wer auf dem Kopf geht, der hat den Himmel als Abgrund
unter sich. (Celan, 1999, p. 7)

Lenz's seemingly absurd wish to continue on his head represents a wish for
a complete change of perspective. As Lenz enters the mountains, his known
reality is turned on its head, resulting in a new experience of the world. As a
former poet leaving the known world behind and experiencing a completely new

reality, Lenz's experiences represent a sort of poetic renewal, as the reliability of his expressive medium, language, is challenged. The poet is confronted with an inability to use language in the new reality, and finds himself faced with new ineffable experiences of the world. For Celan, this radical questioning of reality and the break in the continuity of the narrative, brought about by the protagonist's absurd desire to walk on his head, mean that *Lenz* is a work of *Dichtung* rather than *Kunst*. It is in these ways that Celan considers Büchner's work to be radical and he identifies other examples of rebellion in Büchner's works, which he also terms a *Gegenwort* (Celan, 1999, p. 3).

Therefore, Celan depicts Lenz in the mountains in a positive light. As the Lenz who is usually interpreted as mentally disturbed who breaks with the continuity of his former existence. Consequently, it is the sane Lenz who forms part of the enduring sense of crisis, the continuity. The Lenz who struggles to express himself in language and finds himself in a dream-like state is the radical Lenz. His experiences in the mountains pose questions surrounding the use of language, the role of art, and notions of reality. Therefore, this Lenz is the more critical and socially engaged Lenz who breaks with the continuity of his former life as a failed poet. By presenting this Lenz as the socially engaged Lenz, Celan also questions ideas surrounding mental illness. It is in fact the seemingly mentally ill Lenz whose decision to go into the mountains is critical of the continuity. This idea will be developed in the discussion of the *Kunstgespräch*. So, when Böschenstein states that 'Celan exploriert den Ort der Dichtung, Ingeborg Bachmann den Ort der Krankheitsbezeugung' (Böschenstein, 2000, p. 262), this distinction is not quite true. In fact, the questioning of mental illness compliments Celan's critical remarks on the continuity, and sheds light on the need to question society, and to radically intercept it with art.

Another critical moment in Büchner's work which Celan discusses in detail in the *Meridian* is Lucile's outburst 'es lebe der König!' in *Dantons Tod* as it marks a moment of poetic rebellion. As Lenz, the former poet's, desire to walk on his head highlights the need for a radical rethinking of the role of art, Lucile's outburst in *Dantons Tod* also represents a break in the artistic continuity. The leaders of the revolutionary forces, Danton and Camille, are both sentenced to death. At the moment when Camille is to go to the guillotine Lucile shouts out 'es lebe der König!', thereby breaking the dramatic continuity of Camille's death, the anticipated course of events. By shouting out this statement in front of the revolutionary forces her death is ensured. Yet because of her unusual relationship with language, this expression is unexpected and contradicts what

the reader already knows about her character. The rupture in the continuity is caused by the reader's inability to prepare for Lucile's outburst or to interpret it in just one way.

Lucile is suddenly bold and confident with language. Celan does not view Lucile's declaration as a demonstration of allegiance to the ancien régime, but rather as an embrace of the majesty of the absurd:

> Gehuldigt wird hier der für die Gegenwart des Menschlichen zeugenden Majestät des Absurden. Das, meine Damen und Herren, hat keinen ein für allemal feststehenden Namen, aber ich glaube, es ist ...Dichtung. (Celan, 1999, p. 8)

According to Celan, this absurd act is what separates art from poetry. Celan states that Lucile's outburst is an act of freedom 'es ist ein Akt der Freiheit. Es ist ein Schritt' (Celan, 1999, p. 3). This meridianal moment, a radical break in the continuity, is a way in which poetry can progress from a state of crisis.

Whilst for the most part of *Lenz*, Lenz suffers from a sensory crisis and speechlessness resulting from his desire to walk on his head, Celan draws our attention to the protagonist's moment of articulation. In the *Meridian*, Celan focuses on the *Kunstgespräch*. This is the part of the novella which breaks away from Lenz's sensory crisis, offering an insight into Lenz the poet before he left for the mountains. Here, the poet regains his voice and narrative agency and speaks coherently and eloquently about his view on art. Notably, this part of Celan's speech follows on from a discussion of *Dantons Tod* where he states that Camille's words '— ach, die Kunst!' can be expressed in a variety of tenses, but for Celan 'ich setze den Akut [des Heutigen]' (Celan, 1999, p. 4). Once again, following the discussion of Lenz's *Kunstgespräch* Celan states 'Meine Damen und Herren, ich habe den Akut gesetzt' (Celan, 1999, p. 5). By placing both examples of these considerations on art in the present tense of today, Celan stresses the relevance of Büchner's thought in the modern day.

In the *Kunstgespräch*, Lenz describes how as he was in the valley the day before, he had witnessed two girls sitting on a rock, one girl was braiding the other girl's hair. He found the image so beautiful that he continues 'man möchte ein Medusenhaupt sein, um so eine Gruppe in Stein verwandeln zu können, und den Leuten zurufen' (Celan, 1999, p. 5). Lenz envisions art as a mimetic representation of nature. Celan emphasizes Büchner's use of the impersonal third person in the narrative 'man möchte ein Medusenhaupt sein,' in order to highlight that Lenz's view does not necessarily reflect Büchner's view on art.

Celan concludes that Büchner would have disagreed with Lenz's vision of art, as he states that this image shows that 'die Kunst bewahrt für [Büchner] auch hier etwas Unheimliches' (Celan, 1999, p. 5). Celan claims that Büchner was also radically questioning the role of art from the perspective of the poet [*Dichter*]:

> Gibt es nicht — so muß ich jetzt fragen —, gibt es nicht bei Georg Büchner, bei dem Dichter der Kreatur, eine vielleicht nur halblaute, vielleicht nur halbbewußte, aber darum nicht minder radikale — oder gerade deshalb im eigentlichsten Sinne radikale In-Frage-Stellung der Kunst, eine In-Frage-Stellung aus dieser Richtung? Eine In-Frage-Stellung, zu der alle heutige Dichtung zurück muß, wenn sie weiter-fragen will? (Celan, 1999, p. 5)

Celan suggests that Büchner uses the *Kunstgespräch* to radically question the role of art, by highlighting the poet's attitude towards art. Celan states that it is this line of questioning that all poetry has to refer back to in order to progress, this is why he locates the meridianal moments in the present tense. These are the questions that poetry always has to refer back to. The meridian is therefore retrospection and continuation; it is the act of looking back to the past in order to move forward. The final line of the quotation combines past, present and future as he asks 'Eine In-Frage-Stellung, zu der alle heutige Dichtung zurück muß, wenn sie weiterfragen will?' (Celan, 1999, p. 5) It is because of the meridianal moments in Büchner's works that Celan is able to claim that 'Die Kunst kommt wieder. Sie kommt in einer anderen Dichtung Georg Büchners [. . .]' (Celan, 1999, p. 2). By looking back to Büchner's works, poetry in Celan's present tense can move into the future. Engaging with poetry is what releases the reader from the continuity and is depicted as setting the reader free.

Notably, Bachmann appears to respond to Celan's claim that Lucile and Lenz's outbursts are acts of freedom in the 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' fragment in *Malina*. 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' also depicts an act of freedom; it is in this part of the novel that the princess describes that the stranger sets her free. In this way, the utopian moment in *Malina* also represents a *Gegenwort*. It signifies the protagonist's momentary freedom from the continuity, the continuity being defined by rationality and a lack of artistic imagination. In the fragment, it is the dark stranger, who represents Celan, who is depicted as setting the princess free: '*daß er um sie klagt und für sie voller Hoffnung gesungen hatte, mit einer nie gehörten Stimme, und daß er gekommen war, um sie zu befreien*' (Bachmann, 1995b, p. 350). The voice that

has never been heard before provides the princess with new insights which break with the old, in such a way, this voice is radical. It is this section of the novel that represents a literary utopia, it is a realm of artistic imagination, which contrasts with post-1945 rational Austrian society. In the *Meridian*, Celan uses the term 'Freisetzung' (Celan, 1999, p. 6) to describe Büchner's poetic writing. He further uses this description to suggest that poetic writing is close to utopia:

> Die Kunst erweitern?
>
> Nein. Sondern geh mit der Kunst in deine allereigenste Enge. Und setze dich frei. Ich bin, auch hier, in Ihrer Gegenwart, diesen Weg gegangen. Es war ein Kreis. Die Kunst, also auch das Medusenhaupt, der Mechanismus, die Automaten, das unheimliche und so schwer zu unterscheidende, letzten Endes vielleicht doch nur *eine* Fremde — die Kunst lebt fort.
>
> Zweimal, bei Luciles "Es lebe der König", und als sich unter Lenz der Himmel als Abgrund auftat, schien die Atemwende da zu sein. Vielleicht auch, als ich auf jenes Ferne und Besetzbare zuzuhalten versuchte, das schließlich ja doch nur in der Gestalt Luciles sichtbar wurde. Und einmal waren wir auch, von der den Dingen und der Kreatur gewidmeten Aufmerksamkeit her, in der Nähe eines Offenen und Freien gelangt. Und zuletzt in die Nähe der Utopie.
>
> (Celan, 1999, pp. 10-11)

In the first paragraph, Celan distinguishes between art and poetry by aligning art with rationality, 'der Mechanismus, die Automaten, das unheimliche'. Here, he associates artistic continuity with rationality. The distinction made between *Dichtung* and rationality is also found in much of Bachmann's writing, including *Malina* and *Undine geht*.

The following paragraph focusses on *Dichtung*. In the second paragraph, the images that Celan uses in his discussion of poetry include the 'Atemwende' and 'Utopie'. Hans-Georg Gadamer associates the breath-turn with Celan's poetics of silence: 'More than anything, this is the "breath-turn", the sensuous experience of the silent, calm moment between inhaling and exhaling' (Gadamer, 1997, p. 73). More than this, it signifies man's interaction with reality, a life-sustaining dependence. It is the holistic relationship with reality that is achieved through self-realization following the connection with the Du, the idea that Celan sought to explain through the metaphor of the message in a bottle. Celan follows this section of the *Meridian* with a reference to his short story *Gespräch*

im Gebirg, a story which supports the idea that connecting with a Du results in a holistic and peaceful relationship between man and reality:

> Und vor einem Jahr, in Erinnerung an eine versäumte Begegnung
> im Engadin, brachte ich eine kleine Geschichte zu Papier, in der ich
> einem Menschen "wie Lenz" durchs Gebirg gehen ließ.
> Ich hatte mich, das eine wie das andere Mal, von einem "20. Jänner",
> von meinem "20. Jänner", hergeschrieben.
> Ich bin...mir selbst begegnet. (Celan, 1999, p. 11)

Gespräch im Gebirg is a short story about an encounter between a big Jew and a little Jew, which Celan claims results in self-realization. In the above extract, Celan mentions Engadin, which is a reference to a missed encounter with Adorno, as Szondi had arranged for the two to meet there in the summer of 1959 (Felstiner, 2001, p. 139). This reference highlights the fact that Celan hoped that Adorno would engage with the text, perhaps even assuming the position of the Du. Moreover, the comparison that is made between *Gespräch im Gebirg* and *Lenz* suggests that *Gespräch im Gebirg* concerns Celan's considerations on art. The story depicts an encounter and a conversation between a Jewish father and a son. Moreover, it deals with the encounter of an Ich and a Du. Amir Eshel suggests that Celan's encounter with the other in his work implies that Celan saw poetry as having an ethical function:

> To be sure, Celan's *Meridian* notes, and indeed his entire oeuvre, in-
> dicate that he was not only well aware of such issues, but that quite
> some time before the discourse of the other became a staple of aca-
> demic debate in the wake of post-colonial and gender theory, Celan
> envisioned poetry as a form of dialogue, encounter, and provocation
> that avoids the reduction of the other to a single realm of identi-
> fication and that thus constantly points toward a nonutopian, yet
> decisively ethical horizon. (Eshel, 2004, p. 59)

Celan states in the *Meridian* that his poetry is directed towards utopia. He even writes 'Toposforschung? Gewiß! Aber im Lichte des zu Erforschenden: Im Lichte der Utopie!' (Celan, 1999, p. 10) Moreover, as became apparent in the analysis of the message in a bottle, Celan's other is an unknown who Celan engages in dialogue with. It is the attempt to connect with this other that brings poetry closer towards utopia. Gadamer describes Celan's use of the other as:

Who the You is cannot be determined because it hasn't been determined. The address has an aim, but it has no object — other than perhaps who faces up to the address by answering.
(Gadamer, 1997, p. 69)

Celan's other is not the Other used by gender and post-colonial theorists as even the notion of the Ich in Celan's poetry is ambiguous. The Ich can be interpreted in a variety of ways, most obviously it can be interpreted as Celan's voice. However, it has the potential to encompass more voices than just that of the poet. Gadamer's analysis of Celan's poetry reveals that:

[. . .] "I", "you", and "we" are pronounced in an utterly direct, shadowy-uncertain and constantly changing way. This I is not only the poet, but even more so "that individual" [*jener Einzelne*], as Kierkegaard named the one who is each of us.
(Gadamer, 1997, p. 69)

Often in Celan's work, the Du is an ambiguous signifier as it does not signify a particular person or object until it has been assumed by whoever chooses to engage with the Ich. Because of this, Celan's notion of the other has no real sense of the ethical. Who assumes the position of the Du is unknown, yet the potential of the Du to be assumed by someone in the future can also allow for the possibility of Celan's notion of utopia through this encounter. The ambiguity of the Du also accounts for the uncertainty surrounding this utopian solution that is stressed in Celan's speeches.

A sense of otherness in the terms that Eshel identifies may have contributed to Celan's sense of enduring crisis, which may have influenced his conviction of the need for a radical break in artistic continuity. Following 1945, Celan still expressed feelings of persecution, particularly following Günter Blöcker's criticism of his work based on his origins. In a letter written by Celan on 17th October 1959 to Bachmann, Celan attaches an article written by Blöcker for the Berlin *Tagesspiegel* which criticizes Celan's ability to write in German based on his heritage:

Celan hat der deutschen Sprache gegenüber eine grössere Freiheit als die meisten seiner dichtenden Kollegen. Das mag an seiner Herkunft liegen. Der Kommunikationscharakter der Sprache hemmt und belastet ihn weniger als andere. (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 124)

For Celan, anti-Semitism still held a significant place in the hegemonic discourse of the post-1945 era. Blöcker's remarks regarding Celan's use of German resulted in a period of crisis for Celan. Failing to get a sufficiently sympathetic response from Bachmann regarding this affair, Celan wrote to her again a month later in November 1959:

> Ich bin in Sorge um Dich, Ingeborg —
> Aber Du mußt mich verstehn: mein Notschrei — Du hörst ihn nicht, bist nicht bei Dir (wo ich Dich vermute), bist … in der Literatur.
> Und Max Frisch, der sich diesen 'Fall' — der ja ein Schrei ist! — literarisch interessant macht … Schreib also, bitte, oder schick mir — telegraphisch — Deine Telephonnummer in der Kirchgasse.
> (Ruf bitte nicht an: wir haben Besuch: Rolf Schroers …)
> Paul (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 128)

In this letter, written in mid-November 1959 Celan finds himself still confronted by anti-Semitism. This letter follows a letter that Max Frisch sent to Celan on 6th November 1959 following Celan's initial letter about Blöcker's remarks:

> Seien Sie nicht böse, lieber Paul Celan, wenn ich mich daran erin-nere, wie kränkend das öffentliche Missverständnis ist auch dann, wenn der Verdacht, dass es aus Antisemitismus kommt, nicht an-wendbar ist. HITLEREI, HITLEREI, HITLEREI, DIE SCHIRM-MUETZEN! schreiben Sie. Ich finde die Kritik von Blöcker nicht gut, nicht frei von zwielichtigen Wendungen, das gebe Ich ihnen zu, wenn ich das andre auch sagen darf: Ich finde Ihre Entgegnung, ob-schon sie ein Meisterstück sprachlichen Scharfsinns ist, auch nicht gut. (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 171)

The desperation in the tone of Celan's letter is emphasized by the repetition of hyphens and ellipses. Moreover, this repetition gives the impression of a striving either to find the words or to reach Bachmann during this episode of personal crisis. The state of emergency is heightened by his insistence that this episode is not a 'Fall', but it is instead a 'Schrei'. The events themselves cannot be articulated in words, instead they are depicted as a scream, as an immediate and instinctive signal of a state of crisis.

This letter to Bachmann was written only shortly before Celan wrote the *Meridian*, and in the same year that he gave the *Meridian* speech, his short story *Gespräch im Gebirg* (1960) was published. The use of the encounter in

the story shows an engagement with Buber's works, as the story contains images from Buber's 'Daniel'. James Lyon notes that the work was likely to have been inspired by Buber's *Gespräch in den Bergen* (Lyon, 1971, p. 110). Additionally, the story has a marked similarity to Büchner's *Lenz*, which Celan references in the narrative '[...] die Juden, die da kamen, wie Lenz, durchs Gebirg, du Groß und ich Klein [...]' (Celan, 2002, p. 8). In the following section of this chapter, Bachmann's *Undine geht* will be examined taking into account her reading and interpretation of *Gespräch im Gebirg* and the *Meridian*.

The depiction of the Jew and the son of the Jew in the mountains begins at night fall. The story thus begins from a point of darkness, which emphasizes both the risk and the uncertainty involved in leaving home and making the encounter. The story opens with a range of perspectives, and uses a variety of pronouns to refer to the encounter:

> ging der Jud, der Jud und Sohn eines Juden, und mit ihm ging sein Name, der unaussprechliche, ging und kam, kam dahergezockelt, ließ sich hören, kam am Stock, kam über den Stein, hörst du mich, ich bins, ich, ich und der, den du hörst, zu hören vermeinst, ich und der andre — (Celan, 2002, p. 8)

The pronouns oscillate, altering the perspectives and the narration, thereby confusing who each pronoun refers to. Although, the story begins by identifying that there are two Jews who set out to encounter one another, no names are provided, making an encounter with a known other impossible. Following the encounter of the small Jew with the big Jew, the next two paragraphs personify objects. A conversation is had in silence with objects in the world:

> [...] hieß seinen Stock schweigen vor dem Stock des Juden Groß. So schwieg auch der Stein, und es war still im Gebirg, wo sie gingen, der und jener. Still wars also, still dort oben im Gebirg. Nicht lang wars still, denn wenn der Jud daherkommt und begegnet einem zweiten, dann ists bald vorbei mit dem Schweigen, auch im Gebirg. Denn der Jud und die Natur, das ist zweierlei, immer noch, auch heute, auch hier. (Celan, 2002, p. 8)

As Lyon points out Buber employs the same image of a walking stick in his foreword to his philosophical treatise *Daniel*. Here, the walking stick serves to demonstrate the significance of dialogue as a means of contact between humans and objects in the world: 'By pressing his cane against an ash tree, he perceives

a kind of contact between two separate beings and an awareness of self which dialogical speech produces in human experience' (Lyon, 1971, p. 111). Celan associates the Jews with nature, so the encounter with the other Jew leads to an encounter with the objects in the world. There is a language-less conversation that takes place between the Jew and the world, evoking Buber's notion of the attainment of the *Du-Welt* resulting in a holistic relationship between the Ich and the world. This is depicted as a type of communicative silence:

> es schweigt der Stock, es schweigt der Stein, und das Schweigen ist kein Schweigen, kein Wort ist da verstummt und kein Satz, eine Pause ists bloß, eine Wortlücke ists, eine Leerstelle ists [...] Die Geschwätzigen! Haben sich, auch jetzt, da die Zunge blöd gegen die Zähne stößt und die Lippe sich nicht rundet, etwas zu sagen! Gut, lass sie reden ... (Celan, 2002, p. 8)

Celan creates a distinction between this holistic language and the language used in the known world, the equivalent of the reality Lenz came from before he entered the mountains. In this way, Celan's distinction between types of language is a distinction between the language used in the continuity and the language used in poetry:

> für wen ist sie denn gedacht, die Erde, nicht für dich, sag ich, ist sie gedacht, und nicht für mich -, eine Sprache, je nun, ohne Ich und ohne Du, lauter Er, lauter Es, verstehst du, lauter Sie, und nichts als das. (Celan, 2002, p. 10)

It is the water that drips from the glaciers that is associated with this language, the language of the earth. With this in mind, the poetic reality is similar to Lenz's dream-like reality. When he escapes his known world and collapses into his state of insanity, or a dream-like state, his former ideas about art which formed part of the continuity, are lost. In the mountains, he finds language problematic. The two Jews discussing language in *Gespräch im Gebirg* have travelled far from this reality: 'Versteh ich, versteh ich. Bin ja gekommen von weit, bin ja gekommen wie du.' The language of silence is a means of communicating without using a corrupt language.

The story ends like a meridian, it ends back at the start, as the first paragraph is almost repeated in full:

> wir, die Juden, die da kamen, wie Lenz, durchs Gebirg, du Groß und ich Klein, du, der Geschwätzige, und ich, der Geschwätzige, wir mit

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> den Stöcken, wir mit unsern Namen, den unaussprechlichen, wir mit
> unserm Schatten, dem eignen und dem fremden, du hier und ich hier
> — (Celan, 2002, p. 12)

The key difference between the end of the story and the start is that at the end a greater sense of unity is evoked by the descriptions and use of pronouns. The final line of the penultimate paragraph links to the final paragraph with a hyphen. The use of the pronoun Wir turns into an Ich:

> ich hier, ich; ich, der ich dir all das sagen kann, sagen hätt können;
> der ich dirs nich sag und nicht gesagt hab; ich mit dem Türkenbund
> links, ich mit der Rapunzel, ich mit der heruntergebrannten, der
> Kerze, ich mit dem Tag, ich mit den Tagen, ich hier und ich dort,
> ich, begleitet vielleicht – jetzt! — von der Liebe der Nichtgeliebten,
> ich auf dem Weg hier zu mir, oben. (Celan, 2002, p. 12)

The story ends back at the start, yet at the same time maintains a journey towards self-realization. It is the reflection on the past, the dialogue with the unnamed Du, and the journey forwards, that result in the ich moving towards an elevated sense of self. A sense of self that transcends the known reality. By the end of the story, there is no clear identification between Ich and Du, the dialogue turns the Du and Ich into a Wir, and then eventually at the end, the focus is placed back on the Ich.

3.2   Reading *Undine geht* as a Meridian

Celan's idea that poetry sets out to make an encounter is re-articulated in Bachmann's short story *Undine geht*, which serves as a literary response to Celan's *Meridian* speech. Bachmann's description of the need for poetic renewal, something that 'einmal einmünden kann, dort wo wieder Kunst kommt. Hinzukommt, gleich hinzukommt' (Bachmann, 1995c, p. 174) is discussed further in her short story *Undine geht*.[1] *Undine geht* functions similarly to the 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' fragment in *Malina*, as it will be shown to also function as a *Gegenwort*.

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[1] In Bachmann's early draft for her Georg Büchner prize speech she writes: 'Gebt uns neue. Gebt uns das Neue, nicht die Reproduktionen, nicht die Revolutionen, nicht die Reaktionen, nicht die Reproduktionen in Gestalt von () gebt uns etwas, was so lustig und so ernst ist, so dumm und so tausendmal klüger als alles zuvor, als alles zuvor, laßt uns auf dem Kopf stehen, auf einem kunstfernen Weg, der einmal einmünden kann, dort wo wieder Kunst kommt' (Bachmann, 1995c, p. 174).

Undine geht is a story based on the water nymph trope; a story which originated in the fourteenth-century Stauffenberg saga and which has been reformulated in literature to the present day. *Undine geht* depicts the breakdown of the water nymph's relationship to man, and her return to the water. *Undine geht* has often been read as a text which portrays the subordination of woman to man and as a discussion of the hegemonic gender binary, as the cause of Undine's return to the water (Baackmann, 1995; Eigler and Kord, 1997; Markotic, 2008). The discussion of this binary as an example of woman's problematic relationship to man has been somewhat overstated, as in an interview held on 5th November 1964, Bachmann claims to not even consider Undine as a woman:

> Sie ist meinetwegen ein Selbstbekenntnis. Nur glaube ich, dass es darüber schon genug Missverständnisse gibt. Denn die Leser und auch die Hörer identifizieren ja sofort — die Erzählung ist ja in der Ich-Form geschrieben — dieses Ich mit dem Autor. Das ist keineswegs so. Die Undine ist keine Frau, auch kein Lebewesen, sondern, um es mit Büchner zu sagen, "die Kunst, ach die Kunst". (Bachmann et al., 1983, p. 46)

As Sigrid Weigel notes, this is not the voice of a woman, but of art (Weigel, 1999, p. 133). Bachmann's reference to Büchner in this interview suggests an engagement with Celan's reading of Büchner's works, especially as Büchner's 'die Kunst, ach die Kunst' is given considerable attention in the *Meridian. Undine geht* was aired for the first time on the radio just five months after Celan gave his speech in 1960. Bachmann considers Undine to signify art and, moreover, according to Bachmann she is 'meinetwegen ein Selbstbekenntnis' (Bachmann et al., 1983, p. 46), which is similar to Celan's claim that by writing *Gespräch im Gebirg*: 'Ich bin . . . mir selbst begegnet' (Celan, 1999, p. 11). The idea of art functioning as a process of self-recognition resonates with Celan's vision of poetry. In scholarship, very little has been written on the relationship between Bachmann's *Undine geht* and Celan's *Meridian* speech and *Gespräch im Gebirg*.

Dagmar Kann-Coomann examines the interrelation of the *Meridian* and *Undine geht*, and notes that a conversation takes place between the two texts:

> Angesichts dieser inhaltlichen Nähe wie auch der zeitlichen Koinzidenz beider Texte erscheint es naheliegend, zwischen beiden Texten einen internen Kommunikationszussamenhang zu vermuten und Bachmanns Erzählung als implizite Stellungnahme zum *Meridian* zu verstehen. (Kann-Coomann, 2000, p. 250)

Weigel also considers *Undine geht* to be a response to Celans *Meridian* and that it forms part of a dialogue:

> Letzlich nicht zu klären ist dagegen die Vermutung, der Entwurf antworte auch auf Paul Celans "Meridian"-Rede (1960), d.h. auf die darin entworfene Poetologie: das Gedicht, das sich an ein Gegenüber, an einen Anderen richtet. (Weigel, 1999, p. 143)

In *Undine geht*, Bachmann constructs a literary dialogue with Celan which considers the need for poetic renewal after 1945. A reading of *Undine geht* with the *Meridian* provides insights into the points at which their thought intersects and diverges on issues surrounding poetic renewal.

The first description of art in the *Meridian* which also refers to Büchner's *Dantons Tod*, can be read as an outline for Bachmann's personification of art in the form of Undine:

> Die Kunst, das ist, Sie erinnern sich, ein marionettenhaftes, jambisch-fünffüßiges und — diese Eigenschaft ist auch, durch den Hinweis auf Pygmalion und sein Geschöpf, mythologisch belegt — kinderloses Wesen. (Celan, 1999, p. 2)

Celan begins with a reference to Büchner's *Dantons Tod* as a memory, introducing the problem of art, as it was discussed between Camille and Danton in the second act of *Dantons Tod*, bringing it into the present tense. Notably, his suggestion that art is puppet-like associates art with the artistic continuity that he criticizes throughout the speech. Celan considers that both he and Büchner radically question the role of art. In Büchner's work it is Camille who discusses the role of art:

> Camille: Setzt die Leute aus dem Theater auf die Gasse: die erbärm-liche Wirklichkeit! — Sie vergessen ihren Herrgott über seinen schlechten Kopisten. Von der Schöpfung, die glühend, brausend und leucht-end, um und in ihnen, sich jeden Augenblick neu gebiert, hören und sehen sie nichts. Sie gehen ins Theater, lesen Gedichte und Ro-mane, schneiden den Fratzen darin die Gesichter nach und sagen zu Gottes Geschöpfen: wie gewöhnlich! — Die Griechen wußten, was sie sagten, wenn sie erzählten, Pygmalions Statue sei wohl lebendig geworden, habe aber keine Kinder bekommen.
> (Büchner, 1971, p. 37)

Camille distinguishes between artistic experience and reality, as art serves as a means of escaping the horrific reality that exists outside. However, Camille then praises the Greeks for combining art with reality by referring to Pygmalion. In such a way, Büchner comments on art that is distanced from reality, or which is simply a bad copy of reality. Maurice Benn claims that Büchner was taking issue with the classicist's idealization of art and their unrealistic depictions of reality (Benn, 1978). At the very start of his speech, Celan brings Danton and Camille's conversation into dialogue with the problem of poetic renewal in the post-war era:

> In dieser Gestalt bildet sie den Gegenstand einer Unterhaltung, die in einem Zimmer, also nicht in der Conciergerie stattfindet, einer Unterhaltung, die, das spüren wir, endlos fortgesetzt werden könnte, wenn nichts dazwischenkäme.
> Es kommt etwas dazwischen. (Celan, 1999, p. 2)

Celan suggests that this notion of art could have been repeated over and over again throughout history, maintaining the continuity. He states, however, that something ruptures this continuity. He claims that art will return and that it does return in other works of Büchner. Suggesting that art will return in the future in works from the past emphasizes his notion of the meridian, and the relevance that he found in Büchner's work for the present state of crisis. The initial reference to the Pygmalion motif throws the relationship between reality and art into question, as the reference to Pygmalion suggests that art forms part of the reality.

Like Pygmalion, Undine is a man-made 'Kinderloses Wesen' (Celan, 1999, p. 2). Undine is a product of man's desire: 'Doch vergeßt nicht, daß ihr mich gerufen habt in die Welt, daß euch geträumt hat von mir' (Bachmann, 1961). Like Celan's and Büchner's reference to a 'Kinderloses Wesen' (Celan, 1999, p. 2), Undine is equally childless 'Ich habe keine Kinder von euch' (Bachmann, 1961). Undine's lack of children highlights the near impossibility of artistic reproduction against a backdrop of crisis and continuing crisis. In a similar way to how Büchner sought to break with the continuity in his writing, Bachmann and Celan must consider how art is to respond to a horrific reality. Simply replicating or idealizing reality in artistic form is strongly criticized, as Celan criticized Lenz's desire to replicate the image of nature in the *Kunstgespräch*. Bachmann's use of the Pygmalion motif however relates more closely to the idealization of art. Notably, the Pygmalion motif, praised by Camille, suggests

that a desired and idealized artistic image is brought into reality. This image opposes Celan's suggestion of the role of poetry in his letter to Bachmann in which poetry serves as 'Das Dokument einer Krise, wenn Du willst — aber was wäre Dichtung, wenn sie nicht auch das wäre, und zwar radikal?' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 159) Rather than creating a copy of nature or idealizing a natural form, the role of poetry is to break with the continuity rather than replicating what exists in reality.

In the *Meridian*, Celan claims that 'Die Kunst kommt wieder' (Celan, 1999, p. 2) whilst Undine, conversely, expresses her inability to return to man's reality: 'Ich werde nie wiederkommen, nie wieder Ja sagen und Du und Ja' (Bachmann, 1961, p. 159). Undine is unable to return, to speak affirmatively, or to make a connection with an 'ansprechbares Du' (Celan, 1958b, p. 11). Undine depicts a profound disillusionment with the possibility of establishing a dialogue that results in self-awareness. It is art who has the narrative voice and expresses her disillusionment with man's reality. In this way, Bachmann hints at man's inability to connect meaningfully with art. As was seen in *Malina*, man and rationality were portrayed as losing their connection with art as a result of man losing his sense of self. In a similar vein, art finds herself unable to connect with man, and unable to exist in man's reality ordered by rationality and continuity. Notably, Undine is a water nymph who can refuse to participate in man's reality and return to her watery realm.

Undine geht appears to have some stylistic similarities to the *Meridian* speech. Where Celan begins his speech with 'Meine Damen und Herren!' (Celan, 1999, p. 2) Undine begins with 'Ihr Menschen! Ihr Ungeheuer!' (Bachmann, 1961, p. 176) and Celan's repetition of this introduction throughout his speech is echoed by Bachmann's insertion of 'Ihr Ungeheuer!' throughout the narrative. In addition, Undine is the first person narrative voice, and the narrative takes the form of a speech-like monologue. The object [art] of Celan's speech assumes the first-person voice; Bachmann empowers this object of Celan's speech with narrative agency.

Undine, as an embodiment of the Pygmalion motif, is at once man's object of desire and a symbol of man's creative power. As she claims in the story, she is man's creation and she appears in his dreams. By gendering art female, Bachmann turns the post-war crisis of poetic production and representation into a love story in which the distortion of the hegemonic gender binary holds a mirror up to the crisis. Man is the creator of this idealized image and he simultaneously desires his creation. This relationship between man and art

cannot be sustained as he cannot desire his artistic production when linked to a horrific reality. In Celan's terms, this kind of art represents *Kunst* as opposed to *Dichtung*, it perpetuates the continuity.

Undine states that there was a time when she loved man: 'Ich liebte ihn. Wir standen auf einem Nordbahnhof, und der Zug ging vor Mitternacht. Ich winkte nicht; ich machte mit der Hand ein Zeichen für das Ende' (Bachmann, 1961, p. 181). She also states that she loved a man named Hans who signifies the whole of mankind. The depiction of this relationship contrasts with Celan's depiction of the relationship of the Jewish character to mankind in *Gespräch im Gebirg*:

> und sie liebten mich nicht und ich liebte sie nicht, denn ich war einer, und wer will Einen lieben, und sie waren viele, mehr noch als da herumlagen um mich, und wer will alle lieben können, und ich verschweigs dir nicht, ich liebte sie nicht, sie, die mich nicht lieben konnten (Celan, 2002, p. 12)

Undine speaks from the perspective of art, and from this perspective, suggests that man was once capable of interacting with art. In *Undine geht*, man's subordinate enacts a rebellion and confronts the reality that threatens her existence. In this way, Bachmann responds to Celan's 'die Kunst kommt wieder' (Celan, 1999, p. 2) by highlighting the difficulty of finding an adequate artistic medium to connect with man. The female voice enacts a rebellion by assuming the narrative agency, which is reminiscent of Lucile's counter-discursive act, her *Gegenwort*, that Celan praised in the *Meridian*.

Before Celan discusses Lucile's counter-discourse in *Dantons Tod*, he refers to breath as a symbol of poetic renewal: 'wer vermöchte hier, im Bereich dieser Dichtung, daran zu zweifeln? —, und zugleich auch Atem, das heißt Richtung und Schicksal' (Celan, 1999, p. 3). As was seen in the discussion of the breath-turn, the act of breathing is the interaction between art and man. However, it is also an expression of silence. Celan associates the breath metaphor with the moment in *Dantons Tod* when Lucile defies the narrative continuity: 'Lucile nimmt Sprache als Gestalt und Richtung und Atem wahr' (Celan, 1999, p. 6). Bachmann makes this breath the life force of Undine, and therefore art's sustenance:

> Ich habe keinen Unterhalt gebraucht, keine Beteuerung und Versicherung, nur Luft, Nachtluft, Küstenluft, Grenzluft, um immer

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wieder Atem holen zu können für neue Worte, neue Küsse, für ein
unaufhörliches Geständnis: Ja. Ja. (Bachmann, 1961, p. 177)

Bachmann depicts the breath image with the love relationship to demonstrate
how poetic renewal is essential for sustaining the relationship between man and
art. This image signifies a call for a radical rethinking of the place and role
of art. It is also a gust of wind that announces Undine's arrival on land at
a time of misunderstanding. Bachmann's portrayal of the water nymph trope
can be read as a counter-discursive act, a *Gegenwort* in literature, as by giving
the object of the story the narrative agency, Bachmann defies the traditional
literary continuity of this story. As Lucile masters narrative agency, altering
the course of events, so does Undine. In this way, Undine's claim that she will
not return is not absolute. The *Gegenwort* is the break in artistic continuity
that Celan calls for. At the start of the story Bachmann even visually depicts
Undine's encounter with man as creating an intersection, a rupture in man's
reality:

Immer wenn ich durch die Lichtung kam und die Zweige sich öffneten,
wenn die Ruten mir das Wasser von den Armen schlugen, die Blätter
mir die Tropfen von den Haaren leckten, traf ich auf einen, der Hans
hieß. (Bachmann, 1961, p. 176)

Bachmann creates a binary distinction between the masculine world of reason
on land and the feminine world of art in the water. The two realms appear
at first to be unreconcilable as Undine wishes to return to the water, which is
untainted by man's reason. Moreover, her relationship with water and language
is the opposite of the depiction in *Gespräch im Gebirg*. In Celan's story, the
water represents the language of man, whereas in *Undine geht* water is the
language of the water nymph. Celan describes the water image as:

[. . .] in der Mitte steht ein Wasser, und das Wasser ist grün, und das
Grüne ist weiß, und das Weiße kommt von noch weiter oben, kommt
von den Gletschern, man könnte, aber man solls nicht, sagen, das
ist die Sprache, die hier gilt, das Grüne mit dem Weißen drin, eine
Sprache, nicht für dich und nicht für mich —, eine Sprache, je nun,
ohne Ich und ohne Du, lauter Er, lauter Es, verstehst du, lauter Sie,
und nichts als das. (Celan, 2002, p. 12)

Bachmann's realms are the water reality and man's reality on land. Undine cre-
ates a *Gegenwort* when she leaves the water to criticize the hegemonic discourse

and master narrative that has restrained her, as she assumes the same position as Lucile:

> Auch aufbegehren konnte die Sprache durch dich, irre werden oder mächtig werden. Alles hast du mit den Worten und Sätzen gemacht, hast dich verständigt mit ihnen oder hast sie gewandelt, hast etwas neu benannt; und die Gegenstände, die weder die geraden noch die ungeraden Worte verstehen, bewegten sich beinahe davon.
> (Bachmann, 1961, p. 185)

She pays particular attention to the role of language as a vehicle for shaping reality. She identifes an inter-relation of man's hegemony, language and reality. Man creates a reality in which Undine cannot survive, therefore their relationship is depicted as a failing love relationship. Bachmann reverses the image used in *Gespräch im Gebirg* as the water realm becomes the space for an untainted form of expression in contrast to the corrupted language of reason on land.

In *Undine geht* the movement towards an encounter is depicted as a struggle. In the same way as in a speech, the text is in the form of a monologue and the only dialogue in the story cannot be sustained. The dialogue itself serves to depict the increasing distance between man and art, between empirical reality and artistic reality:

> Guten Abend.
> Guten Abend.
> Wie weit ist es zu dir?
> Weit ist es, weit.
> Und weit ist es zu mir. (Bachmann, 1961, p. 177)

The dialogue is based on Undine's claim that she will not be returning and is going back to the water. This is again a reversal of what is found in *Gespräch im Gebirg*. In Celan's short story the encounter is achieved by the two Jews having arrived at the encounter from a distance:

> Bist gekommen von weit, bist gekommen hierher. . .
> Bin ich. Bin ich gekommen wie du.
> Weiß ich. (Celan, 2002, p. 12)

It is at that point that the two Jews discuss the water and that it is associated with the language of man. Undine however has to return to the water as the dialogue has failed, as the encounter with man is unsustainable. Undine claims

that she will not return, which contrasts further with Celan's 'Die Kunst kommt wieder' in the *Meridian*. Dagmar Kann-Cooman concludes that Bachmann's response to the *Meridian* serves as a statement of her turn away from poetry towards prose writing:

> Verslltehen wir *Undine geht* als Deklaration eines weitgreifenden Wechsels in Bachmanns Schreiben und beachten wir gleichzeitig die große inhaltliche und zeitliche Nähe der Erzählung zum *Meridian*, so wird es möglich, hierin eine Erklärung des vollzogenen Perspektivenwechsels an die Adresse des langjährigen Freundes Paul Celan zu sehen. (Kann-Coomann, 2000, p. 257)

The problem with this reading of *Undine geht* in relation to the *Meridian* is that, on the one hand, *Undine geht* does not end with a total renunciation of art. Notably, Bachmann does not appear to make the same distinction between *Kunst* and *Dichtung* as Celan does. In fact, she refers to Undine as *Kunst*: 'Die Undine ist keine Frau, auch kein Lebewesen, sondern, um es mit Büchner zu sagen, "die Kunst, ach die Kunst"' (Bachmann et al., 1983, p. 46). In addition, recent research into Bachmann's unpublished poetic drafts by scholars including Hans Höller, Arturo Larcati, Isolde Schiffermüller and Áine McMurtry demonstrate that Bachmann continued to write poetry into the nineteen-sixties (Höller, 1994; Lacarti and Schiffermüller, 2010; McMurtry, 2012). Thus, *Undine geht* cannot represent a turn away from poetic writing. At the end of *Undine geht* there is no absolute ending, the story remains open to the possibility of Undine's return. Like Celan's message in a bottle metaphor, this return is something that can be hoped for, but not guaranteed:

> Beinahe verstummt,
> beinahe noch
> den Ruf
> hörend.
>
> Komm. Nur einmal.
> Komm. (Bachmann, 1961, p. 186)

The use of 'Beinahe verstummt' emphasizes that there is the possibility of art's return, the story does not end hopelessly. Bachmann's use of dialogic and monologic forms in the text suggest an affinity with Celan's poetics. Undine is similar to the message in a bottle as she moves between land and water. As was

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explored in *Malina*, National Socialism and Austria's failure to acknowledge what had happened presented art with a crisis. In *Malina* art appears in a moment of utopia, in *Undine geht* there is a clearer call for poetic renewal, as Undine stresses the difficulty of moving between realms. Bachmann's statement '[Undine] ist meinetwegen ein Selbstbekenntnis' combined with her reference to Du and her use of the dialogic form, suggests that *Undine geht* engages with Celan's poetic vision as it is set out in the *Meridian*. Art should be capable of bringing about a recognition of self, and in Bachmann's portrayal it seems that this recognition of self will only be possible once art is able to re-establish a dialogue with man and reality.

Chapter 4

Liebe ist ein Kunstwerk: A Poetics of Correspondence

Whilst Bachmann and Celan's poetics have been studied in their poetry and prose, they have received little attention in other written forms. In this chapter, their poetics will be considered in both their poetry and their letters. It will be argued that Bachmann and Celan's poetic and epistolary dialogues construct a poetics of correspondence. Celan's poetry is famous for its attempt to connect with an unknown as it directs itself towards an unnamed Du (Kästner, 1958), and as was seen in the previous chapters, Bachmann's literature is also concerned with the *Flaschenpost* poetics expressed in Celan's Bremen speech. Because of their disillusionment with the reality of post-war Europe, including the continuation of fascism and anti-semitism into the post-war era, their writing seeks out alternatives to this reality, arguably utopian alternatives, as a way of overcoming an enduring present state of crisis. As has been seen, both writers seek to express themselves in a way that is not absolute, but in a way that moves away from the empircal present tense whilst not losing sight of the past. As was outlined in the *Meridian*, poetry has the task of remembering the past whilst striving into the future. In these ways, their poetics are not too dissimilar from the function of a letter, the material document moves from the writer's present to connect with another in the future at the risk of loss or destruction. Moreover, the letter's meaning or the significance of the message may change over the course of the letter's journey.

Bachmann and Celan appear to construct a poetics of correspondence, as the

poetic aim is to make an encounter with another in the future. In this chapter, some of Bachmann and Celan's poetry of the 1950s will be analysed with the aim of comparing the use of language in the poems with the language used in the letters that Bachmann and Celan exchanged between 1948 and 1967. As some of the letters share motifs and themes that form part of Bachmann and Celan's dialogue in their poetry, such as the rescue metaphor which was discussed in chapter 2.3, this chapter will consider if the letters can also be considered literary.

On 7th December 2013 a conference was held at the Austrian Embassy in Paris on the subject of the poetic import of the letters. At this conference Madeln Reimer put forward the convincing argument that letters are literary texts based on Adorno's claim that the writing subject in a letter is not quite an accurate representation of the self, that it is almost a fictional representation of a self, 'das Ich im Brief hat bereits etwas Scheinhaftes':

> [i]n einer gesellschaftlichen Gesamtverfassung, die jeden Einzelnen zur Funktion herabsetzt, [. . .] keiner länger legitimiert [ist], so im Brief von sich selbst zu berichten, als wäre er noch der unerfasste Einzelne, wie der Brief es doch sagt: das Ich im Brief hat bereits etwas Scheinhaftes. (Adorno, 1974)

The argument that Adorno puts forward is that the Ich constructed in the letter is not quite an accurate representation of the real person. According to Adorno, it is not legitimate to speak of the self as an individual; the self in the letter is simply the appearance of a self. This line of argument is similar to the arguments quoted in chapter one by Guillén that the letter is a fictional text. Because of the nature of reciprocity, the letter has something fictional about it, as in the letter the writer constructs an image of themselves for the reader. As was seen in the first chapter Peter Michelsen claimed that letters aren't necessarily literary as fictional accounts are commonly constructed in everyday discourse:

> Auf der anderen Seite sind auch in der Alltagssprache Fiktionen aller Art — in Form von Lügen, Phantasien, Wunschträumen, politischen Versprechungen in Wahlreden, Anpreisungen in der Werbung, usw. — durchaus nicht selten, ohne daß diese willkürlichen oder unwillkürlichen Erfindung deswegen schon literarischen Rang einnehmen. (Michelsen, 1990, p. 149)

However, Michelsen's claims don't take into account the effect of reciprocity on

the construct of the subject in the letter, as Adorno's do. Reimer argues that this appearance-like depiction of the self makes the letter literary. Moreover, she notes that Bachmann exploits this relationship between the self and the letter in *Malina*:

> Denn auch diesen ist eine poetologische Ebene eingeschrieben, die Aufschluss über die Literarizität der Brief-Texte gibt und somit neben einer pragmatischen Lesart eine literarische ermöglicht, die in engem Zusammenhang mit *Malina* steht. (Reimer, 2014, p. 113)

However, as was explored in the first chapter, from the perspective of theorists, such as Stanley or Bohnenkamp and Wiethölter, letters are bound to their temporal and spatial dynamic. Real letters act as letters in the moments of exchange, surrounded by the sense of anticipation associated with the act of sending and receiving. So, letters in literary texts are simply images of letters that exploit the practical function of real letters for literary effect. For letters to be literary themselves, the language used would have to be intentionally literary when the letter is being written. These considerations suggest that Guillén's argument that letters have the potential to become literary in a later historical period does not work, as letters exist under specific temporal and spatial circumstances. So, if the letters were to become literary in a later historical period, they would no longer be letters but literary texts that have the appearance of a letter. The experience of the letter, including the sense of anticipation, is lost. There thus appear to be two categories in which letters can be considered literary. Either they are intentionally literary when written by their author, or they become literary in the future and act as literary texts.

Many of Bachmann and Celan's letters have the practical function of conveying a message or arranging a meeting, but many also contain features which may be considered literary. For example, some of the motifs and themes exchanged in their poetry are also found in the letters, such as the poppy motif and the themes of light and dark. In addition, Bachmann and Celan exchanged many of their letters in the same way as a volume of poems instead of entrusting them to the post. As their published works are associated with a struggle to find an adequate mode of expression, it needs to be considered if the language used in the letters contains similar strategies for overcoming the problem of expression after Auschwitz. It could even be considered that the letters themselves serve the purposes of Bachmann and Celan's poetics of correspondence, as the letter strives to make contact with another.

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In their attempt to escape the reality of the post-1945 era, Bachmann and Celan's writing develops solutions directed towards utopia. The dream of utopia is a way of positioning poetry against the reality they were living in. As was explored in chapter 2.3, Bachmann and Celan are highly critical of reality in their letters and their published work; it is often depicted in the images of threatening waters or a troubling dream. On 7th July 1951, Celan describes reality in a letter as 'diese dialektisch potenzierte Schemenhaftigkeit unserer dennoch mit Blut gespeisten Wirklichkeiten!'(Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 25) Utopia is closely linked to the literary imagination, rational reality's counterpart, which in addition is also associated with the love relationship, as was seen in 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran'. Love forms a poetological principle as it is one of the most powerful impulses for making an encounter, in line with the aim of the *Flaschenpost*. As was seen in *Undine geht*, Bachmann depicts the impossibility for art in modern reality through the failure of the love relationship between man and art and their inability to sustain a dialogue. As Bachmann and Celan exchanged love letters, even if their intention was not to write poetically, their writing is tied to this function, the desire to connect with another.

Weigel argues that love is used as a literary device in Bachmann's work as it is a concept that belongs in the mind and that is not tangible. She writes that love is 'aus Literatur geboren [. . .]' and that in literature love is 'immer schon codierten, in Literatur und Kunst überlieferten Bedeutungsfiguren wiederholt und wiederbelebt wird' (Weigel, 1999, p. 149). In much of Bachmann's published work, including *Malina* and *Undine geht*, love is examined critically. Frequently, love and the encounter are depicted as unsustainable against a backdrop of cold rationality. Reimer argues that Bachmann and Celan adopt a 'Sprache der Liebe' in their literature which serves as the only suitable language for poetry, against this backdrop, after Auschwitz:

> Die daraus folgende Sprachreflexion geht sowohl bei Celan als auch
> bei Bachmann mit dem Versuch einher, eine eigene 'Sprache der
> Liebe', die als Terminus eine literarische Sprache beschreibt, zu
> finden, weil eine solche Sprache als einzig mögliches (utopisches)
> Konzept für ein Sprechen nach Auschwitz möglich scheint.
> (Reimer, 2014, p. 115)

The love language serves as a counterbalance to the cold rationality of post-1945 reality and the horrific irrationality of the Holocaust. The notion of love is sustainable within literature and Bachmann's notion of utopia. Consequently,

the love language is aimed at establishing an encounter and forms part of Bachmann's poetics. McMurtry also comments on how love serves as a major poetological principle in Bachmann's work, as it serves to motivate an encounter:

> Love, the primary impulse for human connection, forms a poetological principle, as well a central theme, throughout Bachmann's oeuvre. Whilst conventional love poems are seldom found in the author's writing, engagement with love experience consistently describes an immediate, yet often hazardous, move beyond self towards contact with another.
> [...] Writing, as that predicated upon absence and separation, revisits the immediate moment of human encounter from a situation of solitariness and seeks to capture it within the space of the text. (McMurtry, 2012, p. 136)

McMurtry's final claim in the above quotation underscores how love relates to the poetics of correspondence. She demonstrates how this notion of love relates to the act of writing and the *Flaschenpost*, as her description recalls Bachmann's claim in her Anton Wildgans prize acceptance speech and Celan's claim in his Bremen speech that writing starts from a point of isolation and reaches out to make an encounter. Thus, a constellation of love, writing and correspondence develops.

However, McMurtry's comments here refer to Bachmann's earlier poetry of the 1950s; she notes that a shift occurs in Bachmann's poetic drafts of the 1960s following the breakdown of her relationship with Max Frisch which resulted in a period of crisis for the poet. In the 1960s, Bachmann's verse changes as it attempts to express the experience of betrayal and suffering as a result of the breakdown of the love relationship. It is therefore possible that the poetics that concern reaching utopia through the encounter are specific to a type or period of poetry. Moreover, her poetic considerations could change when she writes with Celan in mind, as both writers were concerned with the poetological notion of the *Flaschenpost*. However, what has been explored in the previous chapters is that Bachmann's and Celan's utopian visions differ slightly. Although Celan speaks of a *Gegenwort* in the *Meridian*, this is not utopia, as his utopia does not exist in the present. The *Gegenwort* is a means of breaking with the continuity, the enduring present state of crisis, it serves as a point of departure for his poetry to move away from the present continuity.

Sigrid Weigel underscores the differences in the notions of utopia that in-

form Bachmann's poetics. One of these notions is influenced by Celan whilst the other stems from Robert Musil's utopian notion of an *anderer Zustand*. When discussing Bachmann's Frankfurt lecture 'Literatur als Utopie', Weigel underscores the seemingly contradictory nature of these differences:

> Dabei überkreuzen sich in diesem Teil der Vorlesung aber zwei po-
> etologische Referenzen, die schwer zu vereinbaren sind: zum einen
> die auf den Topos des Unterwegsseins (268) aus Paul Celans "Bre-
> mer Rede" [VIII.2], in der er die konkrete, historisch-topographische
> Matrix seines 'Wegs der Kunst' betont; zum anderen die auf den Be-
> griff des Utopischen, für den Bachmann in der Not einer diskursiven,
> begrifflichen Rede am Katheder auf zwei ihrer älteren, viele Jahre
> zurückliegenden Arbeiten über Musil zurückgreift [IV.2]. Während
> dort bereits konkurrierende Vorstellungen von Utopie begegnen —
> Utopie als Richtung, als Reise ins Paradies, aber auch als anderer
> Zustand oder Ausnahmezustand —, zitiert sie jetzt eine Notiz Musils
> zur "Utopie der Literatur", in der die schrifstellerische Existenz als
> utopisch bestimmt wird. Indem sie diese Existenz nun als "Hier-
> und-Jetzt-Exil" bezeichnet, schreibt die Autorin der Vorlesung den
> Begriff der Utopie in ein metaphorisches Exil um.
> (Weigel, 1999, pp. 486-487)

As was seen in the analysis of the 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' fragment, Bachmann distinguishes her notion of utopia from Celan's. Both writers acknowledge the need to make a connection however Bachmann's encounter can happen in her literature, as it offers a momentary metaphorical exile from the world of rationality and reason. In 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran', it is the connection with the loved one in a utopian realm in a moment of literary imagination that provides the metaphorical exile. 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' depicts the successful encounter and moment of utopian exile, whereas *Undine geht* portrays the failure of the encounter between man and art as Undine returns to the water. In an interview that Bachmann gave in 1971 about *Undine geht*, Bachmann states that love is a work of art:

> Für mich stellt sich nicht die Frage nach der Rolle der Frau, sondern
> nach dem Phänomen der Liebe — wie geliebt wird. [...] Liebe ist
> ein Kunstwerk. (Weigel, 1999, p. 150)

Love serves as the impulse to make the encounter that motivates Bachmann's

early poetics. However, in Bachmann's and Celan's poetry, what is unclear is exactly who the other is and how this utopian moment is experienced. In Celan's work, it seems that the utopian vision is directed towards a harmonious interaction between man and reality, in the sense of Buber, even if it means striving towards a different sort of reality. Mechthild Oberle argues that in Bachmann's dialogic love poetry of the 1950s, the dialogue results in an encounter between self and world (Oberle, 1990, pp. 2-3). McMurtry writes that:

> In the author's love poetry of the 1950s, the precarious relationship with the intimate Other provides a context for the subject's heightened questioning of the relationship between language and experience. The intense yet fleeting erotic encounter enables heightened sensory engagement that brings understanding beyond the rational. (McMurtry, 2012, p. 139)

The separate poetological principles of the love encounter and utopia both serve to evoke experience beyond the rational. As was outlined in the draft of *Ein Ort für Zufälle*, this is also the aim of engagement with literature, as Bachmann states in reference to Büchner's *Lenz*: 'Glauben Sie mir, über unsre Köpfe ist erst das Wenigste in Erfahrung gebracht' (Bachmann, 1995a, p. 172). Engagement with another through literature serves to lift the author and the reader from rationality and evoke more profoundly human experiences. As was seen in the last chapter, Celan writes to Bachmann to express that poetry is radical and that it is also a subjective document of crisis. Literature becomes a counterpoint to post-1945 rationality and the horrific irrationality of the Holocaust. Literature concerns subjective experience and is thus associated with human experience of the world which becomes the other of empirical rationality.

In this chapter, the poems 'Erinnerung an Frankreich', 'Der Tauben weißeste', 'Paris', and 'Hôtel de la Paix' will be examined in order to consider how the constellation of dialogue, love encounter, and writing contributes to the realization of the utopian moment. These poems appear to signify real encounters in the past as the poems are dedicated to Bachmann and depict an encounter in Paris (Caduff, 1997, p. 151). During their relationship Bachmann stayed with Celan in Paris and she also discussed the possibility of moving to Paris if she could obtain a scholarship. This suggests that these poems are associated with their early encounters in Paris, and are possibly love lyrics. Corina Caduff notes:

> Paris ist ein Ort realer Begegnungen zwischen Bachmann und Celan in den fünfziger Jahren, dessen topographischen Merkmale in der

lyrischen Sprache beider Autoren als Konstituenten der Erinnerung
wiederauftauchen, es ist also ein Ort, in dessen Namen eine lyrische
Begegnung zwischen Celan und Bachmann stattfindet.
(Caduff, 1997, p. 151)

Thus, it is possible that the poems serve to evoke the memory of a past en-
counter.

Celan's poem 'Erinnerung an Frankreich' first appeared in 1948 in the vol-
ume *Sand aus den Urnen.* In this volume, the poem is dedicated to the surrealist
painter Edgar Jené, at whose apartment Bachmann and Celan first met in May
1948. The dedication to Jené is dated 25th January 1948, before Celan had
met Bachmann. At the start of November 1952, Celan removed some of the
dedications when the poem was printed in the volume *Mohn und Gedächtnis*, as
it is reported that he felt that the poem was associated with too many people
(Celan and Wiedemann, 2003, p. 602). However, it is in this later volume that
Celan dedicates 'Erinnerung an Frankreich' to Bachmann with the abbreviation
'f.D.', for Ingeborg Bachmann. By changing the dedication in the paratext and
removing other dedications the meaning and the significance of the poem alters
for the person the poem is dedicated to.

Du denk mit mir: der Himmel von Paris, die große Herbstzeitlose...
Wir kauften Herzen bei den Blumenmädchen:
sie waren blau und blühten auf im Wasser.
Es fing zu regnen an in unserer Stube,
und unser Nachbar kam, Monsieur Le Songe, ein hager Männlein.
Wir spielten Karten, ich verlor die Augensterne;
du liehst dein Haar mir, ich verlors, er schlug uns nieder.
Er trat zur Tür hinaus, der Regen folgt' ihm.
Wir waren tot und konnten atmen.
(Celan and Wiedemann, 2003, p. 35)

As Celan changed who the poem was dedicated to at different times, either
the Du in the poem does not designate the dedicatee, or it is changeable, or it
can refer to a variety of different readers. By dedicating a poem to a specific
person, the reader's relationship to the pronouns in the poem may change. The
narrator of the poem invites the Du to remember an event; the Du is deliberately
left ambiguous. With the dedication to Bachmann or Jené, the event that is
referred to can change for each reader. As will be seen, Bachmann assumes

the Du position and responds to 'Erinnerung an Frankreich' in 'Paris'. Thus, Bachmann identifies with the poem on the basis of her relationship to Celan.

In Max Black's *The Radical Ambiguity of a Poem*, he argues that a poem can be radically ambiguous 'if and only if it is ambiguous with respect to one semantic feature for *any expert* (sufficiently competent, ideal) reader' (Black, 1984, p. 95). Although the dedication is a paratext, Celan's poetry becomes ambiguous as the feature he changes is the dedicatee. Moreover, because the Du is ambiguous any reader is an expert reader bringing their own pasts to their reading of the poem. However, for the dedicatees, the poem could evoke specific memories.[1] The poem's dedication to Bachmann could recall one of the occasions when they met in Paris even after the poem was written. As was stated in the Bremen speech, a poem is an 'Erscheinungsform der Sprache' (Celan, 1958b, p. 11), language is fluid, and the message can change on its journey with each new encounter conjuring up a range of different past experiences.

In 'Erinnerung an Frankreich', Celan's use of pronoun changes from a Du and a mir in the first line to Wir in the second. Supposing the general reader reads the lyric Du as a direct address, the use of pronouns shifts from being directed towards the reader in the use of Du and mir, to talking about an encounter between two unknown people in the past. The general reader does not have the same relationship to the event or with the author as the dedicatee. Alternatively, the general reader might not read the lyric Du as an address, but as a poetic device. In either case, the general reader responds differently to the dedicatee in the paratext. When Bachmann responds to the poem in 'Paris' and 'Hôtel de la Paix', she assumes the position of the Du, and also part of the Wir. In this way, she relates to the poem based on her own encounter with the author of the poem, either in Paris or in their poetic dialogue. Because of the nature of reciprocity, the poems with dedications function similarly to letters.

The final Wir in the last line alters the entire reading of the poem to that final point. The juxtaposition of breathing and death in the line 'wir waren tot und konnten atmen' draws attention to the death of Wir. The pairing of death and the image of breathing underscores the unreality and irrationality of the encounter. The encounter is beyond the rationality of the living world, as it is in death that Wir is depicted as living. Literature and the encounter are only able to exist in the absence of the rational. As has already been explored

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[1] Although the poem's original dedication to Jené might be explained by the fact that Celan was introduced to literary surrealism in Paris whilst he was studying the foundations of medicine between 1938 and 1939.

'atmen' serves as a cipher in Bachmann and Celan's correspondence. It refers to the poetic use of language, in the sense of *Dichtung* as explained in the *Meridian*. Celan uses the word 'Atemwende' both in the *Meridian* and in his volume of poems *Atemwende*. In Bachmann's use of the metaphor in *Undine geht* the breath motif is depicted as the life force of art, as Undine states: 'Ich habe keinen Unterhalt gebraucht, keine Beteuerung und Versicherung, nur Luft,' (Bachmann, 1961, p. 177). The pairing of breathing and death highlights that the poetic encounter encapsulated in the Wir can only breathe in the absence or death of the rational. In the absence of the rational, Wir serves as the ultimate signifier of the poetic encounter. In the letters, breath images such as 'Atemwende', become integrated in the everyday, practical language. In a letter that Bachmann sent to Celan from Naples on 10th August 1958, she writes:

> Es wird sowieso nur eine Atempause sein, eine dieser wenigen, die man uns zugesteht. Und die "Lösung" gibt es wohl nicht, die ich gesucht habe und vielleicht wieder einmal versucht sein werde, zu suchen. (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 92)

From Bachmann's and Celan's poetic uses of the breath metaphor in their published works, it appears that the 'Atempause' denotes a disillusionment with the efforts to continue to write poetically. However, this letter itself appears to be poetic with its use of the motif and the wordplay with the verb 'suchen', which throughout their individual oeuvres appears to refer to the struggle to write, searching for a solution to the problem, or searching for an encounter. From the perspective of someone for whom the letter was not intended, the 'Atempause' appears as an ambiguous metaphor. The letter is what Black might distinguish as a subjectively ambiguous text:

> A text is *uncertain* or *unambiguous* for a given reader if and only if that reader is unable to decide between two incompatible readings of the text. (Black, 1984, p. 93)

In some ways, the letter correspondence is similar to the poetic correspondence. The dedication in 'Erinnerung an Frankreich' to Bachmann, and the response to Celan in 'Paris' mean that the texts are understood differently by anyone who is external to the epistolary exchange. In this way, Celan's dedications in his poems function similarly to the address on the letter as he identifies an ideal reader who will read the text differently from a general readership.

In the poetry and the letters, Bachmann and Celan's visions of utopia through poetic engagement mean that language with a practical function may be transferred into the realm of the poetic. In 'Erinnerung an Frankreich', the memory of a real event evoked in the poem may be lifted from its reality in the poetic encounter of the Ich and the Du in the Wir. The real event becomes poetic precisely because it is moved from a real basis to the poetic imagination. The Wir becomes a utopian particle as it represents the ultimate poetic encounter of the Du and the Ich and lifts real experience into the poetic imagination. Corina Caduff argues that the Wir elevates the Ich and the Du in the encounter:

> Zum einen gestaltet Celan als Autor sein Verhältnis zur Lyrik der Moderne vor 1945, zum andern gestaltet das lyrische Ich — im zweiten Teil des Gedichts, auf der Grundlage der erinnerten Dichtung des ersten Teils — das Verhältnis zu einem Du. Im Schlußvers "Wir waren tot und konnten atmen" verdichten sich die beiden Gestaltungsebenen: Die poetische Tradition und das Du sind präsent, aufgehoben im Zeichen des Wir. (Caduff, 1997, p. 152)

Wir is used to evoke a memory of two people and of a possible encounter, and at the end Wir becomes a utopian particle combining Du and Ich in an encounter and in union in the paradoxical image of breathing death. For the dedicatee, not only does the use of poetic language dissociate a real moment from its reality, but the self becomes dissociated in the Wir as it becomes part of a poetic encounter aimed at utopia.

In Celan's poem 'Der Tauben weißeste', the pronouns function similarly. The poem depicts a loving encounter between an Ich and a Du, and it is in the final line that the encounter is elevated in the pronoun Wir. The intimacy of the relationship is however defined paradoxically by absence. In 'Erinnerung an Frankreich' the same image occurs when the encounter is depicted as occurring in death, signifying the complete absence of rationality in the poetic encounter. 'Der Tauben weißete' refers to a meeting between Bachmann and Celan on 14th October 1950, when Bachmann arrived in Paris and stayed until December. As Barbara Wiedemann points out, the colours that the flowers are depicted as not being are the colours of the French flag: 'sie ist nicht weiß, nicht rot, nicht blau' (Celan and Wiedemann, 2003, p. 615), they are also described in terms of absence. This reference could further allude to the time Bachmann and Celan spent together in Paris.

Der Tauben weißeste flog auf: ich darf dich lieben!
Im leisen Fenster schwankt die leise Tür.
Der stille Baum trat in die stille Stube.
Du bist so nah, als weiltest du nicht hier.

Aus meiner Hand nimmst du die große Blume:
sie ist nicht weiß, nicht rot, nicht blau — doch nimmst du sie.
Wo sie nie war, da wird sie immer bleiben.
Wir waren nie, so bleiben wir bei ihr.
(Celan and Wiedemann, 2003, p. 47)

The poem begins with the ascent of the dove which introduces the expression of love. Celan already alludes to the ascent, or utopian quality of the text in the image of elevation next to the expression of a loving encounter. Throughout the poem the Ich addresses the Du until the final line in which Du and Ich are united in the pronoun Wir. The final line of the first stanza expresses the paradox of the addressee being so near as if they were not there at all 'Du bist so nah, als weiltest du nicht hier'. In the last line of the final stanza, the Du is united with the Ich through the Wir, and the total absence of this unity in the presence of the flower motif is confirmed: 'Wir waren nie, so bleiben wir bei ihr'. In the presence of the poetic image, the Wir is defined by its absence from the rational world, but it becomes present in the poetic world. The poetic encounter occurs in the absence of rationality, marking the separation between the realm of the poetic and the rational. The possibility for love and literature in a reality of rationality is denied by Celan. For such an encounter to take place, the Ich and the Du need to escape the rational reality through the poetic encounter, a sort of metaphorical exile. Consequently, the Du and Ich when compounded in the Wir as the ultimate signifier of the encounter, must be defined by their non-existence in a reality which does not allow for such an encounter. Poetry and reality are placed at odds in a way that is reminiscent of Bachmann's letter to Celan in which poetry is depicted as a counter-balance to the evil in the reality in which he was living.

Bachmann responds to 'Erinnerung an Frankreich' in her poems 'Paris' and 'Hôtel de la Paix'. 'Paris' was published for the first time in 1952 in the volume *Stimmen der Gegenwart 1952*. 'Hôtel de la Paix' was aired in 1957 on NDR Hamburg. Bachmann's response to Celan in her poetry suggests that she assumes the Du position of his poems, however, her response to Celan in

'Paris' is not dialogic. Instead, Bachmann uses the pronoun Wir throughout and she stresses the intensity of this moment of encounter in her descriptions and comparisons of images of light and dark:

> Aufs Rad der Nacht geflochten
> schlafen die Verlorenen
> in den donnernden Gängen unten,
> doch wo wir sind, ist Licht.
>
> Wir haben die Arme voll Blumen,
> Mimosen aus vielen Jahren;
> Goldnes fällt von Brücke zu Brücke
> atemlos in den Fluß
>
> Kalt ist das Licht,
> noch kälter der Stein vor dem Tor,
> und die Schalen der Brunnen
> sind schon zur Hälfte geleert.
>
> Was wird sein, wenn wir, vom Heimweh
> benommen bis ans fliehende Haar,
> hier bleiben und fragen: was wird sein,
> wenn wir die Schönheit bestehen?
>
> Auf den Wagen des Lichts gehoben,
> wachend auch, sind wir verloren,
> auf den Straßen der Genien oben,
> doch wo wir nicht sind, ist Nacht.
> (Bachmann, 1982, p. 33)

Bachmann's poem expresses a similar dynamic to Celan's in the depiction of the upwards movement, such as in the ascent of Wir as is expressed in the line 'Auf den Wagen des Lichts gehoben'. Bachmann distinguishes the Wir from those who are lost in the image of night and darkness. In the final line of the first stanza she writes that 'doch wo wir sind, ist Licht'. The poetic encounter encapsulated in Wir juxtaposes the darkness and the experience of the *Verlorenen*. Throughout the poem, Bachmann alludes to her notion of utopia through engagement with literature. The poem begins with the experience

of making a connection in literature, however, in the final stanza, Bachmann depicts awakening from this *anderer Zustand* or utopian moment. At the end of the encounter, Wir awakens to the world and the reader and the writer find themselves again in a state of loss, 'wachend auch, sind wir verloren,'. The depiction in the last line as the poetic encounter breaks off, is of Wir awakening to the darkness of the non-poetic world, 'doch wo wir nicht sind, ist Nacht'. In this final line the poetic encounter of the Wir is characterized by the absence of night and darkness.

Corina Caduff argues that Celan's 'Erinnerung an Frankreich' depicts the failure of the love relationship in the death of wir, whereas Bachmann takes up the images from Celan's poem and turns them into the setting of the love story:

> Die Wiederaufnahme von Motiven aus *Erinnerung an Frankreich* findet sich zunächst in der Präsentation der Liebesszenerie: "Wir haben die Arme voll Blumen" rekurriert auf "Wir kauften Herzen bei den Blumenmädchen". (Caduff, 1997, p. 155)

Rather than depicting the failure of the love relationship, the depiction of absence that pervades the two poems in fact alludes to the encounter and its absence in the rational reality. The image of the flower becomes a poetic symbol of love and the encounter, Bachmann uses this motif along with the light motif to emphasize the intensity of the encounter: 'Wir haben die Arme voll Blumen'. In addition, in the letters the flower, and in particular the poppy, becomes a cipher in their relationship which also signifies the start of their relationship. On 20th June 1949, Celan wrote to Bachmann that he wished to place '[...] zwei große leuchtende Sträuße auf Deinen Geburtstagstisch' (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 11). Here, both the images of light and flowers are combined. In 'Paris', Bachmann uses these images to describe the intensity of the union. As was seen in 'Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran' the flowers were depicted as blacker than black and redder than red underscoring the intensity of the image. Throughout the correspondence light images are used to depict finding positive experience from times of darkness. For example, on 9th December 1957 Celan describes his response to having received a new copy of *Die gestundete Zeit* which included the four poems 'Nach dieser Sintflut', 'Hôtel de la Paix', 'Exil' and 'Liebe: Dunkler Erdteil'. He describes his response to them in terms of being drowned in light:

> Ich war also wieder im Abteil und nahm Deine Gedichte aus der Aktentasche. Mir wars wie ein Ertrinken in ganz Durchsichtig-Hellem.

(Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 74)

Celan's description is similar to those found in the poems, he discusses the experience of making a poetic encounter in terms of bright light but also in terms of near absence. The self becomes dissociated in the encounter with literature as it becomes absorbed by the light. The suggestion that he was drowning in light resonates with the depictions of absence and death in the moment of poetic encounter. Other motifs depicting light from this poetic exchange also find their place in the letters. The lamp motif from 'Hôtel de la Paix' becomes a feature of Bachmann and Celan's letters:

> Die Rostenlast stürzt lautlos von den Wändern,
> und durch den Teppich scheinen Grund und Boden.
> Das Lichtherz bricht der Lampe.
> Dunkel. Schritte.
> Der Riegel hat sich vor den Tod geschoben.
> (Bachmann, 1982, p. 152)

The image of dark and light is thematized throughout the correspondence. For example, the dream image in conjunction with the juxtaposed light and dark metaphors used in 'Paris' in 1952 was also used in a similar way in a letter Bachmann sent to Celan on 24th November 1949:

> Schreib mir bald, bitte, und schreib, ob Du noch ein Wort von mir willst, ob Du meine Zärtlichkeit und meine Liebe noch nehmen kannst, ob Dir noch etwas helfen kann, ob Du manchmal noch nach mir greifst und mich verdunkelst mit dem schweren Traum, in dem ich licht werden möchte. (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 14)

The image of light is used to counter the dream image and the darkness. As was explored in chapter 2.3, the dream is often used as a metaphor for a problematic empirical reality in contrast to the literary reality. Reimer reads the use of the light image in the letters as referring to the realization of the hopes that Bachmann and Celan place in language:

> Der Ausruf verweist wiederum darauf, dass diese tropische Sprachfind-
> ung im Kontext der sprachlichen Utopie steht und als Gelingen der
> Sprachhoffnung gelesen werden kann. Bestätigt wird das Funktion-
> ieren dieser Sprache, indem in nächsten Brief des Dialog-Partners

die Trope noch einmal aufgegriffen, weitergeschrieben und somit
bestätigt wird. (Reimer, 2012, p. 13)

The line 'Das Lichtherz bricht der Lampe.' from 'Hotel de la Paix' is repeated
on multiple occasions in their letters. In a letter written on 14th November
1957, Bachmann contrasts the feeling of confusion with the act of searching for
light:

> Ich rede manchmal zu Dir nach Paris, als wärst Du allein dort, und
> oft verstumme ich, wenn ich Dich wahrhabe mit allem dort, mich
> wahrhabe mit allem hier. Dann aber werden wir Klarheit und keine
> Verwirrungen mehr stiften — und die Lampe suchen gehen!
> (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 70)

In another letter, Celan aligns the search for the lamp with the encounter of the
Du and the Ich in the pronoun Wir. In this way, searching for light is associated
with the encounter and with clarity and contrasts with the dark dream depicted
elsewhere in the correspondence.

> Wir wollen dann die Lampe suchen gehen, Ingeborg, Du und Ich,
> wir. (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 72)

Even in the letters the same pronouns that are used in Celan's poetry to dis-
sociate the Du and the Ich in the symbolic Wir are used. Of course, in let-
ters pronouns usually signify the writing and reading other, but when placed
alongside the discussion of searching for the lamp, the pronouns take on a new
significance. As was seen in 'Paris', light is also associated with the ascent in
the literary and poetic encounter. Reimer suggests that this dissociation of the
Ich gives the letters a utopian, and therefore poetic quality. Bachmann and
Celan's letters which include motifs and themes that also exist in their liter-
ature function similarly to the poems with dedications. When the letters are
removed from their context, the moments of exchange between Bachmann and
Celan, they still appear to have a poetic quality, for example:

> Lieber,
> in wenigen Tagen fährt Nani Maier nach Paris, und ich werde sie
> bitten, was ich schwer in einem Brief sagen kann, mit Dir zu be-
> sprechen.
> So will ich nur viele, viele Gedanken vorausschicken und hoffen, daß
> wir bald auf ein Wasser sehen, das wieder an Indien grenzt und an

die Träume, die wir einmal geträumt haben.

Aber wenn Du nicht mehr kannst oder schon in ein nächstes Meer getaucht bist, hol mich, mit der Hand, die man für andere frei hat! Ich will Dir sehr danken,

Ingeborg. (Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 16)

This letter was sent early in Bachmann and Celan's relationship, so it might be suggested that this expressive language appears as heightened or poetic because love places language under extreme pressure. However, this would not stop the language from having a poetic function, particularly as love is a driving force behind the *Flaschenpost* and the encounter. In this way, the 'Sprache der Liebe' is a poetic language. The ciphers and motifs such as the lamp serve to lift the practical language and make reality poetic in the same way that was seen in 'Erinnerung an Frankreich'. For example, Celan's reference to the encounter 'Du und Ich, wir' is a reminder of language's efforts to strive towards an utopian horizon. The letters and the poems with epistolary intent lift the reader's reality by imposing the poetic on the practical.

These considerations explain why Bachmann distinguishes between types of letters. In the letter that Bachmann describes as factual, the majority of the letter is concerned with arrangements and dates:

Die Tagung findet vom 23. bis 25. Mai statt, und zwar in Hamburg; der Ort der Tagung selbst ist noch nicht bekannt. Doch stellt der Nordwestdeutsche Rundfunk einen Autobus zur Verfügung, der die Teilnehmer in München, Stuttgart und Frankfurt abholt.
(Bachmann and Celan, 2008, p. 47)

The language used in the non-factual letters has less of a practical function, in these letters the language connotes and denotes. The language in the non-factual letters is also ambiguous, particularly to a reader external to the dialogue. Some of Bachmann and Celan's letters are similar to their poetry as they exploit the same motifs. In this way, Guillén's comments that a letter may become literary in a later historical period are relevant. In the published volume, some of the letters appear as similar to Bachmann and Celan's poetry as they are removed from their context in the published volume. This is not dissimilar from the reader's relationship to a poem like 'Erinnerung an Frankreich' in which the dedication means that the poem means something different for the dedicatee to than the general readership. Language becomes detached from its practical function and

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denotation, instead it connotes something. This corresponds with Celan's poetics as outlined in the Bremen speech, language is fluid and the meaning of the poem or text changes for different unknown readers at different times. In addition, because Bachmann and Celan construct a poetics of correspondence, many of their letters are literary letters. This is because they become literary in the moments of interaction and encounter with the other, serving Bachmann's and Celan's aim of directing their language towards utopia through an encounter motivated by love as a poetological principle. In Bachmann and Celan's letter correspondence, the letter becomes a form that facilitates the unfolding of their poetics, and therefore functions as a poetic form in its own right.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This thesis has explored Bachmann and Celan's poetic and literary correspondence in light of the recent publication of the letters they exchanged between 1948 and 1968. Their letters provide crucial insights into their personal responses to the crisis of expression and their endeavours to find a viable mode of poetic expression following the Holocaust. Not only do these letters demonstrate how these concerns impacted on their personal lives, but some of the letters describe their considerations on wider cultural concerns relating to the role of language and poetry after 1945. These considerations discussed within the letters provide clearer insights into their poetics and how their individual oeuvres were influenced by each other's thought and poetics.

With the publication of these letters, this thesis has been able to explore Celan's use of the message in a bottle motif, relating it more concretely to the thought of Martin Buber. In turn, this has helped to ascertain what Celan considered poetry's role to be after the Holocaust. Celan's poetry, rather than seeking a dialogue with modern rationality or seeking a way of confronting it, endeavours to find a way of existing holistically with reality. However, as has been seen in the correspondence, notions of reality are frequently problematized by Bachmann and Celan. Reality is depicted as an unfixed and unstable concept, and thus Bachmann and Celan envisage an engagement with another sort of reality through establishing a dialogue in literature. In this way, Bachmann and Celan cast their writing out from a point of isolation to make an encounter with another with the hope of reaching an experience of reality distinct from the empirical reality of post-1945 Europe.

Moreover, through analyses of their speeches, letters and literature, it ap-

pears that literature and poetry are associated with subjective experiences of crisis. Literature concerns human thoughts and feelings which serve as a counterbalance, or to use Celan's terminology a *Gegenwort*, to modern rationality. This exploration of the letters alongside the literature has served to confirm these ideas expressed in their literature. Moreover, these considerations surrounding their poetics also contribute to a better understanding of their language use in their letter correspondence.

As was explored in the first chapter, many of Bachmann and Celan's letters fall out of the oscillating pattern of a correspondence. The ways in which some of the letters are discussed suggests that their composition more closely resembles writing poetry or prose than a conversation. Moreover, distinctions are frequently made between types of letter. Some of the letters have the practical aim of conveying a message, yet others also appear to have a poetic intention. Following the exploration of Bachmann's and Celan's poetics in light of new considerations brought to light by the letters, it appears that they construct a poetics of correspondence informed by their mutual engagement with the *Flaschenpost* poetics outlined in Celan's Bremen Speech.

The message in a bottle serves as a way of sending poetry out of the known reality towards an unknown other in the hope of making an encounter. This effort to reach another is also described as the attempt to reach an unknown reality. In this way, Celan's poetry is sent out towards an utopian horizon. In Bachmann's Anton Wildgans prize acceptance speech, she suggests that her utopian horizon can be reached in the present day through an engagement with another in literature. It is through this encounter that the Ich and the Du become dissociated from themselves in the poetic encounter signified by the Wir. The language used in their poetry serves to lift the reader and the writer from their reality in the poetic encounter. This process also occurs in some of Bachmann and Celan's letters in which poetic language is used as a way of lifting the reader's real experiences through the use of poetic language. In these letters, the poetics of correspondence unfolds, and in this way these letters also form part of Bachmann and Celan's poetic vision.

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