One of the origins of philological thinking in Werner Hamacher's oeuvre is without a doubt the work of his teacher Paul de Man. In his short text “The Return to Philology,” de Man allies the persistence of close reading and philological techniques in literary departments with the advent of post-structuralism. They share a program of developing the question “whether aesthetic values can be compatible with the linguistic structures that make up the entities from which these values are derived.” Philology here would match the deconstructive techniques that consider reading first an act of developing poetic and rhetorical figures before turning toward hermeneutic techniques and historical context. The resistance within literary studies against this theoretically oriented approach that de Man points out is taken up again by Hamacher in his manifesto Für—die Philologie, of which the opening sentence reaffirms de Man's diagnosis from more than two decades before: “There is an anti-philological affect” that turns itself against the “privileging of the concentrated attention to language, the word, the pause.” Hamacher situates philology as that which departs from the zero-level assumption that

Meaningfulness and communicability would be dependent on an instant that withholds itself for itself before any determined meaning and before any complete communication. Philology is the advo-
cate of this withholding, for which and through which language is first of all able to give.3

This description of philology as advocating the for of the instant that precedes and gives signification and communicability, the retraction that makes language possible in the first place, becomes decidedly more emphatic in Hamacher’s 95 Theses on Philology, most prominently in Thesis 46: “Philology: in the pause of language.” It is this thesis that will guide us through a number of interrelated theses on philology, as well as in a broader context Hamacher’s work on poetry as prima philologia (Thesis 14), poetry as the site from which he gathers philology.4

Before considering what Thesis 46 says, we ought to first inspect how it says it—without staking any claims on any essential separation between content and form that philology undermines. In my understanding, Hamacher has neither chosen the thetic form by accident, nor in order to approach a certain logical or scientistic format.5 We should read this “thesis” as resonating with the opening lines of Aristotle’s De Interpretatione, a text to which Hamacher often returns throughout his oeuvre: “First it needs to be posited [thesthai] what a noun and what a verb [is].”6 Aristotle's entire treatise thus operates under the sign of a positing of nouns and verbs and the sentences that can be built from them. In Aristotle, thinking about language takes the first form of a thesis.

De Interpretatione is considered one of the founding texts of logic and grammar, as it lays out the conditions for the logos apophantikos, declarative discourse, that which builds a logically sound argument. However, it has a central position in Hamacher’s enterprise as the place where—in the midst of the most grammatical and metaphysical terseness—the first resonance for another discourse is heard, specifically a philological one. This discourse is “another logos, one that does not say something about something and therefore can be neither true nor false” (Thesis 8): the euchē, the prayer or wish.7 Whereas the Western sciences and most of philosophy have developed in the realm of the logos apophantikos, philology is located within the discourse of the euchē (Thesis 9).

Another aspect of Aristotle’s opening sentence of De Interpretatione that should draw our attention is the absence of any copula—“is.” Translated word by word, Aristotle indicates only that what needs to be pos-
ited is “what noun and what verb.” This syntactical feature provides us with another opening toward thinking Hamacher’s 95 Theses. For Thesis 46 similarly revolves around the absence of a copula, thus defying a status as proper sentence, or as definition. Jacques Derrida, in his essay “The Supplement of the Copula,” has given ample attention to how the verb “to be,” and especially its third person singular indicative form, the copula, is inextricably linked to a set of problems commonly gathered under the header of metaphysics, haunting linguistics and philosophy alike.8 Hamacher’s conscious omission of the copula in this thesis thus emphasizes philology’s distance from metaphysical considerations, as if silently responding to the enigmatic last sentence of Derrida’s essay, “If it were still a question, here, of a word to say, it would surely not be for philosophy or linguistics as such to say it.”9 It is philology that says this word, itself being a “chopping copula, chopula” (Thesis 39).

In Hamacher’s philological thesis, the absence of the copula is compensated in turn with a punctuation mark, a colon.10 Thesis 46 performs its own statement by opening up a pause inside itself, suggesting neither adequation nor subordination, but rather a silence that contemplates a form of relation that may be different, “signaling both continuity and interruption.”11 Here we may think pause with its etymology in the Greek pausis, meaning stopping or ceasing. Again, this arrest of the pause, that in which philology happens, has an antecedent in Aristotle’s text—namely, at a moment of non-declaration similar to the one that marked the euchê: “So when spoken by themselves, verbs are nouns and signify something,—the speaker halts [histēsi] his thinking through and the listener calms down [ēremēsen],—but whether it is or not it in no way signifies.”12 The standstill of the speaker’s mind and the immediately following acquiescence of the listener are signaled by the abrupt present tense form histēsi and the aorist ēremēsen. The bare verb form, without the context of a declarative sentence with a subject and predicate, causes a veritable pausis in language, an “absolute fermata” (Thesis 59), a “holding back” or delay (Thesis 70). It is this pause that is doubled up in the middle of 95 Theses, on the blank page of Thesis 48,13 in which the question of being, the ontological question, is suspended and meaning itself is called into question. Philology is thus confirmed as decidedly anontological (Thesis 29).
Hamacher consistently sets up philology against ontology—that is, a specific set of philosophical considerations. Whereas issues of the meaning, address, and aim of language have been, are, and will be important preoccupations of any philosophy, philology operates, so to say, on the other “half.” Philology concerns itself with lack of meaning, the absence of stable protocols of reading, and aimless speech (Thesis 48). Whereas language is often considered the object of philosophy, philology treats it as its objet (Thesis 49). Were we to return to Lyotard’s terminology, silence, pause is the differend between philosophy and philology; and to “give the differend its due is to institute new addressees, new addressors, new significations, and new referents in order for the wrong to find an expression and for the plaintiff to cease being a victim.”

It may be suggested that it is Hamacher’s philological project to explore these new addressees, addressors, significations, and referents, in order to reinstate philology not as a secluded area for obscure specialists or as an oppressive field of outdated knowledge, but as a project of the “emancipation of the interval” (Thesis 41). Hamacher’s usage of “emancipation” here is not without political connotations. Not only do the form and title of the 95 Theses refer to Luther’s tractate that started the Reformation, also its content at times becomes militant: “As long as a single person must pay to be able to speak with others and to read and listen to them, language and philology are not free” (Thesis 87). And it is in poetry—for poetry is prima philologia—that Hamacher attempts to locate this emancipatory, reformatory force of philology.

Any consideration of poetry as prima philologia in the work of Werner Hamacher has to take as one of its points of departure his readings of Paul Celan because they trace the outlines of the philological thinking that has congealed in the 95 Theses. Like Hamacher’s philological project, Celan’s poetical project departs explicitly from Aristotle: “[Poetry] does not transfigure or render ‘poetical’; it names, it posits, it tries to measure the area of the given and the possible.” Hamacher’s article “The Second of Inversion” uncovers, by following the movement of a figure of speech, the inversion, through the work of Paul Celan, the point at which his poetry is able to articulate itself philologically—that is, unrestricted by any metaphysical boundary, fully founding itself on
the abyss of its own potential meaninglessness. The contrast, outlined in the 95 Theses, between philology and ontology, is therefore an immediate consequence of Hamacher’s reading of Celan and, more specifically, a close analysis of the function of the dash, the pause, as what Hamacher provisionally calls the “inversion of inversion.”

“The Second of Inversion” opens with an extensive consideration of the consequences of Aristotle’s theory of the logos apophantikos in De Interpretatione. The logic of declarative speech or “predicative assertions” that bases itself on the semantic and referential functions of language—that every sentence signifies something—has since the beginnings of occidental grammatical considerations firmly linked language to reality, either as “an empty gesture that must evanesce before the power of the factual” or “accorded all the weight of the only ascertained reality.” Hamacher’s point is that within this metaphysical framework of the logos apophantikos, language cannot be thought on its own right: “At the end of every semantic theory of language and its truth stands the aporetic verdict: language does not speak.” He thus sets out to escape this logic through the work of Celan, just as he has sought escape routes in De Interpretatione itself: the meaninglessness of the euchê and the bare verb.

The motif of inversion comes into play at the moment that language as guarantee and source of the objectivity of reality itself is promoted to the construct of reality itself. Hamacher locates this moment in the “Copernican turn” of Kantian philosophy, and with this turn he signals the appearance of the entire vocabulary of revolution, overturning, and inversion, including the speculative inversion of the Hegelian negation of negation. According to Hamacher, the figure of inversion heralded by Kant retains its efficacy in the German philosophical, literary, and poetic tradition up to the early and middle work of Paul Celan who, however, “seeks ultimately to surpass and abandon this figure by means of a procedure to which the formulation ‘inversion of inversion’ scarcely does justice.”

Hamacher locates the first instance of such surpassing in the last poem of the cycle “Counter-Light” from Celan’s volume Poppy and Memory:
The whitest dove flies off: I can love you!
In the soft window swings the soft door.
The still tree stepped into the still room.
You are so near as though you did not linger here.

From my hand you take the great flower
it is not white, not red, not blue—yet you take it.
Where it never was, it will always remain.
We never were, so we remain with it.\textsuperscript{20}

The poem drives the figure of inversion to the extreme with the symbol
of a flower in the second stanza, “laying bare the carrying-over mecha-
nism of imagistic language at its extreme, thus trope, turn, and reversal \textit{par excellence}.”\textsuperscript{21} However, in this ultimate articulation of the logic
of inversion, Hamacher also locates the first of a series of ruptures in
Celan’s poetry that will be the undoing of this logic:

This possibility of the impossibility of its own existence breaks open
in Celan’s poem only in the dash before the \textit{doch} (yet), in the inter-
ruption of tropic language, in the mute hesitation of receiving and
perceiving. This graphic pause [ . . .] opens in poetic speaking a hole
that cannot be closed by the logic of inversion; it opens a distance
that cannot be transformed into nearness, a difference that cannot
turn into unity, a mute site that cannot change into a topos of an
eloquent image. This is the site of an absence that must still remain
unreachable to every absence that could change into our own, into
the presence of language.\textsuperscript{22}
In this citation we are already able to locate several aspects of the pause of language later developed in the 95 Theses. Hamacher explicitly invokes the pause of dash, the “mute site” that resists inversion and possible articulation, in an attempt to address the other half of an ontological process at work in Celan’s poetry. As prima philologia, poetry here offers the philologist, in casu Hamacher, philology itself: “Philology: in the pause of language.” It is perhaps not incidental that he locates the rearticulation of a possible love of language, of a philo-logy, in a poem that concerns itself with the “very site of the language of love,”23 in the pause of language, the place where nothing followed language any longer or, as formulated in Thesis 37: “Philology is the love of the non sequitur.”

A second instance in which Hamacher treats the pause in Celan’s work is in his discussion of the poem “Radix, Matrix.” For Hamacher, “Radix, Matrix” is a poem in which the logic of inversion that was still lingering in Celan’s poetry is fully undone:

[...]
(Wurzel.
Wurzel Abrahams. Wurzel Jesse. Niemandes
Wurzel— o
unser.)
[...] [[Root.
Root of Abraham. Root of Jesse. No one's
root—o
ours.]]24

Communicability itself has given way, and the poem “delivers itself up to the abyss of possible meaninglessness, indeterminacy, and incomprehensibility.”25 In the penultimate stanza of the poem, Hamacher notes that the figure of inversion itself becomes suspended in a “‘pause,’ a ‘hiatus,’ a ‘lacuna.’”26

The lacuna between “no one’s” and “root” cannot be brought down on either side of the opposition between meaning and meaninglessness: it maintains itself between the poles of this opposition [...]. Neither semantically nor asemantically cathected, the lacuna—and
not only this one—holds open the space between negation and the negated, keeps it open for their relation and at the same time for the possibility of non-relation. [. . .] In the pause there is nothing and there is not nothingness.27

Like in the poem from “Counter-Light,” the pause interrupts the linguistic fabric of “Radix, Matrix,” but whereas in the former the dash was only a first crack, the pause in the latter acquires its full philological weight:

Only when this lacuna and loophole separate language from itself does language impart as ours; as language held in common, it only imparts as one held back by the collapse of communication. [. . .] Here the linguistic being is articulated—and being is only thus articulated—in which language reaches out to its own nothingness, to the nothingness of its reference, its meaning, and its determination.28

The movement traced by Hamacher in Celan’s poetry, from the early poems in which the figure of inversion makes its way through time in order to mend all oppositions, until “Radix, Matrix” and beyond, in which this figure is fully undone and “has ceased to be its rhetorical and epistemological matrix,” leaves us with a situation in which language is divested of its last metaphysical foothold. But where the philosophical grasp fails, the philological traction increases.29

Hamacher’s reading of Celan’s poetry as one of the origins of his philological preoccupations does not offer us a definitive key or point of access to philology itself, nor to a definitive reading of poetry. What we have attended to in briefly reviewing “The Second of Inversion,” a text to which we will return later, is nothing but an attempt to distinguish the imprints of Hamacher’s later philological theses in his philological work, in order to elucidate the former and recapture the latter. Nevertheless, the question remains: “How does philology answer these verses of Celan? [. . .] Philology gives no answer” (Thesis 52).

If not an answer, we may find another indication in the work of the Belgian poet Jean Daive. Less well known in the Anglophone world, Daive’s first volume of poetry, Décimale blanche, was translated into
German by Celan, who was in turn translated by Daive into French. Daive has recorded the traces of their friendship in the fifth volume of his prose series *La Condition d’infini*, entitled *Sous la coupole* (Under the Dome). This title should already make us attentive to the space that is occupied by their exchange—namely, “under the coupole,” underneath and hushed by the expanse of the copula. At several points, Daive is explicit about the absence of the copula and the verb in general in Celan’s work: “On the one hand, the composite noun—on the other, no verb is given. Paul Celan does not give the verb. [. . . ] Absence of the verb: the verb is absorbed into the energy of the composite noun. Morphology.” 30 Similarly, Daive, still a young poet when encountering Celan, learns from him the value of silence: “I’ve come to understand that a silence—is—the negative of a moment of thought and that it needs to be heard thoroughly.” 31 Beside an unsuccessful attempt at crossing out, an interruption of erasure, or perhaps even a suggestion of adequation, “a silence—is—” that recalls the interruption of thought already signaled in Aristotle; this suspension of the copula between two silent dashes raised by Celan in Daive forms the bridge to Hamacher’s readings of Daive.

Hamacher has translated Daive’s volume of poetry, *Narration d’équilibre 4-W* (W for Werner?), appending a lengthy postscript under the title “Anataxis. Komma. Balance.” And Daive’s intense engagement with the work of Celan should in turn make us attentive to the possibility that Daive’s poetry, like Celan’s oeuvre, lends itself to an exposition of Hamacherian philology. A considerable portion of Hamacher’s reading of W zooms in on the interruptions of its language, its broken syntax, the bare infinitives, and proliferation of periods. Hamacher claims that not one comma can be found in the entirety of W precisely because each of its constituents is structured like a comma, undoing the predicational core of syntactical structure. In an extended lemma on the interruption of regular syntax in W, Hamacher develops the idea, affiliated with Derrida’s claim, that the syntax of the copula, the predicational pivot of declarative discourse as meaningful language, is some type of “transcendental machine.” 32 In the tradition of Stéphane Mallarmé and Gertrude Stein, Daive upsets and “reprograms” this syntactical—or as Hamacher suggests, *seintactical* 33—machinery. He does not
concern himself with “a grammatically correct, monolinear speaking, recited in an ordered syntax, but [...] with the possibility of speaking and language as such.” The comma is here the interpunction mark of the undoing of seintax, of its dispersion, displacement, and dissemination. In his 95 Theses, Hamacher returns to the comma and its relation to the pause in which philology arises:

Hölderlin’s philosophical and poetic attention is condensed in a philological remark that is related from the time of his misery. It says, Look, my dear sir, a comma! [...] If one considers the weight that the future, the arrival, the coming claimed in Hölderlin’s language, then this comma may also hint at that which is not asserted but is called and invited to come. Philology would then be attention to that which interpunctuates, brings to a hold, creates caesuras, because within it something that comes—or its coming—becomes noticeable. (Thesis 92)

Through Hamacher’s considerations of the comma in Daive’s W, we may now perhaps turn to “Sllt,” the preceding installment in the series Narration d’équilibre. Although Hamacher refers only once to this text in his considerations of W, he seems very well aware of the affinities between these two texts, their continuities, and discontinuities; on closer inspection it will appear that “Sllt” openly insinuates itself into the philological discourse that Hamacher developed in his readings of Celan and Daive’s W. Whereas W stages the psychoanalytic drama of (mis)communication, or rather its breakdown (and Hamacher’s citation of “Sllt” in his reading of W suggests this relation), “Sllt” operates in what precedes communication, what we may perhaps call the sleep of language. In this sense, the title, between quotation marks, makes us attentive to the suppressed ssst of the nocturnal visitor, the salut of poetry, but also the slat that will appear in the construction of nocturnal language. At the same time, the title bridges the separation between counting and spelling by incorporating its own ordinal as “ll,” while indicating a certain muteness, vowellessness of language that is “comparable à une surdité” (comparable to a deafness), a deafness and an oversaying, a saying too much (sur-dité). Attending to the thematics that cross over from “Sllt” to W, and to Hamacher’s philology of the
comma, we may perhaps start by inspecting briefly the following pro-
grammatic poem from “Slit”:

Des yeux
comme capsules, mettre la monnaie
sachant
qu’une virgule se déplace
selon
le temps qui.

[Eyes
like caps, putting down the money
knowing
that a comma displaces itself
according to
the time that.]38

The opening phrase invokes closed-off eyes, a state of being asleep,
a suspension of theōrein: “Les yeux, en d’autres termes ce qui me précède /
évoquent les nuées dont parlait le mot / théorie” (The eyes, in other words
what precedes me / evoke the clouds whereof the word theory / spoke).39
Throughout “Slit” sleep plays an important role as a figure of the pro-
cess of unconscious phrase building, the construction of language, but
also of resting. The money of the second phrase recalls the long history
of coins as a metaphor for words, including a sentence from Gertrude
Stein’s How To Write discussed in Hamacher’s lemma on interruption in
W:40 “Putting down the money” is thus another image for the coining of
language, the minting of words, what happens when eyes are capped off.
This language production takes place “knowing / that a comma displaces
itself,” which is fully congruous with what we have been able to establish
thus far in Hamacher’s reading of W. But whereas in W the comma is, so
to say, fully integrated as anatactical structure, present in each phrase,
in “Slit” it is still in constant displacement, “according to / the time that.”

This final phrase ends in a non-sequitur—did we expect le temps
qui [reste]?—suspending any specification of the time of the comma’s
displacement, or precisely qualifying it as a time that happens in a
silence, a blank space, a break, pause, or abrupt interruption—a sec-
ond. It is this second that provides us with the decisive link between the poetical work of Celan and Daive and Hamacher’s efforts in philology. “Sllt,” however, is not only philological in the sense that it, as we will see, forms a bridge between Celan’s work and $W$; it also produces an entire mode of shadow signification, departing, like Hamacher, from the classical grammatical framework set out by Aristotle, but at the same time responding to its crisis.

In *De Interpretatione*, Aristotle elaborates on the different parts of human speech and institutes a tripartite division between “affects in the soul” (*ta en tēi psukhē pathēmata*); “sonifications,” more commonly translated as “words” (*ta en tēi phōnēi*); and “written things” (*ta graphomena*) which are linearly connected. Affects of the soul are symbolized by sonifications, which are in turn symbolized by what is written down. Letters (*grammata*) and sounds (*phōnai*) are not the same for everyone, contrary to the affects of the soul to which they refer, which they signify as signs (*sēmeia*). The same holds for the relation between words and things.41 In these definitions, Aristotle lays the foundation for the sign as linguistic unity, as well as for the structuralist idea that whereas the form of words, letters, and sounds is arbitrary, the signification of a sign is stable: the famous interpretation of the sign as a fissured duality of signifier and signified.42 However, besides the philological objections raised by Hamacher, additional philosophical and scientific developments have complicated the Aristotelian theory of linguistic production. Brain scans and electromyograms of the larynx and throat offer us an image of actual sound production and the underlying physical processes. Moreover, the works of Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan, who both, among others, addressed the Saussurian sign, have shown that the unity of the sign is less stable than it seems, both on the level of the signifier and signified.

It is within this context that Jean Daive aims to formulate a poetic—that is, a philological—response to the crisis in the (analysis of) the production of language and signification. Cast in a Hamacherian mode, we may suggest that Daive develops a mode of signification for the *euchē*. The first poem in the section “Pant Threat” of “Sllt” immediately addresses the wide topographical range of the role of poetry and its extension beyond the restricted Aristotelian realm:
Car rôle, in—
dit tout dire. “Maïa, neurolinguistique, télépathie
Inde, danse, allométrie. Pourquoi cette traversée des autres
comme—”

La chambre serait-elle sous la tente.
Blocage. Aphasie. Cerveau dans lequel
une chimie sans page.

Raie qui se
onde.

['Cause role, in—
dict say everything. “Maia, neurolinguistics, telepathy
India, dance, allometry. Why this traverse of the others
like—”

The chamber would it be under the tent.
Blockage. Aphasia. Brains wherein
a chemistry without page.

Line that
waves.]^{43}

The role of poetry is introduced as a car, quare, a res and thus a chose,
cause, a causa that is in, immanent, the cause of poetry as poetry itself,
but perhaps also a cause that is in-, un-, in the sense that Hamacher sug-
gests that language is a “causa finalis defecta” (Thesis 81). But this in is
suspended in a dash, a pause that at the same time links it to dit, in—
dit. An interdiction, interdit, is immediately silenced, suggesting an
un-said, in-dit within itself. Yet in spite of this possible prohibition or
obstruction of speech—“Blockage. Aphasia.”—poetry should say every-
thing: from Maia, the eldest of the Pleiades and the mother of messen-
ger and interpreter-translator Hermes (but also a name referring to an
ancient form of hieroglyphic writing); to the latest developments in
neurolinguistics, telepathic brain waves emitted from the skull; to the
origins of grammar and the dancing and syncopated rhythm of speech

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and language. Whereas Hamacher expands the discursive field set out in Aristotle by embracing the *euchē*, Daive suggests that, at the same time, Aristotle’s theory of the sign should also be extended, from the neurological signals in our brain to the pressure of air waves.

But, at the same time, Daive also says, “Why this traverse of the others like—.” In its saying everything, poetry also asks why it is crossing all of it, traversing this constellation of terms, and “des autres comme—” (the others like—), like silence, like pause, but perhaps also others *comme, cum*, with (Thesis 38), or, perhaps, comma. The quoted pause at the end of the second stanza also links the constellation that describes the field of linguistic action to its site of production: “The chamber would it be under the tent,” characterized by aphasia and blockage, the proper terms to qualify the two dashes ending the first and second stanzas. This “chamber […] Brains wherein / a chemistry without page” recalls the absolute incommensurability of neural signals and chemical processes with spoken, written, or read language, only lines that wave. In neurology there are no holes, only waveform, as yet unsymbolized electrical signals. And the poet doesn’t see anything more in it than we do, “Nothing but a wave”:

 Je ne vois plus que vous. Rien qu’une onde.
Cela ne se trouve pas.
S’écoute. Neurologie.
La main d’un singe. Sa gorge nous supplie.
Nous aurons des enfants, des arbres. Nous grandirons
nous grimperons.
Cela dans ce qu’elle dit. Plus tard.
Neurologie.
Le kilomètre.

[I do not see more than you. Nothing but a wave.
That does not get pierced.
Hears itself. Neurology.
The hand of a simian. His throat supplicates us.
We will have children, trees. We will grow up

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we will climb.
That in which it says. Later.
Neurology.
The simians are coming, closing in
doubling. The kilometer. That. Phonetic language.
The kilometer.]

On the allometric side, on the other side of the human speech apparatus, there are different measurement units. The microseconds of EEGs are transformed into sluggish waves of air pressure, into phonetic language. Within this enlarged field of signification, which includes the structure of the sign but envelops the neural signals and air waves on both sides of our throat, a new figure emerges: “The hand of a simian,” a supplicating throat that not only “supplicates” (supplie) but also supplements (supplée). It is the ape’s aphasic throat that distinguishes it from a human; its articulatory mechanism is one of the reasons it cannot speak with us. His throat does not “have” language as we are supposed to but only knows the gesture of supplication, even before it can have enfants (children) or, more precisely, infants. Supplication, that is, the euchê, precedes non-speech (Thesis 19). “That in which it says,” in which neurology speaks, is always later. The simian climbs, traversing distances differing from allo-métrie, the minute scales at which neurons fire at each other. This singe (simian) is what dwells in the spot previously occupied by the Aristotelian sign (signe), between the waving signposts of neurology (ta en tēi psukhē pathēmata) and phonetic language (ta en tēi phōnēi). As can already be traced in Under the Dome, “[Karol] opens her legs and notebooks and explains that her life is phonetic writing learned in Northern India among monkeys with whom she lived for a year.”45 These monkeys are the sign, originating from a conversation between Daive and Celan about stammers and stutters,46 of the inherent aphasia of all speech: the mangling, interrupted signals, gaps, and non sequiturs. Daive’s simian upsets the entire economy of language, where the monetary character of language transforms into “monnaie de singe,” empty promises.

Whereas Stéphane Mallarmé imagined the sign as swan (cygne), caught on the surface of the white page, Daive focuses on the unoffi-
cional, mischievous character of the sign, highlighting its almost human qualities. Here we have to remind ourselves that in his *Course on General Linguistics* Saussure illustrates the duplicity of the sign by means of a tree: the relation between the concept “tree” and the phonological sequence /t-r-i/ is arbitrary (arbre), and Daive’s simian seems to climb from one to the other, swinging between different branches. The border between signifier and signified, so strongly articulated by Saussure, is thus perforated through the simple displacement from signe to singe, from the Greek sēmeion to the English simian, from signification to singification. Daive thus provides an image of what Lacan described as the signifier entering the signified. He does not consider the sign to be a structural or hermetically closed unity, as suggested by Saussure, but implies that the signifier constantly insinuates itself in the signified: words and concepts continuously penetrate each other.

In his reading of the *Interpretation of Dreams*, Lacan elaborates the semantic mechanism of Verdichtung, which is “the superimposed structure of signifiers in which metaphor finds its field; its name, condensing in itself the word Dichtung, shows the mechanism’s connaturality with poetry, to the extent that it envelops poetry’s own properly traditional function.” This metaphor, which produces a superimposition of signs—“condensation”—functions as process largely during nocturnal dreams, but is also expressed within the work of poetry. If we would follow Hamacher, this process of Verdichtung is so productive that the initial metaphoricity that may emerge with it ends up completely flattened out. It is a process of closing in and doubling, but under a kilomètre, a thousand meters, the allometry of a nanosecond—not under a single master-signifier but under a thousand masters (maîtres), born from a thousand mothers (mères, Greek métēr).

Semblable à l’attention
si je lui dis fut semblable à
l’identique.
Il conclut. Il reste pour ressembler
et ainsi. Des chambres sans table ni mur.
Des chambres avec un soleil
tout entier.
[Similar to the attention if I tell him was similar to the identical. He concludes. He remains to resemble and such. Chambers without table or wall. Chambers with a sun entirely.]

This brings us back to the place where Daive’s *singification* takes place, the chamber under the tent, *tente, tenter, attention*, and waiting (*attente*). This is similar to this halting that Aristotle describes in *De Interpretatione*, when the thinking process stops, and the listener quiets down, attentive and waiting for what follows. Attention is the construction of a pause. And what is this construction in which the simian—image of the permeability of the sign, index to the interpretation of dreams, but also a pre-linguistic, even pre-infans state of humanity—climbs around? As Daive writes, “He concludes. He remains to resemble / and such. Chambers without table or wall.” This resemblance (*ressembler*) and being similar again (*re-sembler*)—“Similar to the attention / like I say to him similar to / the identical”—is at the same time a reassembly (*rassembler*), a construction of “chambers with a sun / entirely.” Resembling is remaining in the attentive pause, in an open space without furniture or walls.

Un sommier en quoi cette seconde resterait.
Méconnue qui sépare s’appelle je suis couché et je marche.
La pratique de la bouche entrée déjà comme une construction dans mon sommeil.

[A slat in which this second would remain.]
Disowned that separates
is called I went to bed
and I march.
The practice of the mouth
already entered like a construction
in my sleep.[50]

The subconscious work on the construction of the phrase may also be interpreted as the construction of the sign itself, which for Saussure is always split by a bar (barre). And Lacan pertinently points out that arbre and barre are anagrammatically derivable from each other, something that, as I stated before, has its reflection in the couple signe–singe. However, this bar is at the same time a blockage: “Ils lui bloquent la mémoire / avec un sommier.” (They block his memory / with a slat.)[51] Again we find a confirmation that chamber and blockade, speaking and aphasia, are intimately connected and mutually imply each other. Daive speaks of a démembrement (dismemberment) of words, a “complexe de subordination” (subordination complex): a subordination, subjugation, subdivided into “alerte chimique” (chemical alarm), electric signals in the brains, firing neurons, and “ces rassemblements de sommeil” (these accumulations of sleep).[52]

Just like the slat, the plank, is part of the chamber’s construction, which is gradually built up—from Planche I: Tout / est / lacune (Plank I: Everything / is / lacuna)[53] until “Merci pour le plancher. Il finit / tout.” (Thanks for the planking. It finishes / everything.)[54]—this space, built from planks, is provisional, conditional: “Une condition est placée comme / une planche. / C’est une balance.” (A condition is placed like / a plank. / It’s a balance.)[55] It is a balance, a figure that is fully worked out later in W, because it depends on lacunas, pauses, breaks; a fragile balance between the words, sentences, and themes that also compose the entire cycle of Narration d’équilibre.[56] Yet the planks and slats (sommiers) do not only refer to the nocturnal construction work of sleep (sommeil) and the support of the bed; they also contribute to the summation (sommer) of the phrases, series, and seconds (secundus) sequences and persecutions; marching and marking are separated and thus form names, words, albeit in a disowned way: aping. The practice of the mouth, the
speaking of language, is always already under construction in our sleep, similar to an attention, an attentive pause, in a chamber constructed by slats “in which this second / would remain.”

With Daive’s introduction of the poetic trope of the second in “Sl1t,” we may perhaps return, through Hamacher, to the opening lines of Celan’s volume *Language Mesh*:

*Stimmen*, ins Grün
der Wasserflächen geritzt.
Wenn der Eisvogel taucht,sirrt die Sekunde:
Was zu dir stand
an jedem Ufer,es tritt
gemäht in ein anderes Bild.

[Voices, into the green
of the water surface etched.
When the kingfisher dives,
the second buzzes:

What confronted you
on each of the banks,
it steps,
mowed into another image.]^57

Celan’s poem resonates in several ways with the few poetic samples that we have adduced from “Sl1t.” Whereas in Daive’s poem, a simian replaces Mallarmé’s swan floating on the reflective water of the page, Celan’s kingfisher breaks this clear surface, diving in like the simian reaching out with its supplicating throat. Both animals attempt to break the classical logic of the signifier that Hamacher has drawn out as the logic of inversion. Although this is only the first of many intersections between Celan’s *Language Mesh* and Daive’s “Sl1t”— for what does “Sl1t” propose other than a “language mesh” constructed by sommiers?— Hamacher points us here to the etymological sense of *Sekonde, seconde*— namely,
from secare, to cut, a section but also sexing of time, as the slicing of the water surface but also as a slicing that is diese Kunde, “this message,” or “conduit of communication”:

DieSeKunde is not simply a metamorphosis but also a metaphor, the very moment of metaphorization: conducting across and carrying over. All images and all turns of speech in Celan’s text follow the alteration dictated by its eccentric center—dieSeKunde, the second, this conduit: they are not metaphors for representation but metaphors for metaphorization, not images of a world but images of the generation of images, not the transcription of voices but the production of the etched voices of the poem itself. [. . . ] Die Sekunde—this second, this conduit—dictates the law of “originary” secondariness; it is the cut that precedes everything primary, the rift that opens in every principle, including that of universal linguisticity, and it disperses every unit and every condition that makes unity possible.\(^58\)

For Hamacher, dieSeKunde suspends the semantic function of language that was supposed to be secured by the figure of inversion, whose ultimate conduit was time itself. The pause is that which interrupts the “language of inversion,” which is “the language of time represented as a continuum of negativity.”\(^59\) By interrupting time with time itself, the message with a broken message, the meaningfulness of language itself becomes grafted on its only ultimate meaninglessness. Hamacher here dovetails with Giorgio Agamben’s remarks that the modern conception of linear time is out of sync with the conception of revolutionary history, and that it is necessary as well to think of “revolutionary time.”\(^60\)

In order fully to undo the language of inversion, linear time itself needs to be inverted. The interruption of the temporal fabric ultimately supporting the figure of inversion that Hamacher signals under the second in Celan’s Language Mesh may be thought precisely as an attempt to think what Aristotle thought to be thoroughly heterogeneous to the experience of continuous, uninterrupted time: pleasure, that which is “perfect at any moment.”\(^61\) Although this idea of pleasure as suspension of linear time is not immediately developed by either Celan or Daive, Hamacher seems to hint at it at two key points of the 95 Theses—namely,
immediately preceding Thesis 46: “This other philology [i.e., not in its classical conception] cannot be out for an end and a goal; it can only be out for a feast,” and at another instance beyond the edge of the 95 Theses — namely, in Thesis 95sqq: “The delight therein: that the indefinite slowly defines itself.” Feast and delight as conditions for philology here bring forth the necessary interruption of linear time by means of pleasure. And this other idea of revolution that, however, has very little to do with the revolution that is still dependent on the language of inversion sustained by linear time, appears openly in Daive’s text, in fact precisely in what can be nothing but a glorious image of the poet, or, pace Hamacher, the first philologist.

Ces choses oubliées.
Mot à mot, ce qu’ils allument
dans mes cheveux.
Un sommier par la suite
nocturne
plus lourdement chargé
qu’éclairé. Un jour s’édifie, dormir
car des journaux auront
 rempli les baignoires.
Il y aurait alors un dernier livre
et sa première phrase:
“Le répétiteur de la révolution
se transforme en pur logarithme
de vitesses stellaires.”

[Those forgotten things.
Word by word, what they kindle
in my hair.
A slat through the nocturnal
series
heavier loaded
than lit. A day builds up, sleeping
because newspapers would have
filled the tubs.
So there would be a last book
and its first phrase:
“The repeater of the revolution transforms himself into pure logarithm of stellar speeds.”

This verse, which provides us with a shorthand of the entire logic of signification that I have addressed above, opens with “Those forgotten things,” opening not only the question of memory and the often blocked subconscious, but also of the choses—that is, the causes of language, which are always somehow defect, broken, forgotten. “Ces choses oubliées” thus refers directly to language itself, which “word by word, what they kindle,” light up “in my hair,” becoming external to the inside of my head, in my cheveux, chevet, the bedhead of the bed in which I sleep. “A slat through the nocturnal / series” recalls the construction of language in my sleep, the somnier in which the seconde remains, which returns here as suite, which etymologically derives from the same Latin verb as secundus, sequi. This is a “sleeping / because newspapers would have / filled the tubs.” Journaux here relates to jour in the previous line, but could perhaps also be read as jour-non (non-days), or at least not days as described by Daive in “chambers with a sun / entirely.” The contrast between jour and journaux thus may suggest two different times, the former built with the slats in which the seconds remain—that is, a day not in the linear conception of time but rather the eternal Sabbath of Messianic time, and the latter consisting of the eternal monotony of journalism (Thesis 90).

The slat is “heavier loaded / than lit.” We recall here the overburdened back of the simian and the obscure work of sleep that, however, ends up with “chambers with a sun / entirely,” and indeed, “A day builds up,” suggesting that there may be a last book, which recalls the last book of the Bible, the Apocalypse—that is, the arrival of the end of times, in which “a first phrase” would have its première in front of all these ground floor boxes (baignoires) filled with endless chatter. And this first phrase, after all the sleep work has been done, the simian having traversed the chamber, basking in the light of the entire sun: “The repeater of the revolution / transforms himself into pure logarithm / of stellar speeds.” This sentence is an image of the poet, the first philologist. He is “The
repeater of the revolution,” the inversion or revolution that even revolutionizes time itself, repeatedly. As Hamacher suggests, this is no simple repetition; rather, “it releases itself from repetition and dissolves it. It turns to another beginning, that is to say, back to something other than a beginning. It—philology, repetition—does not only turn back. It begins, without principle” (Thesis 88).

The poet “transforms himself into pure logarithm”; into a free rhythm of the logos, a spacing of words and speech; the incarnate comma of stellar speeds; the progression from night to day; the sleepy acceleration, running early; but also the speed of Stellen, the Aristotelian thes-thai, thesis of language, that is, in the pause of language.

Notes

2. Werner Hamacher, Für—die Philologie, cover–1. My translation.
4. See also Hamacher, Für—die Philologie, 14.
5. There is a clear resonance with Luther’s 95 Theses, the manifesto that he nailed to the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg and that set off the Reformation. These theses, as well as his translation work, were undoubtedly the result of a philological project to recuperate the Scripture from canonical exegesis.
6. Aristotle, De Interpretatione, 16a1.
the colon and other punctuation marks, see M. B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).


13. The page of Thesis 48 is blank in the German edition of Urs Engeler; in Diehl’s English translation there remains only an empty paragraph.


15. The other 95 Theses that Hamacher explicitly refers to are Gershom Scholem’s *95 Thesen über Judentum und Zionismus*, in *Gershom Scholem: Zwischen den Disziplinen*, eds. Peter Schäfer and Gary Smith (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), 287–95. See, by way of comparison, Thesis 79.


36. The following annotations to “Sllt” were previously developed in my short introduction, “The Poetry of Jean Daive.” *continent* 2, no. 2 (2012): 82–98. I

38. Daive, Narration d’équilibre, 264. All English translations from “Silt” are my own.
39. Daive, Narration d’équilibre, 190.
41. Aristotle, De Interpretatione, 16a3–8.
43. Daive, Narration d’équilibre, 221.
44. Daive, Narration d’équilibre, 222.
45. Daive, Under the Dome, 130.
47. Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, 67.
49. Daive, Narration d’équilibre, 183.
50. Daive, Narration d’équilibre, 243.
51. Daive, Narration d’équilibre, 251.
52. Daive, Narration d’équilibre, 266; 263.
53. Daive, Narration d’équilibre, 189.
54. Daive, Narration d’équilibre, 185.
55. Daive, Narration d’équilibre, 274.
61. See Agamben, Infancy and History, 114.