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# TIDAL THINKING AND TIMES OF CONFLICT

## I

*La mer, la mer, toujours recommencée*
*– Paul Valéry, "Cimetière marin," line 4, 223–39*

"The sea, the sea, where to start? It is always beginning again." At what point does one encounter it "as such"? But maybe one already "knows" it, deep down.[1] Not intimately, it dissolves inwardness, at the very best everything becomes one and it is all right that it is so … It could even be that we yearn for this dissolution, for this becoming one with that which has "no perceptible limits," that one wants to be submerged in an "oceanic sentiment" (letter from Rolland to Freud as cited in Parson 503).[2] And yet, surely one wants to hold on to something, to be more than molecules?

In 1919, beholding the devastated world brought about by "progress," the collapse of "civilisation," the crisis of "spirit," Valéry draws our attention to the phenomenon of drops of wine being tipped into water; the wine lightly colours the water pink before being absorbed without a trace ("Crise de l'esprit" 29–30; *Anthology* 106–07). He then conjures up a Cana scene wherein scattered dark drops miraculously re-emerge out of the limpid water and concludes that likewise what we call "genius" defies the historico-political-cultural forces that diffuse humans.[3] Humphrey Jennings includes this passage in his *Pandaemonium: The Coming of the Machine*, his interminable project exploring "[w]hat *may have been* the place of imagination" from 1660 to 1886 comprises colourful "images" that illuminate "clashes and conflicts," charged moments, that arise from the forgetful depths of official history (xxxv–xxxix).[4] The significance of his quest to "reintegrate[e] lost colours" can be keenly sensed when reading his poem "As I Look" (1949):[5]

As I look out of the window on the roofscape
of smoke
The factory chimney standing up as rocks
stand in the sea

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> The glistening slates lying along what would be the shore
> As I look into the midst and let my vision dive
> (As Corot in Campagna when the sun descended mixed the paints together)
> I perceive in the grey picture all the colours that were once there
> Not only the simple divisions of the prism […]
> I perceive also the hues of the men who built the city […]
> And all this work coloured with men's blood men's ideas men's fancies and regrets
> Coloured with love friendships hates unspoken wishes outspoken words
> And now like the sea each individual wave individual work
> Washes and mixes in with the rest
> And the exact day fades and the exact man
> Yet to the mind's eye that looks out this evening and dives into the depths
> Every single colour is still there nothing lost […] (Jennings in Jackson 300)

Is it possible that nothing is lost, that colours can re-emerge from a grey sea? That even "unspoken wishes," hopes that could have been, can be retrieved so that they amount to something?[6]

## 2

When writing about The Sea, the very subject matter has often been presented as a force that defies any definite, let alone definitive, analysis. In his exquisite text, "Regards sur la mer," Paul Valéry writes:

> When at leisure by the seaside, salt on our lips, our ears either flattered by the mumbling or battered by the crashing of the water, one tries to decipher what wells up within us. One wants to be able respond to this all-powerful presence. Sketchy ideas, bits of poems, phantasmal actions, hopes, threats occur to us. A whole confusion of excited, vague wishes and agitated images are produced by the expanse that offers itself, that defends itself, that calls for decipherment because of its vast surface, yet scares off the very undertaking because of its depths. (10)

According to Valéry, it would seem that any attempt to say anything conclusive or all-encompassing about the sea would not only be doomed to failure, but also be inappropriate. The sea advances towards us seemingly "offering" itself, yet subsequently retracts thereby forever eluding our grasp (Valéry, "Mers" 663).[7] Our response to the sea can only be halting, truncated, half-formed and provisional, thwarting our desire to grasp something precise and substantial. What form could possibly accommodate such formlessness? Valéry presents his *Variétés* as essays ("Crise de l'esprit"). The essay is an effect of a circumstance that has provoked it. The essay is not intended. It comes as a surprise. In each essay the writer sets out on a different journey, following a current, sometimes drifting and yet there is no passivity, no submission. Valéry dedicates "Regards sur le monde actuel" (1939) to "those who have no system and adhere to no party, who are therefore free enough to doubt what is doubtful and not reject that which is not" (913). The essay form grapples with material and draws no firm conclusions, but he still wants to call it (quasi-) "political" inasmuch as it tries to make notions a bit clearer by the accumulative effect of a succession of approximations (913–15).[8]

## 3

In "Lettre à Cornelius et la métamorphose," one of the essays included in his *Inspirations méditerranéennes* (1941), one side of Jean Grenier's character evokes the difficulties he has beginning writing, the impression he has of wearing lead shoes whilst following meanders and crossing bogs (161).[9] The writing does not flow like a linear river. His arduous journey is accompanied by a plague of doubts, a tortuous tossing and turning, backwards and forwards, that mirrors his experience of life, one constant striving to unite what he desires with who he is, the aspiration to coincide with himself, instead of feeling torn and battered by doubts and fears (164, 92). Tranquillity descends on him when contemplating trees, especially the pine trees along the Mediterranean coast (see Figure 1).[10] A tree seems to

Fig. 1. A tree's creation of an "inter-view." Postcard postmarked 1976: Panorama Lacco Ameno, Ishia.

consent to its existence, whereas he doesn't. "With an inexpressible act," a tree adheres to its being, whereas he doesn't. Its trunk is a fully fledged affirmation, whereas his body is an avowal or confession [*un aveu*].[11] Espying the sea through its foliage serves to frame the view, to turn it into a perfect landscape, but more importantly it tames the prospect, works us into it, into a "Nature" that is both bushy (the tree) and calmly inhuman (the sea).[12] The "inter-view" created by the tree prevents us from being overwhelmed by the vast expanse and latent power of the sea (167–69).[13]

Maybe it is important for us now, given the need for us to face up to the immanent climate crisis and in recognition of those who risk, and often lose, their lives in search of better lives, to confront the sea full on without such commodious framing devices, but at the same time, if we are to still have a world, we need to find our "measure" within it.[14]

## 4

> Swimming.
> I seem to find myself and know myself again when I return to this universal water. I know nothing about harvests, about grape harvests.
> Nothing for me in the Georgics. (Valéry, "Inspirations méditerranéennes" 261)

In *What is Called Thinking?* (1954), Heidegger writes that the only way to learn to swim is by taking the plunge (*Was heißt Denken?* 9; *What is Called Thinking?* 21).[15] Ultimately, no manual or teacher can help you. It is best to learn to swim when encountering the sea. However, swimming can be avoided. You can just sit on a bench or in a car and watch it from afar. You can remain on the beach and just venture in if you choose to, more or less on your playful terms, though you can be unexpectedly caught out; waves can still knock you about and result in your having to crawl inelegantly to dry safety, maybe pained by the shingles as you fight against the drag and pull, the bashing and hammering.[16] As might be already evident, I speak as someone who is not into swimming, who definitely does not intend to put her head into watery stuff, but rather aims to maintain it as far away as possible, resulting in a stiff and awkward posture, a bit ridiculous. I make no claim to be a mermaid.

Fig. 2. Image of a child defying the waves. Author's own photograph.

Heidegger draws the analogy between swimming and thinking. This might surprise us. I cannot imagine him in a swimsuit. Despite what I will be identifying as a form of "tidal thinking" in his work, I still associate him more with what is earthly, grounded, which is of course part of "the problem" with Heidegger.

The ideas explored in this essay will come and go, like the waves. We will therefore revisit swimming, albeit tentatively, as is my wont. We must surely at some point want to play on the beach (Figure 2).[17] We will want to spend time in a port which is a perfectly delightful way of being with the sea, as well as being an excellent compromise.

Writing and reading can be activities akin to beachcombing. Looking out for what the sea washes up. Not all of it is good. Far from it.

## 5

"Man is the measure of all things" said Protagoras, words that are "characteristically, essentially Mediterranean" says Valéry ("Inspirations méditerranéennes" 257). What is meant by this measuring? It implies an opposition to the fleeting and elusive diversity of phenomena and impressions. It implies a surpassing of our particularity as accidental individuals with local and partial lives. It implies an embracing of "a universal I," far larger, all-encompassing, which is no entity as such but is rather an invigorating and exalted sense of the fullness of Being as beings in this world.[18] There is, it gives, The Sea, The Sky, The Sun![19] Valéry excuses himself for getting carried away (258). But it's the sea, looking at the sea does that to one, in particular the Mediterranean, because of its clarity, depth, vastness, measure. The contours are well-defined. There is inspiration, there is a germ of a thinking that is more general, more comprehensive, more embodied, more sensed, even lived, however momentarily. It's to do with the light, the shimmering expanse of water; there's a state of leisureliness, time is not a problem, one is at-ease, happy, even, yes let's go for it, why not, *ça fait du bien*! – *joyous*, though one should not be even thinking of oneself, one should not be using such terms. It feels as if there is a harmonious attunement between the mind, the body and its senses, the world with its light, its warmth,

its air, its smells, its sounds, its colours, a complicity with other life forms.

Jean Grenier came from Brittany. The sea, sky and atmosphere of his childhood was that of the Atlantic. His hyperborean writings evoke its luminous, cloudy greyness, incessantly chased by the tides and the winds of the ocean. How different the Mediterranean is! Whereas the Atlantic is "always mobile and uncertain," Grenier agrees with Valéry, the Mediterranean is a "sea with well-defined horizons" (Grenier, *Inspirations méditerranéennes* 99). The clarity of its lines and forms, the brilliant light, the sunny climate, it is a place "predestined for happiness" (preface). On reaching the Mediterranean "the step gets lighter, the heart flourishes." Nature suddenly seems to "break […] into song." The Mediterranean inspires the lyrical:

> One talks of love at first sight, there are also landscapes that makes the heart pound, that provoke delicious anxieties and long voluptuousness. There are friendships to be had with the stones of quaysides, the lapping of the water, the tepidity of labour, the clouds at the end of the day. (89)

What is the Mediterranean for us now? A still desirable, but often overcrowded and expensive, coastline compounded with the haunting images of those who, at their peril, desperately try to cross it. The washed-up corpses. The imagery clashes and jars with any exuberant affirmation of Life as it is.[20]

## 6

> When I see the blindness and the wretchedness of man, when I regard the whole silent universe, and man without light, left to himself, and, as it were, lost in this corner of the universe, without knowing who has put him there, what he has come to do, what will become of him at death, and incapable of all knowledge, I become terrified, like a man who should be carried in his sleep to a dreadful desert island, and should awake without knowing where he is, and without means of escape. And thereupon I wonder how people in a condition so wretched do not fall into despair.[21] (Pascal 165, §184 cited in Grenier, *Albert Camus* 23)

Explaining the atmosphere of his book, *Les îles* (first published 1933), Grenier situates it in its times. In the wake of the First World War a "romantic afflux resuscitated the eternal themes of solitude, death and despair" (Grenier, *Albert Camus* 23). Camus wrote a preface for the 1959 re-edition of the text. The fatal car crash meant that he did not get to see those words in print.[22] Camus professes to having been "shaken up" by this book when he first read it at the age of twenty in Algiers and claims to have reread the text over and over again (Camus in Grenier, *Îles* 9). Of a crushingly poor background but nevertheless a Mediterranean child blessed by the sun, sea and light, the impact that Grenier's text had on him was avowedly decisive. Grenier was born "on other shores." The Breton's sea has its flux and reflux. It is always disturbingly mobile. The grey granite sky often plummets confoundingly into the vast stretch of agitated water. The eye cannot embrace such emptiness. Those rocks, the mud, the onslaught of the rain, yet more water. "It is a climate that everyday puts everything into question. Nothing exists" (Grenier, *Îles* 26; see also *Inspirations méditerranéennes* 186–87). *Things are illusory. Everything dissolves into one general mistiness. I am on a boat adrift at night. There is no point of orientation. Lost, I am irredeemably lost in an infinity that is perfect indifference* (Grenier, *Îles* 26).[23] Such "disenchantment" shocked the young Camus and yet it explained those otherwise inexplicable doubts and worries, the sudden bouts of melancholy that he had himself experienced. In Grenier's *Les îles* (and in *Inspirations méditerranéennes*), there are many joyous moments of affirmation, but they pass, inevitably, and one plummets, downwards. *So it goes*![24] The earth remains rude and ungrateful. The grey hostility of the sky and the sea are revealed as givens that one cannot take on board.

In the Roman countryside steeped in Mediterranean cultural history, Grenier observes

the inscriptions on tombstones. They do not attempt to defy finitude but instead display deep compassion towards other mortals. In the very face of the pain for lost loved ones, they communicate poignant messages across the tomb. There is a genuine attempt made to give "the support of a definition," to find Protagoras' "measure," to counteract the otherwise shaky and formless world (Grenier, *Inspirations méditerranéennes* 68).

> *I did not exist. I existed. I no longer exist, I regret nothing.*
>
> *You didn't exist, now you exist and again you will cease to exist. Here is the place of your homeland.* (66, 67)

For the soul, such as Grenier's, that is incessantly eroded by the limitless ocean, there is no tranquillity. Life is an arduous journeying, the battering onslaught of adversity that wears and tears, the ups and downs of encounters of unequal interest that have to be coped with. At a certain point of life, the past years drain into pointlessness, laid exposed in their sheer futility. We run the risk of finding ourselves stranded far away from those we love, not quite knowing how that happened and why. We hadn't quite realised what was important to us after all. *To die in a hospital incomprehensibly alone, where people are speaking in a foreign language. We are filled with terror* (67).

Blanchot detects in Grenier's writing "the voice that language adds to thought when thought, knowing its impotence, asks words for a veiled consolation that makes it bitter and secret" (Blanchot 83). The words express more than, or something other than, thoughts, but if any "consolation" is to be gleaned it would have to come from a passionate revolt, even rejection, in the name of Life, its importance and "value" after all, its joys, its beauty.

Grenier admired such energy in Camus. In 1948, Camus wrote: "all those who are fighting today for liberty are in the final analysis fighting for beauty" (*Noces et L'été* 138).[25]

## 7

Found in the car wreckage, the unfinished manuscript of *The First Man*. "Jacques Cormery" (Camus) goes to the cemetery in Saint-Brieuc at the request of his mother. Before paying a visit to "Malan" (Jean Grenier), his erstwhile teacher, now friend, he is to find his father's grave. The father whom he had never known nor really thought about, had died in the faraway war in 1914. The sky is pale, the clouds white and grey, the light faint, waning, as befits Brittany. Head turned to the sky, searching for the saltiness in the air, "Cormery" is wrenched out of his reverie by a sound (a bucket that is banged against a marble gravestone). His sight falls on the tombstone and he sees the date of his father's birth, 1885. His father died at the age of twenty-eight. He himself is forty. The man buried in the grave, who had been his father, was younger than him. This realisation, vertiginous. It shakes him to the core. He is overcome by a flood of tenderness and pity. Not that of a son towards a dead father, but rather the compassion one feels for a child unjustly assassinated. As if a "natural order" had been violated. All is madness and chaos; a Shakespearian world turned upside-down by war: the fathers are children. Berserking unnaturalness. Darkest perfidy. Time does not flow like a river that steadily heads out to sea. The years no longer clock up in a regular way. All is "crashing, surf, swirl" (Camus, *Premier homme* 47).[26] Giddily looking around him, the churchyard awash with dead children, fathers of grey-haired offspring. The statuesque self that had been constructed over the years cracks and crumbles. All that is left exposed is an anxious heart, desperately gasping for life, revolted by death. Finitude and war.

Bachelard wrote that the human being has the destiny of water that flows, "water being truly the transitory element." As such "the being who is devoted to water is vertiginous, dying at every minute. The substantial incessantly crumbles away" (Bachelard 8–9). But how, where, when, even why, one dies makes a difference.[27]

## 8

Oh the perpetual maritime tossing and turning, the tormenting prevarication. Valéry conjures up a post-First World War Hamlet in "La crise de l'esprit": all those skulls, whose are they? Leonardo, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, Marx (20),[28] … – what did all of "that" amount to in the end? "The European Hamlet looks out at the millions of specters," they gave us so much! And yet, not all turned out to be good (da Vinci's dreams of flight led to bomber planes and carbon emissions) … what now? Where is the way forward?[29] The terrace of Elsinore is no privileged vantage point, it has been plunged into a Europe *terrassée*, crushed, ruined, stricken by war, an ocean of ruins …

The swelling and surging of the water repeat themselves over and over again. Valéry inevitably evokes the "absurd" notion of the eternal return that threatens to crush all initiative ("Regards sur la mer" 13). Nevertheless, a "furious desire" can emerge to resist "the living inertia of the mass of water" (15), to break out of the cycle, to get out "there," "beyond," somewhere else. Beyond the fatalistic sense that there is no possible future. There is the promise of waters new, an alternative to this, *it's possible* (14). To take the plunge, *to flee*, *escape*, *evade*, *head off*, *the impulsion that the wide horizon of the Mediterranean can produce* (12).

But hold on a minute! Before making rash decisions, let's take stock of the situation. How about sitting down for a bit on that inviting terrace overlooking the port? Don't you agree that:

> There is no site that is more delectable – not in the Alps, nor in the forest, nor any monumental place, nor any enchanted garden – that is worth more in my eyes than what one sees from a good-placed terrace overlooking a port. The eye possesses the sea, the town, their contrast, and everything it encloses, admits, emits, at all hours of the day, the broken ring of the piers and the breakwaters […] (Valéry, "Regards sur la mer" 29)

Isn't the port a frontier where:

> the continually wild state, physically brute, always primitive nature, virgin reality encounters the work of human hands, modified earth, imposed symmetries, tidily arranged and erected solids, displaced and frustrated energy, and all that goes into an effort whose evident law is finality, economy, appropriation, prevision and hope? (30)

As such, the traditional port offers a "civilising reconciliation" between two regimes, that of nature and the human, as well as being a sensorially resonant, deeply meaningful and indisputably agreeable place to spend time.[30]

But how to situate oneself now, one century later, in relation to these rich and seductive sources? To begin with, to whom is Valéry talking? Who does he think "we" are? The devastation facing today's Hamlet is far vaster, it is global; the skulls he would have to contemplate are far more numerous, they are not just those of white, male Europeans. And then there is "the Mediterranean," it requires better definition, both as a locality and as a "culture," posited as a solution to the crisis of modernity, due to its "civilising," pacifying tradition and immanent force … [31] All models should be treated with suspicion and this one is no exception, it is difficult to sustain, and inappropriate given global realities and concerns. There is also the impulse to take to the sea: it might indeed be an exciting fantasy, but it can also be a far less exhilarating prospect, more like a desperate and life-threatening flight. Were it at all possible, staying at home might be preferable. And lastly there's the charming prospect of the historic port-city with its rich scenes of everyday vitality: such a site is an increasingly rare phenomenon and if it still exists, its "authenticity" is reflected in the high prices on Airbnb.[32]

All those attempts to construct a peaceful world in the wake of the disaster that was the First World War, what happened to them? Did they just get submerged? Diluted into … nothingness, at least not something that could resist geopolitical pressures?[33]

What remains.[34]

> Parce que c'escoit luy; parce que c'estait moy.
> *Because it was him, because it was me* (Montaigne speaking about his friendship with La Boétie as cited by Planeille in Camus and Char 9)

> Dear Albert,
> I hope that the weather that prevails with you favours a stormy-free temperament. In Paris it drizzles like a tap. In spite of the eclipses, one can have faith in the resources of the Mediterranean as they are blue by nature […] these detours, lacking any finesse, are ways of telling you my thoughts […] (Letter from Char to Camus, 5 Jan. 1950 (Camus and Char 56))

René Char's Mediterranean references were those pertaining to the banks [*rives*] of the river Sorgue, whereas Camus was a child of the seashore [*rivage*], nevertheless they were friends (Planeille in Camus and Char 14). It was allegedly thanks to Char that Camus' *The Rebel* was able to become a "book of hope" (100fn1), and Char, on reading it, in turn thanked Camus for having "rejuvenated, refreshed, strengthened, stretched" him (101).[35] If the correspondence is "authentic" and not written for show, if it truly is the expression of deeply held, reciprocated feelings, then this friendship was a lifebuoy. Camus is surely speaking earnestly when he writes to Char:

> One talks of the pain of life, but it is not true. One should rather say the pain of not living. And how is one to live in this world of shadows? Without you, without two or three beings whom I respect and cherish, things would definitely be lacking thickness. (105)

In his preface to the German edition of René Char's poems (1959), some of which were translated by Paul Celan, Camus evokes the fresh water that flushes through Char's work (240–41). Any apparent obstructive obscurity in the language is due to the "furious condensation of the image, the density of the light that differs greatly from abstract transparency" (ibid.). Whereas the light of Valéry's skies he considers "too fixed and round" to be of service in such dark times, the intensity of Char's poetic engagement is a resistant force: "Si nous habitons un éclair, il est le coeur de l'éternel" [If we inhabit a flash, it is the heart of eternity] ("A la santé de serpent" §XXIV in Char, *Fureur et mystère* 190).[36] Char's credentials in the fight against Nazi totalitarianism are laid out by Camus. Char knew when it was time to inhabit the lightning (Camus and Char 243). The line "Guérir le pain. Attabler le vin" [Cure the bread, sit the wine down at the table] taken from *Feuillets d'hypnos* (written whilst in the Resistance and published in Camus' series *Espoir* in 1946) is a demand for a free society where bread and wine have their rightful place as indicators of hospitality and gages of friendship (Char, *Feuillets d'hypnos* 56, §184). The dry husks of prison life will not do (Camus and Char 243). Injustice is an outrage (Camus, *Homme révolté* 379; *Rebel* 267). In the very midst of combat Char militantly proclaimed: "In the darkness there is no single place for beauty, all the place is for beauty" (Char, *Feuillets d'hypnos* 70, §237; Camus and Char 244). Char knew what it was to actively kill someone. He also knew when he had to stand back and watch a fellow resistant be shot as intervening would have meant putting other lives in danger (Char, *Feuillets d'hypnos* 44, §138). He made political choices during a crucial historical period, whilst remaining a vigilant rebel, not prepared to be duped by any ideological recuperation of complex situations.[37] Char's statement "obsession with the harvest and indifference to history are the two extremities of my arc," is, for Camus, composed of rebellious "words of courage and intelligence." It is the expression of an "agonised serenity […] [that] on the shores of the eternal seas even have the qualities of virtue" (Camus, *Homme révolté* 376–78; *Rebel* 266–67).[38]

René Char must have been greatly touched by the gesture of his friend when he saw the French translation (1976) of *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (1959). Published after his death,

Heidegger not only acknowledged his thanks for the wonderful memories of shared poetic dwelling at the time of the Thor seminars, but he also cited from Char's works as proof of the affinity that exists between poetry and thinking.[39] The first epigraph is composed of the charming, but subtly resilient lines from "Qu'il vive" [That it Lives!] in *Les matinaux* [Early Birds] published just after the war (1947–49):

> Dans mon pays, les tendres preuves du printemps
> Et les oiseaux mal habillés sont préférées aux buts lointains.
>
> In my country the tender proofs of springtime and the badly clad birds are preferred to distant goals […]
> In my country, we say thank you. (Char, *Matinaux* 42)

This "country" is a wished-for place where one is respectful of and generous towards others, relations are liberal and gentle, though "[o]ne doesn't believe in the good faith of victors."

Heidegger then included the poignant lines from "L'éternité à Lourmarin," that Char initially wrote in a letter addressed to Jean-Paul Samson in the wake of Camus' tragic death in 1960: "Avec celui que nous aimons, nous avons cessé de parler, et ce n'est pas le silence" [With the one we love we have ceased to speak but it is not silence] (Char, *Matinaux* 198). This epigraph is a sure sign of Heidegger's attentive sensitivity, his tender understanding of Char's continuing grief for his lost friend.[40] The third citation comes from Char's "Trois respirations" in *Recherche de la base et du sommet* (1954) that is dedicated to those who are disenchanted, yet who have not succumbed to inactivity: "La parole soulève plus de terre que le fossoyeur ne le peut" [Language lifts up more earth than the gravedigger does] (32). Why was this line chosen by Heidegger? Wavelike poetic language is maybe presented by Char as a counterforce to the activity of the gravedigger whose lifting is a mere displacement of earth with the purpose of creating a hole for corpses? For there are corpses that have to be buried. Some have died naturally. Some have been brutally killed: "Why?" interjects the rebel … [41] Heidegger concludes the page with his own epigraph that evokes his love for Provence as the possible "secret arche" that links Parmenides to the poems of Hölderlin, the poet of destitute times. The friendship with Char is thus firmly sealed with Mediterranean affinities that stretch at least from Todtnauberg to Lourmarin, to Elea and to Tübingen.[42]

The molecular configuration, Camus–Char–Heidegger, located in a specific time period and in particular places, forms a dense block of complex detail that raises many vital issues such as: What is a friend? What is an enemy? Or is it merely an anecdotal story, only of incidental interest within intellectual Franco-German history of ideas, with no wider reverberations? Indeed, to what extent is it at all significant in the wash of time? Did it really have lasting effects and significant repercussions? After all what are the long-term implications of anyone's relations, their professed friendships in the wider, longer proverbial "scheme of things"?[43] But I am still troubled. I still want to believe naively in the "authenticity" of one friendship and in the very different nature of the other.[44] We would need to carry out an in-depth study of "the politics of friendship" to delve deeper into the issue, and even then, we still wouldn't know for sure.[45]

"O mes amis, il n'y a nul amis" [O my friends, there are no friends] repeated Montaigne.

## 10

> Those who we call the Ancients so dispersed their funerary monuments in the countryside that they unavoidably encountered them on the way home. They no doubt did not feel like us today, shipwrecked in a limitless ocean, but instead circumscribed by so many *presences*. (Grenier, *Inspirations méditerranéennes* 149–50)
>
> Not so long ago I wanted to take the task of being human seriously, my social standing, my natural "obligations," my relationships,

> and all of that […] But I didn't succeed very well. (103)
>
> The human must look for a life to their *measure* and once it has been found, they must throw it away as there is no life to measure. (78)

In *L'homme révolté*, which was dedicated to Jean Grenier, Camus presents Nietzsche's Heraclitean view of life:[46]

> The primordial sea indefatigably repeats the same words and casts up the same astonished beings on the same seashore. But at least he who consents to his own return and to the return of all things, who becomes an echo and exalted echo, participates in the divinity of the world. (Camus, *Homme révolté* 100–01; *Rebel* 65)

This primordial sea is tidal, like the North Sea, the turbulent ocean of Grenier, but also of Heine, who is not mentioned at all by any of my acknowledged sources.[47] In his poem "Questions," Heine pictures a doubting and melancholic human who asks the night-time sea: what does it mean to be human? Whence has the human come? And wither does the human go? Who dwells on yonder on golden stars? (Heine 208). Maybe we instinctively feel that we originate from, and therefore ultimately belong to, the sea. Maybe that's why we presume that the murmur of the waves, the blowing wind, the flurrying clouds, the twinkling stars, have something to communicate to us. Maybe that's why we ask such probing questions when by the sea, especially when we are feeling down and vulnerable. But the foolishly expectant human vainly awaits answers. If we need answers, then we will have to find them for and by ourselves. But maybe we should stick with the questions? Maybe we should, as best we can, in all its absurdity, in all its adversity, "settle down and live within" [… *uns ansiedeln*] in what I suggest can best be called "tidal thinking" (Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?* 156; *What is Called Thinking?* 137). Is it possible?

In *Was heißt Denken?* [What is Called Thinking?], Heidegger writes:

> Was sich uns entzieht, zieht uns dabei gerade mit, ob wir es sogleich und überhaupt merken oder nicht. Wenn wir in den Zug des Entziehens gelangen, sind wir- *nur ganz anders als die Zugvögel*- auf dem Zug zu dem, was uns anzieht, indem es sich entzieht (5; my italics)
>
> What withdraws from us, draws us along by its very withdrawal, whether or not we become aware of it immediately or at all. Once we are drawn into the withdrawal – *but differently from migratory birds* – we are drawing toward what draws, attracts us by its withdrawal.[48] (Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* 9; my italics)

Despite Heidegger's insistent recourse to the stomping metaphor of being on pathways – Lacoue-Labarthe asks "has one ever been able to think thinking otherwise than as a pathway?" (149)[49] – we can nevertheless detect more fluid and turbulent forces at play in his writings, for instance:

> Wozu dieser Hinweis auf die Sprache? Um uns erneut einzuschärfen, daß wir uns in ihr und mit ihr auf einem schwankenden Boden, besser *im Wellengang* eines Meeres bewegen. (Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?* 169)
>
> Why this reference to language? In order to stress once again that we are moving within language, which means moving on shifting ground or, still better, *on the billowing waters of the ocean*. (Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?* 169; *What is Called Thinking?* 192)

But along with the waves and the tides, there is also the drift [*Strömung*] of language (Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* 61; *On the Way to Language* 63). We try to latch onto something on the way, a good concept is surely dependable, but our grip slowly slips, we are pulled back in, thrown forwards, buffeted from side to side. Language can be "music while drowning" in a world not made to measure for humans.[50]

## II

> Les morts sont à rejeter plus encore que le fumier [The dead are to be thrown away

> more than manure]. (Heraclitus as cited by Palmier, *Situation de Georg Trakl* 297)
>
> Ce qui est decomposé n'est simplement pourri [What is decomposed is not simply putrefied]. (289)
>
> Chez Trakl, il n'y a pas de metamorphose. Ce qui est mort reste mort et le reste à jamais, et lien qui unit les vivants et les morts est un lien criminal [There is no metamorphosis for Trakl [contrary to Rilke]. What is dead remains dead forever and the tie uniting the living and the dead is a criminal tie]. (305)

When Heidegger gave his lecture "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" in Darmstadt in 1951, he recognised that there was indeed a "housing shortage" in Germany, that many Germans were still living like and alongside rats in bombed-out ruins, but he considered that one is not really thinking if one reduces dwelling to a mere question about having shelter (Heidegger, "Bauen, Wohnen, Denken" 147; *Poetry*, *Language*, *Thought* 145–46). Three years previously Hans Erich Nossack had published *Der Untergang* (The Going-under, The Collapse, The Decline) an eye-witness account, one of the very few, of the first Allied bombings of a major German city, that of Hamburg in 1943. Another of Nossack's works, "Unmögliche Beweisaufnahme" [The Impossible Taking of Evidence] somewhat unexpectedly, crops up in Heidegger's "Temps et être" (266).[51] As Sebald points out in *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, Nossack, in his attempt to describe the indescribable, at times resorts to the rhetoric of mythic fatefulness, calling upon the heavens to put a final end to everything whilst "staggering on the shore [*Meeresufer*] of the destroyed world" (Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literatur* 57; *On the Natural History of Destruction* 51). Nevertheless, overall Nossack's syntax befits a situation that has no measure. Grappling with words, the bombing is described as a massive, freak flood that had suddenly swept away the city leaving behind a "stony sea" (Nossack 18). The metamorphosed, "sea-changed" world left free-standing chimneys "like cenotaphs, like dolmens, or admonishing fingers, the only things growing up from the ground" (69);[52] the odd solitary house, either the last or the first in a non-existent street, hung like a "perched cliff in the frozen surf of the ocean of ruins" (106). This is natural history, a petrified primordial landscape, or rather seascape, that appears most natural where it is historical, and most historical where it is natural (Adorno, "Idee der Naturgeschichte" 354–55; "Idea of Natural History" 117).[53] Nossack remarks on the general lack of lamentation (*Klage*), the absence of tears, the uncanny muteness, the disturbing adaptation of habitual life amongst the German population, as if it was all too normal.[54]

The first two essays in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* [On the Way to Language] in the 1959 original and in the 1976 French translation with the dedication to and citations from Char, are concerned with Georg Trakl's poetry. Trakl was "morally killed" by the First World War. After the battle of Grodek, Trakl had to care for ninety fatally injured soldiers, without any help, in an abandoned farm. One of them killed himself in front of Trakl's eyes to put an end to the pain. Corpses of those accused of desertion hung around the place. Unable to bear the sight, Trakl in turn attempted suicide. He was transferred to a psychiatric hospital in Krakov where he died of a cocaine overdose. It is unclear whether it was an accident or not (Palmier, *Situation de Georg Trakl* 11). But Heidegger thinks that it is unimportant who the poet was, what sort of life he had, his historical context … (*Unterwegs zur Sprache* 37; *On the Way to Language* 159).[55]

Trakl's world is full of lamentation (*Klage*), there are sighs; there are tears.[56] It is watery: thinly trickling streams, dark blue to black heavy, borderline stagnant rivers, moistly thick moors, but also the heaving, rolling, swelling liquidity of the sea [*Woge*]. These textures and movements are reflected in those of the air, its drafty breezes and turbulent winds.

Trakl visited his friend Kokoschka every day when he was painting the *Windsbraut* [The Bride of the Wind] (1913–14) (Figure 3).[57]

Über schwarzliche Klippen
Stürzt todestrunken
Die erglühende Windsbraut,
Die blaue Woge
Des Gletschers […] (Trakl, "Die Nacht" in *Poèmes II* 304)

Over dusky cliffs
Plunges death-drunk
The glowing wind-bride,
The blue surge
Of the glacier […] (Trakl, "The Night")

It was Trakl who suggested the title to the painter. In this painting we see how air *is* water and we see the elemental vulnerability of the couple.[58] The attention paid by Trakl to the air's circulation, its currents, tides and flows, can also explain the prominent presence of birds in his poems.[59] There are very few poems where thrushes, blackbirds, swallows, seagulls, to name but a few, do not appear. They rarely sing, instead they cry, shriek, call and, most notably, their wings burst noisily into frenzied flutter when taking flight:

Am grauen Himmel
Ein Zug von wilden Voegeln folgt;
Quere über finsteren Wassern.

Aufruhr. In verfallener Hütte
Aufflattert mit schwarzen Flügeln die Fäulnis

In the grey sky
A flight of wild birds follows;
Cross over dark waters.

Uproar. In dilapidated huts
Flutters up with black wings the putrefaction. (Trakl, "Am Moor" in *Poèmes II* 190)

Particularly striking, even overwhelming as the eye tries to follow the movement and the ear to attune to the commotion, is when a swirling mass of birds decisively depart for warmer climes. But Heidegger, as we saw earlier, seemed to rather summarily dismiss migratory birds in *What is Called Thinking?* as being insignificant for his analysis of how we are situated in this world of language (see above §10 "*nur ganz anders als Zugvögel*," "only completely differently from migratory birds," erased by Gray in his English translation (Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?* 5; *What is Called Thinking?* 9)). Nevertheless, birds are in the air as we are too, differently to be sure, but nevertheless. As Heidegger himself pointed out, the same is not the identical, but a whole set of differences (*Identität und Differenz* 14; *Questions I & II* 346). Birds are the same as fish in water and Heidegger presents the latter as giving us an image of how we are in the world, a world with which we are in communication even if, *especially as*, we do not know what is being said, if anything.[60]

> Die Mehrdeutigkeit ist niemals nur der Restbestand einer noch nicht erreichten formallogischen Eindeutigkeit, die eigentlich anzustreben wäre, aber nicht erreicht wurde. Die Mehrdeutigkeit ist viemals das Element, worin das Denken sich bewegen muβ, um ein strenges zusein. Im Bild gesprochen: *für den Fisch* sind die Tiefen und Weiten des Wassers, seine Strömungen und Stillen, seine warme und kalten Schichten das Element seiner vielältigen Beweglichkeit. Wir *der Fisch* der Fülle seines Elements beraubt, wird er auf den trockenen Sand gezerrt, dann kann er nur noch zappeln, zucken und verendend. Darum müssen wir das Denken und sein Gedachtes jeweils im Element seiner Mehrdeutigkeit aufsuchen, sonst bleibt uns alles verschlossen. (Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?* 68)
>
> [T]his multiplicity of possible interpretations [is not] merely the residue of a still unachieved formal-logical univocity which we properly ought to strive for but did not attain. Rather, multiplicity of meanings is the element in which all thought must move in order to be strict thought. To use an image: *to a fish*, the depths and expanses of the waters, the currents and quiet pools, warm and cold layers are the element of its multiple mobility. *If the fish* is deprived of the fulness of its elements, if it is dragged on the dry sand, then it can only wriggle, twitch and die. Therefore, we always must seek out thinking, and its burden of thought, in the element of its multiple

Fig. 3. Oskar Kokoschka, *Die Windsbraut* [The Bride of the Wind], 1913–14. © Kunstmuseum Basel. Permission for reproduction granted.

> meanings, else everything will remain closed to us. (Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* 71)

In this passage Heidegger suggests that humans can make some way towards sensing, even understanding at some level, what it is to be alive in this world thanks to the image of the fish-in-water. The fish-in-*and-out-of*-water also reminds us of what it must be like for all living creatures who lack the natural resources they need to survive.[61] We too "wriggle, twitch and die" (Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?* 68; *What is Called Thinking?* 71).[62] Fish and birds can both be similar in ways, and different in others, from "us." Heidegger therefore is reducing the potentiality of his analysis when later he suddenly gets so exclusive, categorical and proprietorial about poetic dwelling. He throws out the water (along with the air):

> Das Sagen ist dasselbe Element für das Dichten und das Denken; aber es ist für beide noch oder *schon auf eine andere* Weise "Element," als das Wasser für den Fisch und die Luft für den Vogel; auf eine Weise, daß wir die Rede vom Element verlassen müssen, insofern das Sagen nicht nur das Dichten und das Denken "trägt" und den Bezirk bietet, den sie durchmessen. (Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* 189)

> Saying is the same element for poetry and thinking; but for both it was and still remains "element" *in a different way* than water is the element for the fish, or air for the bird – *in a way that compels us to stop talking about element*, since Saying does more than merely "bear up" poetry and thinking, more than afford them the region that traverse. (Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* 84)

Language speaks and, given that we so much want to be fully in our element, we too snap desperately like forlorn fish, and/or flap frenziedly like broken birds when deprived of what we need to breathe, to live, not to die. There is so much to say and so few, and often not quite the right words, to express! In the poem "Afra," Trakl declares:

> Verfaulte Früchte fallen von den Zweigen;
> Unsäglich ist der Vögel Flug, Begegnung
> Mit Sterbenden; dem folgen dunkle Jahre.

> Rotten fruit fall from the branches:
> Unspeakable is the birds' flight, encounter
> With the dying; dark years follow. (*Poèmes II* 220)

Bird flight is "unspeakable" (unsäglich) says Trakl (220) and furthermore, in "Unterwegs," he declares:

> Unsäglich ist das alles, o Gott daβ man erschüttert *ins Knie bricht*.
>
> It is all unspeakable, oh God, *one could collapse onto one's knees* in exhaustion (174; my italics)

This return to the pedestrian – collapsing on our knees – is befitting for a poem called "Unterwegs" [On the Way], but it should not distract our attention from the more fundamentally underlying and surrounding tidal fluidity that we have already seen at work and in play. Adrien Finck tells us that: "Trakl est *une route tracée sur l'eau*, route sur lequel on ne peut pas marcher" [Trakl is a route traced on water, a route on which one cannot walk] (Finck in Trakl, *Poèmes II* 22). What remains over and above, before and after, are the billowing waves (Wogen):

> Das Gedicht eines Dichters bleibt unangesprochen […] Dem Orte des Gedichts entquillt die Woge, die jeweils das Sagen als ein dichtendes bewegt. Die Woge verläβt jedoch den Ort des Gedichts so wenig, daβ ihr Entquellen vielmehr alles Bewegen der Sage in den stets verhüllteren Ursprung zurückflieβen läβt. Der Ort des Gedichtes birgt als die Quelle der bewegenden Woge das verhüllte Wesen dessen, was dem metaphysisch-ästhetischen Vortsellen zunächst als Rhythmus erscheinen kann. (Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* 37–38)
>
> The poet's statement remains unspoken […] From the site of the statement there rises the wave [*die Woge*] that in each instance moves his Saying as poetic saying. But the wave, far from leaving the site behind, in its rise causes all the movement of Saying to flow back to its ever more hidden source. The site of the poetic statement, source of the movement-giving wave, holds within it the hidden nature of what, from a metaphysical-aesthetic point of view, may at first appear to be rhythm. (Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* 160)

At times the making of ways becomes watery in Heidegger's writings. Tapping into the "Quell- und Strombereich" (the "source- and stream region," or "that which enriches") of the verb "to move," "bewegen," Heidegger lets flow *wiegen*, *wagen*, *wogen* (to weigh, to venture and risk, to heave and surge …) (*Unterwegs zur Sprache* 198; *On the Way to Language* 92).

## 12

Trakl's poem "Klage" (Lamentation) was cited in the "Zeitgeist" room at the Baselitz exhibition held at the Centre Pompidou, 20 October 2021–7 March 2022. "Zeitgeist" was the name of an earlier exhibition that took place in 1982 at the Martin Gropius Bau in Berlin, before the Fall of the Wall. In this exhibition, the "Man in Bed" series was "installed high up" so that the vulnerable and isolated figures, those "threatened by and excluded from society," seemed to float or be adrift in space, whether composed of air and/or water (Figure 4). The curators at the Pompidou suggested that Baselitz's paintings "correspond freely" with Trakl's "Klage." The association of Baselitz's paintings with Trakl changed my perception of what I had taken to be his work, all those rather gauche, clumpy upside-down "hero warriors" that I could easily understand the why of, namely Germany and its dark history, *there is no forgetting of that tragedy and those crimes, no consolation possible*, but which nevertheless did not really *affect* me as paintings.[63] Whereas here, with these tipped-on-their-side figures, I felt a very moving, visceral poignancy.

Baselitz was a war-child. He vividly remembers walking through fire-stormed Dresden at the age of seven (in 1943):

> It was absolute chaos, an apocalyptic world in which I had to be careful where I put my feet. The roads didn't exist anymore when we crossed Dresden […][64] (Pamela Sticht interview with Baselitz in Blistène 263; my trans.)

Fig. 4. Georg Baselitz, *Mann im Bett*, 1982. Permission for reproduction has been sought via all available routes without response hence this image is being used for academic purposes under the agreement for fair use.

The paintings speak to this situation, and indeed so can Trakl. As we saw, his *Dichtung* is "a route traced on water, a route on which one cannot walk" (Finck in Trakl, *Poèmes II* 22).

In "Lamentation" [*Klage*] (1914) – his penultimate poem, written just before "Grodek" – Trakl evokes a purple body buffeted against horrendous reefs. The relentless bashing breaks down any "golden image of the human" that might be residually left. The human image and body are devoured by the "icy waves of Eternity." Trakl's sea is neither one swollen by melted icecaps, nor whipped up by freakish tsunamis, yet there is something in his attention to the exposure of the finite creature to forces that are no longer sublime, but expressly monstrous, that might speak to our times, characterised by Dipesh Chakrabarty as the clash between the "global" (a "humanocentric construction") and the planetary ("that decenters the human") (30). Equally, Trakl's depictions of the destructive brutality of human warfare, compared to the "wild organs of the winter storm" inasmuch as its "purple billows" of violence [*Die purpurne Woge der Schlacht*] also fractures and explodes vulnerable lives "In the East" [Im Osten], is receptive to the discordant "noise" we are hearing about today.

In *The Natural Contract*, Michel Serres reminds us that "noise" means quarrel, tumult, fury, but also "the gasping of water, wuthering, lapping" [*le halètement de l'eau, hurlement ou clapot*] (23–24). Serres begins his book by describing Goya's *Fight with Cudgels* (1820–23) (Figure 5), where we see two enemies bashing each other, woefully ignoring the sinking sands that will imminently engulf them both (13–14). Or rather, to metamorphose by a "sea-change" what Heidegger said earlier, we should not just realise that we are "moving on shifting ground" but, "still better," recognise the even greater danger of "*the billowing waters of the ocean*" (*Was heißt Denken?* 169; *What is Called Thinking?* 192). Whilst we might adamantly, yet nevertheless reluctantly, refuse to dismiss outright all war as wrong, anachronistically beside the point, unjustifiable and even counterproductive given what should be more pressing larger

Fig. 5. Francesco de Goya, *Duelo a garrotazos* [Fight with Cudgels], 1820–23. Image in public domain, Wikimedia Commons.

issues (namely, the climate crisis), there surely has nevertheless to be a case to be made for affirming peace as a militant form of resistance for the turbulent times ahead?

We might easily be able to imagine "peacefulness" as lying on one's back whilst gently bobbing in the sea, our relaxed limbs enjoying the rhythmic motion, our face upturned to a glorious sun. Less evident is the peace to be had when the billowing waves are crushing us and the cold winds are howling inside our heads. Maybe we can in some sense come to terms with these two extremes, or at least address them, by presenting thinking itself as "tidal"?

We have come a long way, it has not been plain sailing. The future will be worse. As Trakl spake:[65]

> Kommen dann Zeiten der unsäglichsten Öde zu überdauern! Was für ein sinnlos zerrissenes Leben führt man doch!
>
> The coming times of unspeakable desolation are to be endured! How senseless and torn the life one leads is! (Letter to Erhard Buschbeck (in Salzburg) V "Vienna 2nd half of July 1910" as cited by Adrien Finck in his preface in Trakl, *Poèmes II* 18)
>
> O wie stille ein Gang den blauen Fluss hinab
> Vergesssenes sinnend, da im grünen Geäst
> Die Drossel ein Fremdes in den Untergang rief.
>
> Oh how still a going-down the blue river
> Things forgotten, as in green branches
> A thrush calls a stranger into the going-under. [*Untergang*, sinking, decline, collapse]. (Trakl, "Sebastian im Traum" 1915; published posthumously (*Poèmes II* 188))

Heidegger reckoned that "der Untergang" (going-under, decline) described by Trakl should not be understood as a real, historically-produced-by-humans catastrophe (*Unterwegs zur Sprache* 42; *On the Way to Language* 164).[66] Maybe he is right, it is not just that. Nevertheless, for us now, given our present situation – wars concatenated with climate crisis – it is that as well.

## disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## notes

1 We would have to explore what we mean by "knowing." What do the characters of Ballard's *The Drowned World* (2014) "know"? Is the term still appropriate? To anticipate later material, see Heidegger on how thinking and poetry are not means for gaining "knowledge" (e.g., *Was heißt*

*Denken?* 161; *What is Called Thinking?* 159; *Unterwegs zur Sprache* 173; *On the Way to Language* 70).

2 Here we would need to interject much information and many references. Firstly, Rolland's various protests against war including "Au-dessus de la mêlée" [Above the Battle] (1915) and his increasing despair about the possibility of peace (see Haroux). See also Jean-Michel Palmier for a reference to Rolland in the context of German Expressionism and Trakl, who will feature later (*Situation de Georg Trakl* 98). Secondly, Freud's reservations in "Civilisation and Its Discontents" (1930) about the existence of any such "oceanic feeling," about any such being-at-one with the world even if it is, following Grabbe, minimally defined as "we cannot fall out of this world" (Freud, *Civilisation* 252). Even this slight "consolation" [*Trost*] he deprives us of (ibid.). (The impossibility of consolation, and the necessity for lamentation will feature later in this essay.) Freud should reappear in relation to Valéry. Valéry, together with Henri Focillon, was behind the initiative of the *Entretiens* between key thinkers published by the Société internationale de coopération intellectuelle, under the auspices of the Société des nations. The resulting exchange with Einstein, "Why War?" (1933), gives little ground for optimism (Freud, *Civilisation* 343–62). Incidentally, there is also an interesting reference in Freud's "Open Letter" to Rolland (otherwise known as "Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis") that, in resonance with Valéry (see section 8), evokes how the ocean stimulates one's longing to travel, to escape, to break free (and the psychological turmoil that can produce) (Freud, "Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis" 455).

3 An important aspect of the process of diffusion Valéry is referring to is globalisation which erodes the importance of Europe, which seems to be his key concern. It might not be ours, or might be, but not solely. Here Derrida would be helpful (*De l'esprit*; *Autre cap*). Derrida (*De l'esprit*) would also be appropriate for the later analysis of Heidegger and Trakl.

4 There are still many as yet unexplored affinities between Jennings' unfinishable *vade mecum* and Benjamin's *Passagenwerk*. Both thinkers refer to Valéry. See Sagnol for just how much Benjamin drew on Valéry's ideas. Benjamin and Jennings both died tragically by the sea, though in different circumstances. Benjamin committed suicide at Port-Bou in 1940, the serene beauty of the Mediterranean did not protect him from the violence of political borders. Jennings fell off a cliff on the island of Poros in 1950 whilst scouting for a location for a documentary film about post-war healthcare in Europe. This essay is drenched in war and death.

5 See Jennings:

> They are all moments in the history of the Industrial Revolution at which clashes and conflicts suddenly show themselves with extra clearness, and which through that clearness can stand as symbols for the whole inexpressible uncapturable process. They are what later poets have called "Illuminations," "Moments of Vision." (xiv)

The resonance with Benjamin's philosophy of history resounds loud and clear.

6 As Jennings (347–48) also notes, "the diffusion and possible, or rather miraculous, idea of the diffused drop gathering itself again" also features in Valéry's poem "Le vin perdu." See Alain's commentary in *Charmes*. He reads the (rich) man's gesture of pouring good wine into the sea as more than a libation, rather more as an action that, by conjuring up a relationship between the body and soul, releases of a whole world of ideas, "that are absolutely strange and absolutely natural" (Alain in Valéry, "Cimetière marin" 216). Incidentally – but also in anticipation of molecular configurations to come – Jennings' father translated the poems of Paul Eluard. René Char was a very good friend of Eluard. For three nights Char stayed with Eluard for the wake of Nutsch Eluard.

7 The assumption of the natural constancy of the advancing and receding motion of the sea needs to be revisited in the light of anthropogenic climate change. Indeed, in places the tidal range has been exacerbated, in others it has decreased. Valéry (e.g., "Inspirations méditerranéennes" 254, 256) presumed on the "universality" of the sea, as did Grenier (*Inspirations méditerranéennes* 90) and Camus (*Noces et L'été* 136, 138). In the past it seemed that the sea, and "nature" generally, could be counted upon to remain "true" to itself, always the same, "eternally primitive," unaffected and indifferent to us.

8 An essay should not really have footnotes. They are far too academically heavy. And here I am

adding another one. Footnotes can be akin to currents that drag one off course, even out to sea, though they can also drift rather pleasantly like flotsam.

9 Grenier borrowed his title from Valéry (with his permission). This is acknowledged in the preface, as is their shared vision of the life-enhancing and ennobling properties of Mediterranean culture (Grenier, *Inspirations méditerranéennes* 11–12 and see note).

10 Grenier originated from Brittany. He began his teaching career in Naples before moving to Algiers for eight years. Before discovering the pleasures of the Mediterranean, he was familiar with the Atlantic, which was "always mobile and uncertain" (Grenier, *Inspirations méditerranéennes* 99). In the north at low tide, a vast expanse of muddy sand extends way out to the horizon where the sea barely features as a thin shimmering strip, barely distinguishable from the sky. When the tide changes, the sea rapidly advances inland, loudly asserting its presence with its impressive and sometimes most intimidating roaring and crashing. Such potentially dangerous contrasts make for a mind – such as Renan's or Chateaubriand's (Grenier, *Inspirations méditerranéennes* 102) – that is equally turbulent, unstable. Being far less tidal, the Mediterranean maintains "its perfectly defined horizons" (99). Grenier reminds us that there is no "sea" as such; there are various seas, and their "moods" can vary. As migrants, but also fishermen, know, even the Mediterranean can turn hostile. When the sea reveals its radical otherness (what Camus calls the "primitive hostility" of the world (*Mythe de Sisyphe* 30; *Myth of Sisyphus* 14)), we clearly see the absurdity of our anthropocentric assumptions that the world is ours.

11 For Grenier his love of trees figures as "a negative theology" (*Inspirations méditerranéennes* 168).

12 Grenier's character proposes that contemplation requires a "point d'appui," a support or resting point, akin to "the balcony that serves the woman who leans out (qui s'accoude)" (*Inspirations méditerranéennes* 167). Leaving aside the evidently problematic assumption that the reader is male, here it is suggested that, in order to for us to have any sort of grip on the sea, some technique needs to be found. Grenier's "Cornelius" suggests that everyone needs to be able to lean against (s'adosser) something, or someone. If one refuses that this means of support can be one's ancestry, the atmosphere of one's country or region, or the "familiar abstractions of one's times," then one is detached from everything, doomed to "float wide at sea" (184). If one has no frame or point of reference, there "nothing compatible with the human" in this world and any "Absolute" one postulates is "a synonym for nothingness, as there is no possible interpretation." The response to Cornelius resonates with the ideas of Camus and indeed Char, for example: "if everything comes to the same thing and if, in spite of that, one must act, then is it not better to act as energetically, as effectively, as possible?" (Grenier, *Inspirations méditerranéennes* 185). We too need to act right now given the gravity of the climate crisis even if, especially as we know that we cannot prevent it, only partially mitigate its effects. See Robinson's references to Camus' "happy" Sisyphus for how a lively sense of "absurdity" is a crucial aspect of resistance (572).

13 The text reads: "[l'arbre] apprivose le paysage, il nous ménage avec lui, avec Nature hirsute ou d'un calme inhumain, une *entrevue* qui ne nous accable pas" (Grenier, *Inspirations méditerranéennes* 167). See also Heidegger on how representation as a "putting in front of us" is the means by which nature is "brought" to humans: "Die Natur ist durch das Vor-stellen des Menschen vor den Menschen gebracht" ("Wozu Dichter?" 283).

14 My use of "commodious" is intended as an allusion to Paul Celan's reference to Büchner's "eine kommode Religion" in "Leone und Lena" (Büchner 118). Celan plays on Karl Emil Franzos' rather apposite mistranscription of Büchner's manuscript (he noted down "kommende"): what is "commodious" is always "to come"; a world fit to measure for all is the utopia we are always searching for (Celan, *Ausgewählte Gedichte* 147–48). Celan is liminally present in the molecular configuration I describe in this essay.

15 Heidegger's point is that if we want to think, like swimming, we have to take the plunge. Both have to be actually practised as activities. Neither can be taught. Strangely he later says that cycling is different (Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?* 160; *What is Called Thinking?* 158). Heidegger made reference to Valéry (e.g., "Terre et ciel de Hölderlin" 230–31).

Janicaud stresses that Heidegger, contrary to the clichéd image one might have of him as being Urdeutsch, was familiar with the works of Valéry, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé and of course Char (226). The first of Jean Beaufret's questions to which Heidegger responds in "Brief über den Humanismus" referred to Valéry's criticism of "zélateurs d'action" (Heidegger, *Lettre sur l'humanisme* 26–27; Janicaud 113). For further resonances between Heidegger and Valéry as regards the "spirit of Europe," see Derrida, *De l'esprit*.

16 The very idea that one can take the plunge or not is misplaced inasmuch as we are primordially at sea and any "dry land" is a halting construction within that context. It is the sea that has thrown us temporarily upon the shore, see *L'homme révolté* (1951) where Camus paraphrases Nietzsche on Heraclitus (*Homme révolté* 100; *Rebel* 64). Moreover, with rising sea levels due to the climate crisis, soon there will be no decision to be made. Some already have no choice.

17 I fear that we will not get to that beach, but then one never had enough time to play on the beach. One always had to rush back home out of fear of being reprimanded for being late to dinner. For the significance of building sandcastles, see Nietzsche on Heraclitus:

> And as children and artists play, so plays the everlasting fire. It constructs and destroys, in all innocence […] Transforming itself into water and earth, it builds towers of sand like a child at the seashore, piles them up and tramples them down. From time to time, it starts the game anew. (111)

See also Camus quoting Nietzsche: "a child is innocence and forgetfulness, a new beginning" (100; *Rebel* 64–65). Michelet's *La mer* (1861) is also very good on why "young imaginations" throw pebbles at the sea: it is the "image of the war, of combat, the sea is frightening," the child responds in kind (48–49). Throwing pebbles is a way of fighting back, resisting its otherwise humiliating opposition to us.

18 In his review of Grenier's *Inspirations méditerranéennes*, Maurice Blanchot emphasises that for Grenier (likewise for Valéry), the appropriation of Protagoras' "measure" is "no mediocre anthropomorphism." The vital task of Mediterranean culture is rather "to search for the point where one can compare oneself with the world, where the accidental, unstable, fragmentary individual is substituted by a universal I from within […]" (Blanchot 78–83). Grenier makes the same point himself: "This is not anthropomorphism, as the human is aware of their limits, instead it is *humanism*" (*Inspirations méditerranéennes* 110). What haunts this essay is the necessary loss of any "point" and "measure." This "loss" does not indicate that there ever was a measure, see Hölderlin: "Gibt es auf Erden ein Maβ? Es gibt/Keines" in "In lieblicher Bläue […]" (202). The climate crisis should mean that we get real, that we lose this world by really confronting the planetary. And yet we want to live.

19 See Schürmann for an analysis of the nuances between "es gibt," "es ist," "il y a," "there is" and, for example, Heidegger, "Temps et être" 246–48.

20 My style imitates Grenier's writing that swings into glorious affirmation, to then plunge into a melancholic, if not downright depressive and even nihilistic negativity and indifference. Indeed, Grenier's character, "Malan," in Camus' *The First Man* states: "There is a terrible emptiness in me, an indifference that hurts me" (Camus, *Premier homme* 47; *First Man* 29). However, having reached the depths, he then manages to surge back up again, for a time.

21 See also Grenier (*Albert Camus* 60; *Îles* 70, 74, 77) for other Pascalian references.

22 Camus wrote to Grenier on 28 December 1959, seven days before the car crash, enquiring as to the whereabouts of the book (Grenier, *Albert Camus* 31–32). By the way, but not without significance, when he left the house in Lourmarin on that fateful morning, he left a copy of René Char's poetry open on his desk.

23 This essay is awash with paraphrasing, although it does also sporadically acknowledge formal references. Unjustifiable academically maybe, but mitigated by the nature of the topic and the essay genre and style. The ideas have been appropriated, reworked, as if by a "sea-change" (Shakespeare I, ii, 403). For the metamorphosing processes of the sea, see Valéry's "Eupalinos" on the wondrous washed-up object – is it natural or a work of art? (discussed by Benjamin 531–35). Grenier suggests that statues found in the earth are "mutilated," whereas

those retrieved from the sea are "disaggregated," "partially dissolved," creating an otherworldly, strangely moving "porous beauty" (*Inspirations méditerranéennes* 100). See also Bachelard on how water groups together images, dissolves substances and helps the imagination in its task of "désobjectivation" (dis-objectivation), to assimilate (17). To provide respectable support for my paraphrasing, I point out that Blanchot does the same in his review of Grenier, as does Derrida (e.g., *Politiques de l'amitié* 349ff.). What does it, anything, matter after all? (Grenier, *Inspirations méditerranéennes* 161). Moreover, this is also an essay which by definition should provide "proof of a certain activity of the mind, or a disorderly work of erudition" (Blanchot 79). Nevertheless, a "critical light on a subject" should also gradually diffuse through the piece (ibid.).

24 The reference to Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (e.g., 20) can be justified inasmuch as we will be evoking the Allied bombings of Germany.

25 The first line of Camus' "Helen's Exile" echoes Grenier's sentiments: "The Mediterranean has its solar tragic that is not that of the mists" (Camus, *Noces et L'été* 133).

26 Hapgood's translation is "waves, surf and eddies" (Camus, *First Man* 20).

27 See Zola for a powerfully succinct account of how dying well depends on having lived well and how class can be a determinant of both. See also *The Tempest* for how dying at sea can be perceived as especially frightening: "I would fain die a dry death" (Shakespeare I, i, 66–67).

28 See Derrida (*Spectres de Marx* 23–24; *Politiques de l'amitié* 5–6) on how Marx is later mysteriously dropped by Valéry.

29 Again, the Eurocentricity neither satisfies nor suffices. We need to think far wider than this. The crisis is much bigger. It is this world, where "we," that is, most of us, some have other ideas, want to continue to live, to be sure differently, better, but nevertheless still here on this earth.

30 Described in this way (but see also Valéry, "Inspirations méditerranéennes" 246), the port is an ideal place to take measure of the world so as not to be lost at sea. See also Hölderlin on the equally "commodious" framing of the window as cited by Heidegger (*Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* 158; "Terre et ciel de Hölderlin" 205).

31 See the work of Thierry Fabre, for example, *La méditerranée créatrice* for whom Camus' "la pensée du midi" is central. Camus also sees the Mediterranean as "preserving the fountains of life" where, one day, "an exhausted and ashamed Europe will refresh itself" (Camus and Char 230).

32 Valéry's life was marked by war. He was born in Sète in 1871, not long after the end of the Franco-Prussian war, lived through the First World War and died in July 1945, just before the end of the Second World War. He said that when he was young, one could still say that "[h]istory still lived on the waters" (Valéry, "Inspirations méditerranéennes" 250). He evidently had a sense that times were changing, hence his wanting to promote the Mediterranean as a cultural and quasi-political model for a fast dissolving "Europe" (to be defined, a definition of which is always to come …).

33 Here we can reconjure up Valéry's image of "le vin perdu": can the molecules of those early initiatives – an ideally demilitarised league of nations, the only possible condition for the materialisation of the Kantian pleonasm "perpetual peace" – ever be resuscitated? See also note 2 above.

34 I hesitate to add a question mark here as Christa Wolf's novel, *Was bleibt*, published controversially after the fall of the Berlin Wall, didn't have one.

35 *L'homme révolté* is dedicated to Jean Grenier.

36 Camus' apparent dismissal of Valéry should be counterbalanced by his use of the same quotation from Pindarus as an epigraph, indicative of a shared approach to life, namely: "My soul do not seek immortal life, but exhaust the realm of the possible." See Valéry's "Le cimetière marin" and Camus' *Le mythe de Sisyphe*. What this quotation might well suggest to us now is that harbouring transhumanist fantasies of escaping elsewhere, in the hope of living forever, of deftly evading the extreme climatic situations that we will be further confronted with, is a dangerous and irresponsible illusion. We need to draw on what Günther Anders, along with the International Peacebuilder John Paul Lederach, call our "moral imagination," so as to create a "realm of the possible," one that includes what was before considered impossible, "utopian." As the famous line from "Le cimetière marin" says: "Le vent se lève! […] Il faut tenter de vivre!" [The wind is rising!

[…] We must try to live!]. We must confront the new wind blowing our way and find creative ways of living accordingly. See also F. Hartog for this citation (331–32).

37 See Char (*Recherche de la base et du sommet* 15–16) for his disgust for the post-war settling of accounts and ideological recuperation of the horror that is warfare. Note his complex and challenging analysis of the Nuremberg trials. We would need to analyse these pages far more closely.

38 This line from "A une sérenité crispée" comes from Char (*Recherche de la base et du sommet* 134); see Camus' later allusion to it (*Homme révolté* 382; *Rebel* 277). Grenier (*Inspirations méditerranéennes* 119) talks of an equally paradoxical "sérénité déchirante" ("heartrending serenity"). "Déchirement" is also used by Camus (*Homme révolté* 378), but translated by Bower as "dichotomy" (*Rebel* 266).

39 For an account of these seminars, see Janicaud (esp. 240–51).

40 Heidegger expressed a wish to visit Camus' grave when he was in Lourmarin with Char in September 1969, see Vézin 198.

41 Following on from his citation from Char, Camus proclaims that injustice and suffering will never cease to be an outrage to the rebel. "Dimitri Karamazov's cry of 'Why?' will continue to resound through history; art and rebellion will only die with the death of the last man on earth" (Camus, *Homme révolté* 379; *Rebel* 266–67).

42 Char belongs to Heidegger's company of poets: Hölderlin, Rilke, Benn, George and Trakl, but he also mentions Rimbaud.

43 The question is disingenuous. The relation between what one, for example, Heidegger thought, did and wrote and how those texts are received, interpreted, made sense of over time is an issue not to be easily settled. Crucial for the post-war reception of Heidegger in France were two figures, Frederick de Towarnicki and Jean Beaufret. When de Towarnicki, clad in his French uniform, dropped off Beaufret's "Confluences" articles about his work in 1945, Heidegger was at his nadir: under the denazification proceedings, he had been banned from teaching (it was lifted only in 1951) and his house and library were under threat of being requisitioned. On his return visit a few months later – with Alain Resnais (who later made "Nuit et brouillard," 1956) – de Towarnicki consolidated the Franco-German configuration that is the concern of this essay. On the occasion of Heidegger's first trip to France in 1955, the philosopher expressed a desire to meet Char and Georges Braque. It was Camus – known to Jean Beaufret from Resistance days in Lyon (Vézin 197) – who was asked to forward a letter from Anne Heurgon-Desjardins – the wife of the professor Jacques Heurgon, to whom Camus dedicated *L'été à Alger* – to Char inviting him to participate in the Cérisy event with Heidegger. Char declined this particular invitation, but wrote to Heidegger suggesting a private meeting which became the famous "Discussions under the Chestnut tree" in Ménilmontant, Paris. For more detail and analysis of this fascinating chapter of the history of philosophical thought, see Camus and Char 157–61, also Vézin but especially Janicaud.

44 On 17 September 1957, Camus was feeling rather miserable with his children in Sorel-Moussel. It is not close to the sea, there is only the river Eure nearby. It was probably raining as it rather tends to in Normandy. Worlds away from the Mediterranean! Needing moral support, Camus wrote to Char: "life today is too difficult, one could literally die of sorrow, but one must nevertheless live, one must find the words, the impetus, the reflection that produces joy." Camus relies on the "happy, free adventurous disposition" of his friend, and, in return, Camus wants to be for Char "the companion on whom he can depend, forever" (Camus and Char 188–90). What we seem to have here are deeply vested interests in friendships that help attribute a value to Life. See also the footnote which is an extract from a letter to Grenier for proof of, if not the bad weather, the adverse climate in Normandy: "I have deprived myself of the South and its pleasures […]" With the climate crisis, will we still differentiate between weather and climate in the future?

45 On this issue, Derrida (*Politiques de l'amitié*) has a lot to say.

46 The epigraph in the original French text from Hölderlin's "Death of Empedocles," where he avows his heart to the earnest and suffering earth, is taken from the preface of Geneviève

Bianquis' two-volume French translation of Nietzsche's *Will to Power*. Camus is interested in the same sources as Heidegger, see Vézin 206. See also Janicaud (e.g., 312–14, 321–34, 344–45) for Vézin's situation (and Janicaud's own) within the intriguingly convoluted story of the French reception of Heidegger.

47 Interestingly, Freud does cite this poem by Heine, in a very strange, unexpected context as befits what is sea-changed (Freud, *New Introductory Lectures* 146).

48 Despite being an attentive and sensitive reader of Trakl, in whose works birds feature prominently, Heidegger rather typically dismissed them (as he tends to do with all non-human lives) as having nothing to tell us humans about what it is to be a-wing, being carried along by or fighting against currents and flows. It is perhaps for this reason that J. Glenn Gray does not even translate the words I've added in italics into English (Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?* 5; *What is Called Thinking?* 9). Nevertheless, tidal thinking could not be strictly human. Indeed, Heidegger himself later on makes reference to the fish's relation to water as a parallel to how we should move in thought, "in the multiplicity of meanings" (*Was heißt Denken?* 68; *What is Called Thinking?* 71). We will be returning to the fish later.

49 Lacoue-Labarthe has good analysis of Celan's "disappointment" with Heidegger. Celan is the other "friend" who could have been featured in this piece. See Janicaud (292n, 338n, 370n) for further references to Celan's visit to see Heidegger in Todtnauberg. We won't forget that Celan committed suicide by jumping into the Seine.

50 "Music While Drowning" is the title of Egon Schiele's poem taken as the title for Miller and Watts's anthology of German Expressionist poems. In the preface, David Constantine has a good account of how the poetry, in particular that of Trakl and Goll, is a "setting up one after the other of more or less autonomous images," a "procedure that is appropriately disconcerting; It suggests a world lacking in connection […] Things have their own significance; the anthropocentric order disintegrates […]" (Miller and Watts 11–12). Note also, given the even vaster capacity we have nowadays to destroy the world, the apocalyptic vision of these early twentieth-century poets is still highly pertinent.

51 It is probably not insignificant that the Nossack text that rather abruptly ends Heidegger's 1962 lecture is called "The Impossible (Taking of) Evidence." Heidegger's essay was republished in French translation, as "L'endurance de la pensée," in 1968 as part of a *Festschrift* for Beaufret.

52 "And sometimes there really was a severed finger on a heap of rubble" (Zuckerman in Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literatur* 39; *On the Natural History of Destruction* 32).

53 Sebald ponders what Zuckerman's proposed "natural history of destruction" might have consisted of. One salient aspect of it might have been the conspicuous change in what had hitherto been taken as the "natural order" of the cities. Parasitical creatures thrived on the unburied bodies, of which there were, for example, more than 40,000 in Hamburg. Nossack reports that the city was ruled by rats and flies. Repulsive fauna grew in the rubble (Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literatur* 42–43; *On the Natural History of Destruction* 35; Nossack 99–100). Sebald wonders how many people "succumbed to the sheer nausea of existence" [[*diejenige*], *die […] dem Daseinsekel erlagen*]. See also Ballard for descriptions of nauseously proliferating, disgustingly writhing life forms.

54 Nossack describes how it would have been easier to calm a lamentation than deal with the silence. He asks: why didn't they complain and cry? (Nossack 24, 27).

55 In *Situation de Georg Trakl*, his epic-length doctorat du troisième cycle, Palmier states that his two meetings with Heidegger taught him more than two years of research (13). Palmier later slightly distanced himself from his earlier text, recognising how his admiration of Heidegger's reading of Trakl led him to downplay the importance of the poet's social and historical context (Palmier, *Expressionisme et les arts* 218). Despite this avowal, Palmier's *Situation de Georg Trakl* is not simply under the influence of Heidegger, it is an excellent and fascinating instance of a "tidal" analysis. Palmier repeats and repeats, notions are remodelled; he advances motifs, then drifts through associations, and some images accrue extra growth. Palmier's death was tragically premature, fifty-three years of age, due to cancer. See his sensitive appreciation of Heidegger's analysis of death in *Sein und Zeit* (Palmier, *Situation de Georg Trakl* 304–05).

56 To develop the topic of "lamentation without consolation," we would have to turn to Gottfried Benn's "Hier ist kein Trost" [Here is No Consolation] with its reference to the shore and the sea: "Du ich lebe immer am Strand/und unter dem Blütenfall des Meeres" ["You I always live on the shore/And under the blossom-fall of the ocean"] (*Gedichte* 70; *Primal Vision* 223). Benn's poem is often read as a dialogue with Lasker-Schüler's "Höre" where she writes: "Ich bin dein Wegrand. Die dich streift, Stürzt ab" [I am your wayside./The one who touches you/Falls away" (Lasker-Schüler 215). Benn's "reply" is as follows: "Keiner wird mein Wegrand sein./Laβ deine Blüten nur verblühen./Mein Weg flutet und geht allein" rather freely translated by Richard Exner as: "No one shall be the brink of my abyss./Leave your blossoms to wither./My path follows and runs alone." This exchange explores whether relationships have any value given that we are condemned to die, ultimately alone. In his analysis of Trakl's lamentation without consolation, Palmier draws attention to the poet's outraged revolt against death (*Situation de Georg Trakl* 309).

57 Palmier even suggests that Trakl might have actually painted the *Windsbraut* with Kokoschka (Palmier, *Expressionisme et les arts* 222). This painting could relate to "the experience of emptiness" identified by Grenier (*Inspirations méditerranéennes* 187): "haven't you felt in the midst of the sea that you are lost, swallowed up in a thing without a name that could never understand nor bear you?"

58 There is an irritating gender difference evident in this painting: blissfully unaware of anything vaguely tumultuous going on around her, Alma Mahler sleeps in her troubled lover's, tormented Kokoschka's, arms …

59 Fish do appear in Trakl's poetry, but far less often than birds. Some are immobile (see "Kleines Konzert" (Trakl, *Poèmes II* 104–05)), though there is also from time to time an odd, solitary darting youngling.

60 Rilke didn't quite "get" Trakl – "wer mag er gewesen sein?" [who on earth was he?] he wrote in a letter to the editor of *Brenner* (Palmier, *Situation de Georg Trakl* 17). Nevertheless, they have things in common. The generous Wittgenstein was prepared to finance them both (Trakl died too early to benefit from the stipend). Heidegger appreciated them both (but of course not half as much as he esteemed Hölderlin). Also, akin to Trakl, Rilke was sensitive to birds, see notably the marvellous poem "Es winkt zu Fühlung" (Rilke 452): "Durch alle Wesen reicht der *eine* Raum:/Weltinnenraum. Die Vögel fliegen still/durch uns hindurch. O, der ich wachsen will/ich seh hinaus, und in mir wächst der Baum […]" [One single space pervades all beings here:/an inner world-space. Silently, the birds/fly through us still. Oh, I who want to grow,/can gaze outside: a tree will rise inside me] (trans. D. Young). To give him his due, Heidegger turns out to be rather good on (apple) trees (*Was heiβt Denken?* 16–19, 106; *What is Called Thinking?* 41–43, 173) as Marder (173–91) also notes.

61 For those of us who have been largely spared the effects of the climate crisis, who have been living more or less as "before," we had better wake up to such visions that depict the scarcity of natural resources.

62 Heidegger writes "verenden" for the fish as he considers that no other species apart from humans die (sterben) as such (*Was heiβt Denken?* 68). Gray opts for "die" rather than "perish" or "come to an end" and it suits me to run with that translation so as to stress the affinities between species and how we also depend on them; our lives are entangled with theirs (Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* 71).

63 In regard to Celan's "disappointment" with Heidegger at Todtnauberg due to his failure to say anything about the Holocaust, Lacoue-Labarthe writes: "j'ai eu tort de penser un instant qu'il suffisait de demander pardon" (167). There is no consolation; there is no possible pardon.

64 Also vividly described by Nossack. In the exhibition catalogue, Philippe Lançon draws on Gottfried Benn rather than Trakl to situate Baselitz's work, in particular Benn's line: "Ich höre Aufbruch in meinem Blut" [I hear departure (breaking-up) in my blood] (from "Söhne" viii "Ein Mann spricht" in Benn, *Gedichte* 67). Desolation is all-pervasive in this poem. There is no consolation. See also Nossack (15) where he says that the bombed-out residents of Hamburg could not listen to music such as Bach's precisely because it has something consoling in it [Es liegt etwas tröstendes darin] which just accentuates their

awareness of being "nakedly and helplessly" exposed to "a power that wants to destroy [them]." This passage for me captures the horror that is war. There is ultimately only lamentation, no consolation, even if, *especially if* one resists, one fights for a "good cause," as did Char.

65 Nietzsche is present more or less throughout this "essay": not so much for Valéry, as far as I know, but certainly for Grenier, Camus, Heidegger, the German Expressionists including Trakl.

66 Nossack's description of the Hamburg bombings was called *Der Untergang*, as is war itself. It is a catastrophe. Heidegger wrote:

> What did the Second World War really decide? (We shall not mention here its fearful consequences [*furchtbaren Folgen*] for my country, cut into two.) This world war has decided nothing – if we here use "decision" in so high and wide a sense that it concerns solely man's essential fate on this earth. (*Was heißt Denken?* 65; *What is Called Thinking?* 66)

See also in the original German text (not included in English translation), Heidegger's strong recommendation to his students (he has only recently been allowed to resume teaching) to see the exhibition about the "silent voice" of German prisoners of war that is currently on in Freiburg (20 June 1952) (*Was heißt Denken?* 159). He insists that they should register this "voice" in their inner ear forever. No-one can speak adequately of war, of what it does and permits to happen, nevertheless it is maybe important to acknowledge our inability to do so, to register its extremely destructive impact, to speak of one's distressing sense of disorientation, of loss, of vulnerability. It is maybe important to recognise one's limits, yet affirm that one wants to speak, to communicate, to say something, to reach out – to something else, to alternatives. That Heidegger persistently refused to name, condemn and lament the Holocaust, that the only "fearful consequences" that he seems to see of the Second World War is the splitting of "[his] country in two" (and the suffering of German prisoners of war) is shocking, unacceptable. It also prevents us from appropriating in this passage what could be construed for us today as a message to refuse war so as to refocus on Life, ours and the other species that are still here. We certainly need to make a "decision" and no God, and no Heidegger, will "save" us, if our survival is what we indeed want.

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