

BOOK FORUM

*Dialogue on the Threshold:
Heidegger and Trakl*

by Ian Alexander Moore

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A Question (Un)Concerned with the Feminine

Katherine Davies

In a “first of its kind”¹ volume in “English, French or German,”² Ian Alexander Moore’s *Dialogue on the Threshold: Heidegger and Trakl* stages a variety of scenes in which philosophy and poetry are locked in a struggle for dominance – over the meanings of words, over religion, and over politics, to name some of these agonistic domains. Moore names such combat “dialogue,” and the theoretical and spiritual warfare it composes animates nearly every page of his monograph. Across seven chapters, Moore first offers historiographical context depicting the opulent sociality that motivated Heidegger’s initial public engagement with the poet and then opens philosophical sites of various “productive and problematic tensions that pervade Heidegger’s reading of Trakl.”³ Despite their localizations within Heidegger’s engagements with the poet, the *topoi* Moore motivates in his book will provoke every Heidegger scholar to reconsider the stakes of Heidegger’s sense of philosophy, of poetry, and (especially) of politics.

Beyond the monograph proper, Moore includes four appendices (constituting nearly one hundred pages) that provide unprecedented access to a variety of sources, including Heidegger’s annotated copies of the Zurich and Salzburg editions of Trakl’s *Die Dichtungen* among other scholarly boons. These appendices offer an overview of “Heidegger’s Trakl Marginalia,”⁴ a collection of “Heidegger’s Occasional References to Trakl”⁵ between 1950 and 1972, a mapping of Heidegger’s often uncited “References to Trakl’s Works in ‘Language in the Poem,’”⁶ and finally a selection of eighteen particularly relevant and newly translated “Poems by Georg Trakl.” This compendium offers a veritable treasure-trove for probing Heidegger’s relation to Trakl further. But even more significant is the rich philosophical and poetic analyses

Moore provides in his pathbreaking book, including developments in Heidegger's thinking of "sexual difference, pain, and madness, . . . [and the blurred] boundaries between the animal and the human"⁷ among many other topics.

With his titular invocation of "dialogue," Moore seems to invite us to consider whether – and on what terms – any meaningful exchange between these two figures unfolds. On a cursory reading, one might conclude that Moore shows just how *little* of Trakl Heidegger seems to have understood. Instancing a dynamic perhaps all too familiar to readers of Heidegger's readings of other significant intellectual figures, Moore may be demonstrating yet again how the philosopher offers a painfully "selective reading"⁸ that seems to compel this poet to speak against himself whenever Trakl is made to speak in Heidegger's voice. Moore illustrates many moments in which it seems Heidegger forcefully recasts Trakl – for instance, the Christian redemptive thrust of "A Winter Evening," elisions of incest in "Springtime of the Soul," and a Hölderlin-izing of "Gródek." And yet this "violent"⁹ mediation of Trakl's "saying," which Heidegger "sounds," is called by Moore "dialogue."

In the *Country Path Conversations*, Heidegger takes great pains to distinguish between dialogue (*Dialog*) and conversation (*Gespräch*): *Dialog* is "about something and between speakers" – wedded to a metaphysical object by subjects – where a *Gespräch* waits for that of which the speakers would speak to emerge and thereby to transform *who* they are so that they could begin to speak of *what* it may be beyond the strict confines of metaphysics (GA 77: 57/37). In his readings, Heidegger certainly seems to set out an "object" for us through his reductive portrayal of Trakl's poetizing and speaks *about* it in "dialogue" with a tailored version of Trakl Heidegger produces as his subjective interlocutor. Indeed, it appears that Heidegger may still rather be caught up in thinking with Hölderlin – holding on to the dream of the western land of evening (*Abend-Land*) of a secret Germany yet to come – not bothering to notice that the author of the works to which he now turns is someone else entirely.

I wonder if Moore is suggesting, at least in some sense, that Heidegger is still reading (his) Hölderlin, even though he quotes lines from Trakl. If so, might this further suggest a (political) *ethos* underlying Heidegger's poetic reading practices? Heidegger may claim that Trakl only writes "one poem," but may it rather be that Heidegger is pursuing "one thought" by any and all (poetic) means?¹⁰ Is Heidegger – at least in his readings of poetry, if not in his thinking of poetizing as such – on the hunt for a particular political argument that he finds ways to contort his subject(s) into (un)saying?

On Heidegger's own account, dialogue forecloses the possibility of conversation – of a speaking *of* that which is already both arriving and departing with others who are always not yet who they may become. Yet while he makes the case that Heidegger set the stage for a thoroughly metaphysical dialogue with Trakl, Moore nevertheless sets out to rescue this poet from the elision he suffers in Heidegger's work, perhaps to rehabilitate the possibility of a genuine conversation between these figures. *Dialogue on the Threshold* offers its readers a plethora of invitations to continue – or simply to begin – a conversation between Heidegger and Trakl on a wide variety of topics. I regret that I will only be able to raise several of them here.

One of the elements Moore touches upon at several points in his book is the question of gender for Heidegger at this time, specifically configured by femininity, sorority, and maternity.¹¹ In his chapter six – devoted to the topic of *Geschlecht* in the Trakl writings – Moore highlights the possible meanings of this multifaceted German term. For his part, Heidegger reads Trakl's use of *Geschlecht* as naming the "decaying shape" of the human, which nevertheless offers the "promise" of a "unification of 'the *Geschlechter*...'"¹² Moore comments, "*Geschlecht* as race or *Geschlecht* as sex? Even Heidegger, it appears, cannot decide on a focal meaning or core-dependent homonymy."¹³ Carefully tracing "edits" Heidegger made to Trakl's work in his marginalia, Moore shows that Heidegger privileges its masculine dimensions: "in Heidegger's reading, it is *he*, the masculine singular one, who leads the way. The sister, the feminine as such, remains secondary – when, that is, she is

not silenced altogether.”¹⁴ Though the sister is a significant and frequent figure for Trakl, as Moore demonstrates throughout his book, Heidegger largely ignores her. Moore notes that in a form of “stereotypical subordination,”¹⁵ Heidegger marks the sister as the Beauvoirian “second” or (in German translation) the “other sex.”¹⁶

Yet, this is not the first time that Heidegger has (not) written about sisters. In the *Ister* lectures, Heidegger develops a greatly expanded reading¹⁷ of Sophocles’ *Antigone*. Distinguishing this later reading from his brief engagement in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger writes that he wants to hear properly “a word from Antigone herself” (GA 53: 116/93) and he endeavors to hear this word in the context of the introductory exchange (*Zwiesprache*) between the sisters Antigone and Ismene. Though he will later call Antigone “the purest poem” (GA 53: 149/119), his attempt to listen to the feminine word she speaks to her sister seems only legible to Heidegger through the larger rubric of the *Zwiesprache* between Hölderlin and Sophocles that structures the larger lecture course. His Trakl readings are not the first time Heidegger effectively abandons the sister to (poetic) silence to bolster such a (masculine) exchange. As Moore also demonstrates, Heidegger repeatedly connects the feminine *Geschlecht* with twilight, the lunar, and nocturnality, following Trakl’s lead.¹⁸ This too has earlier precedent in Heidegger’s work. At the ending of the 1945 “Triadic Conversation,” the characters conclude by collaboratively poetizing¹⁹ the “night” as the “seamstress [*Näherin*] who brings near [*nähert*], so that one star next to the other gleams in silent light” (GA 77: 156/102). If poetizing and non-metaphysical thinking find their affinities in nocturnal silence, it seems that for Heidegger the “threshold” of this gathering may very well be the erasure of the question of the feminine.

This elision of feminized forms of relationality extends beyond Heidegger’s marginalia and “Language in the Poem.” It is also found in “Language” (“*Die Sprache*”), perhaps Heidegger’s most well-known essay that may (or may not) be construed as “on” Trakl’s work. Moore devotes several chapters to unfolding the significance of this lecture in its multiple versions. In his chapter two entitled “Language of Bread

and Wine,” in the wake of Heidegger’s own insistent affirmation, Moore asks, “if...it is not Trakl but language itself that speaks in the poem ‘Ein Winterabend’ (‘A Winter Evening’), what, precisely, does it say, and particularly what does it say about bread and wine?”²⁰ Moore flags the “maternal language”²¹ of the lecture in its reference to child bearing, gestation, and delivery. However, Moore’s scholarly contribution centers his Derridean-oriented interrogation of Heidegger’s essay for its blatant erasure of Trakl’s poetic Christian influences and aspirations – including the “figure of the sister” who, Moore writes, “is not merely a symbol for Christ, but actually seems to merge with him.”²² In the wake of offering a criticism of Heidegger’s insistence that “being” directs Trakl’s poetry rather than “faith,”²³ Moore writes, “*Wozu Gedichte?* What are poems for? Trakl’s answer, which comes in the form of a rare programmatic statement, written in Trakl’s own hand, situates – I use this word intentionally – it *situates* Trakl’s own poetic activity in the religious context of iniquity and redemption.”²⁴ This merits Moore’s own masterful and distinct re-reading of Trakl’s poem away from Heidegger’s, which emphasizes “the Bible as its point of departure” rather than “Heidegger’s interpretation.”²⁵ Such a decision on Moore’s part to declare a Heideggerian independence of sorts may underscore the “dialogical” dimensions of this pairing, elucidating how Heidegger seems to construct what this poem is “about” in advance of his interpretation. Moore’s decision to move outside of the Heideggerian orbit here seems also to suggest Moore may find that if Heidegger had intended to set out to engage in a thinking “conversation” with Trakl’s poetizing, such a venture was without substantial yield.

For Moore, the “threshold” of this deficient “dialogue” appears to be the question of faith in general and Christianity in particular. This divides Heidegger and Trakl and demarcates the “pain” Moore uncovers that may attend both to Heidegger’s violent appropriation of this poet’s work and his concomitant disavowal of religion for thinking and poetizing being. And yet, I wonder if there isn’t another threshold Moore is pointing us toward here, one related to femininity in its various configurations. In his third chapter, Moore raises the question of

love (and the failure to love) in Heidegger's thinking of detachment as essential to Trakl's poetizing. If Heidegger's love of this poet remains "metaphysical"²⁶ as Moore suggests, might we expect to find variations of his ostensibly monogamous ontological love of being formally indicated in his polyamorous ontic relationships with women?

Some of his personal letters may demonstrate just this. In writing to Arendt in 1925, Heidegger attempts to dissuade this future major intellectual figure from engaging in philosophy because of her femininity, or rather, the effect her femininity has on *him*. He urges her to eschew "the terrible solitude of academic research, which only man can endure" so that she can "be happy" and as such "become a woman who can give happiness, and around whom all is happiness. . . ." As Heidegger underscores "I cannot and do not want to separate your loyal eyes and dear figure from your pure trust, the honor and goodness of your girlish essence."²⁷ For Heidegger, the 'threshold' that solidified his sustained refusal to read and engage with Arendt's work may be this "girlish essence" that instead should be proffered to him to make the terrible burden of male intellectual life a little easier. Similarly, in a letter to his wife written on the occasion that Elfride discovered his affair with Arendt in 1950, Heidegger describes the "painful happiness" of their marriage and her "inner belonging to my path" (but not the reverse), aligning her with "Hera and Eros" and "the Mother," who bring him "home safely. . . where I fail too easily & then either stray into pure sensuality or try to force the unforceable through sheer work."²⁸ In both of these instances, Heidegger plays on different stereotypes of femininity, subordinating both to the masculine project of thinking.

Yet, a careful reading of his corpus reveals many feminine and feminized aspects, which are often aligned with poetizing and the poetic. In chapter six, Moore returns to "*Die Sprache*" and highlights the maternal elements of much of the language Heidegger himself relies on to let language speak of its own accord. Moore asks, "Might *die Sprache* (the feminine noun for language) be speaking *herself* in Heidegger's emplacement?"²⁹ In raising this question, Moore follows Shane Ewegen's earlier consideration of this issue. In "Gestures of the

Feminine in Heidegger's 'Die Sprache,'" Ewegen writes of the proliferating "natal nuances"⁵⁰ that engender language "made *not by Heidegger but by language itself*. Language speaks here, through the processes of homophony and etymology."⁵¹ Was Heidegger prepared to listen and enter into conversation with this (feminized) speaking of language? The threshold of which Moore writes – *die Schwelle* – which pain has turned to stone, may not (only) be the "tranquilizing"⁵² of pain Moore decries in his chapter four, but also the distinct pain of a stillbirth – a pain that rends the "child" from the "womb" and the "mother" from the "woman."

To render Heidegger's "dialogue" with Trakl as a still birth may put the matter too starkly – and too tragically. Perhaps such a drama belongs only to a certain masculine form of the struggle for dominance with which I began. Moore closes his book by refusing a simple attribution of tragedy to Heidegger's dialogical interpretation of Trakl. He writes,

Despite all the twists and turns of his path of thinking, Heidegger never gave up on the idea that he was headed toward a Secret Germany, as promulgated by the very 'voice of beyng,' Friedrich Hölderlin...Whatever the merit of this Germano-nationalist mythos about Hölderlin – and there is much in it to be wary of, even as a matter of exegesis – it is more astounding that Heidegger would also hear the promise of the *geheimen Deutschland*, or its coded *noch verborgenes Abend-Land*, in the poetry of Trakl. (211–2)

In tracking both the centripetal and centrifugal forces of this gesture – or gestation – Moore raises the question of Heidegger's delineation of the "tragic condition"⁵³ of the West. Is Heidegger's political version of this dialogical "quarrel" more akin to a "comedy,"⁵⁴ after all? This is the point to which Moore endeavors to draw our attention. There are many sites of elision and evasion on Heidegger's part regarding the meaning of Trakl's work, but the enduring contribution of Moore's

edifying monograph is to invite us to reconsider what Heidegger *doesn't* say in his "dialogue" with this poet, and at whose expense such silencing as its "threshold" is maintained.

NOTES

- 1 Though it is indeed the first full-length scholarly treatment of this particular topic, Moore’s book continues to attain and sustain the high bar of scholarly rigor set in his previous monograph on Heidegger – Ian Alexander Moore, *Eckhart, Heidegger, and the Imperative of Releasement*, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019) – suggesting that, in a different respect, it is not the “first” of its kind.
- 2 Ian Alexander Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold: Heidegger and Trakl*, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2022), 3.
- 3 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 2–3.
- 4 Including an overview of the more extensive marginalia, likely from 1958, to “Into an Old Family Album” found in Heidegger’s Salzburg edition, which is housed in the Literaturmuseum in Marbach (Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 232–37).
- 5 These exclude material from his two explicit lectures on the poet but include references to unpublished epistolary correspondence that may be of particular scholarly interest.
- 6 These include fifty-five poems in total (Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 271).
- 7 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 2.
- 8 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 95.
- 9 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 213.
- 10 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 108–9. If Moore agrees that Heidegger is (in some significant sense) still reading Hölderlin even though he is apparently engaging Trakl, I wonder further if this evident replaceability of poetic figures and poems might indicate a more troubling relation between Heidegger’s thinking and poetizing in general. Is Heidegger “reading” any of the poets he elevates in his work? Or are these invocations simply sites where Heidegger can exercise a virtuosity of his own thinking of

- being in sufficiently veiled political directions? And what might be the terms by which such an assessment could be adjudicated?
- 11 Moore points to how Derrida reads *Geschlecht* in Heidegger in such a way as to prompt consideration of “a host of questions about other underrepresented matters such as maternity and sorority, eros and androgyny” (Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 175).
- 12 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 173.
- 13 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 174.
- 14 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 179.
- 15 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 182.
- 16 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 182.
- 17 This reading builds upon his treatment from 1935 in *Introduction to Metaphysics*. In that earlier text, Heidegger never let Antigone herself speak, but only explored the “Ode to Man” within the *Antigone* tragedy. In the context of the Hölderlin lectures, however, he reproduces and engages her *Gespräch* with her sister for the first time. See my essay, Katherine Davies, “Antigone’s (Poetic, Queer) Death: Heidegger, Butler, and Mortality,” in *Heidegger, Dasein, and Gender: Thinking the Unthought*, ed. Patricia Glazebrook and Susanne Claxton (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2024), 37–66.
- 18 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 172–88.
- 19 Katherine Davies, “The Resistant Interlocutor: Plato, Heidegger, and the End of Dialogue,” *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 23.1 (2018): 165–90, 182–3.
- 20 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 47.
- 21 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 56.
- 22 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 65.
- 23 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 69.
- 24 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 70.
- 25 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 71.
- 26 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 107.
- 27 Hannah Arendt/Martin Heidegger, *Letters, 1925–1975* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2004), 3–4.

- 28 Martin Heidegger, *Letters to His Wife, 1915–1970* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 212–3.
- 29 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 186.
- 30 S. Montgomery Ewegen, “Gestures of the Feminine in Heidegger’s ‘Die Sprache,’” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 30.4 (2016): 486–98, 493.
- 31 Ewegen, “Gestures of the Feminine,” 492.
- 32 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 134.
- 33 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 214.
- 34 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 202.

The Pain of the Other Beginning:
Notes on Ian Alexander Moore's *Dialogue
on the Threshold: Heidegger and Trakl*

Alberto Moreiras

Die Geschichte ist in ihrem verborgenen Gang nicht Fortgang von einem Anfang zu einem Ende, sondern sie ist Rückkehr des Einstigen in den Beginn. (History, in its hidden course, is not progress from an inception to an end, but is rather the return of what is always already there in advance into the beginning). (Heidegger, *Heraklit*. GA 55: 288/217)

Das eigentliche Denken ist das wahre Lieben und das Heimischwerden im Wesensgrund aller Bezüge: Rück-kehr. Erst wenn das Denken sein Tiefstes gedacht hat und d. h. zu denken beginnt und fortan denkt, nämlich das eigentlich und einzig Zu-denkende, erst dann kommt die dem Denken eigene Rückkehr zu sich selbst, die ursprüngliche Reflexion, ursprünglich ins Spiel. (Authentic thinking is true loving and the coming-to-be at home in the essential ground of all relations: re-turn. Only when thinking has thought what is deepest – that is, only when it has begun to think and continues to think the essential and singular to-be-thought – does the re-turn proper to thinking, i.e., the ordinary reflection, come to itself and come into play ordinarily). (Heidegger, GA 55: 221/167)

As Ian Moore himself tells us, his book started off as two papers for conferences motivated by the so-called “discovery” of Jacques Derrida’s seminar sessions on Martin Heidegger’s reading of Georg Trakl: one in Princeton, organized by Katie Chenoweth and Rodrigo Therezo, and one at Texas A&M organized by Adam Rosenthal, both in 2018. Moore’s book can then be read from a certain obvious perspective as a response, or a supplement, in the precise Derridean sense of this latter word, to Derrida’s text. But not only that: Moore’s reflections on the notion of

pain in Heidegger are new and not already rehearsed or prepared in Derrida's text. I will concentrate my remarks on its central section, which is the section devoted to a consideration of pain. This is an understudied perspective on Heidegger, which makes it worthy of proper attention. I think these remarks involve Moore's fundamental position.

There is of course more in Moore's splendid book, and I hope others will comment on it. My intention is to indicate a constellation of motifs around problems of our time, for which I think *Dialogue on the Threshold* gives us precious indications: the problem of the exhaustion of metaphysics in the crisis time of the Anthropocene, which Heidegger anticipated in his thought of the *Ge-stell*; the problem of the perhaps impossible and at the same time necessary "other beginning" of thought after the end of metaphysics; and consequently the decisive problem of our affective, existential confrontation with all of it, which exceeds the "mournful distress" for the departure of the gods that Heidegger placed at the center of his first lecture course on Friedrich Hölderlin.¹ Even though Heidegger's meditations on Hölderlin evolved with time, and to a certain extent they abandoned an understanding of the historical task in the sense of a refoundation of an organic, sacrificial community, quite present in the 1934 lecture course but presumably no longer in the 1959 text on Hölderlin's "Earth and Heaven," it is, I think, fair to say that the theme of a return to a salvational, secret *Heimat* was never left properly behind even if the tropology used for it became more subdued or less sacrificial.² The question is then how the Heideggerian reflections on pain contribute to it, and consequently how we are to think of them in the context of moving toward an other beginning of thought. As a marker of the importance of this theme for our present let me refer to Jean Vioulac's *Apocalypse of Truth*, which insists on the contemporary end of the time of *aletheia* and the dawn of apocalyptic time; and to Bernard Stiegler's words in *The Neganthropocene*:

The Anthropocene, which everyone currently understands in terms of the challenge of climate change, amounts to *an unprecedented and incommensurable putting in question* that suspends and breaks all those

circuits of transindividuation established through the millennia from the Neolithic to the Great Empires, and through the various theologico-political civilizations, and finally secular civilizations.⁵

Both thinkers proceed existentially, not just theoretically. We are caught, in a certain untimeliness, looking at an illegible horizon. That the Anthropocene, which is their point of departure, involves a loss that exceeds both the absence of the old gods and the very notion of the *Heimat*, placing us all irretrievably in the dimension of a radical *Heimatlosigkeit*, is no secret.⁴ Mournful distress is, however, not commensurate to the loss. Moore's meditations on Heidegger's understanding or elaboration of pain might bring us closer to an attuned relation to it. The question then must remain open: what can we do with the pain? What is the pain to us?

The context Moore provides for Heidegger's two lectures on Trakl to the Bühlerhöhe Society – a context that involves Heidegger's determination to claim Georg Trakl as the poet of his (Heidegger's) generation – is instructive, and of course Moore's careful textual analyses contain many noteworthy reflections, some of them critical variations on Derridean motifs, and some of them original and absent from Derrida's text, such as the excellent excursus into Pindar's poetry. What is crucial to Moore's reading is the thematization of the horizon of pain, which plays no ostensible role in Derrida's reading. Already on page 58, at the beginning of his textual exegesis, Moore brings up pain in his commentary on Trakl's "A Winter Evening," and says: "Pain has not just hardened the threshold . . . pain is still present and active, hardening the threshold, making it the reliable and enduring center of support for the differential inter-section of thing and world" (58–59). Pain is the great novelty in Moore's book and in Moore's Heidegger interpretation. The importance of a thematization of pain goes beyond the engagement with Trakl. Derrida's 1984–85 seminar might provide some insufficient context for this.

What about *Geschlecht III: Sex, Race, Nation, Humanity*; then? In the Preface to the English edition Rodrigo Therezo explains that the text

had seemed “lost forever.”⁵ We had “*Geschlecht I: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference*,” and “Heidegger’s Hand (*Geschlecht II*),” both of which appeared in *Psyché: Inventions of the Other*, volume 2, and we had “*Geschlecht IV*,” which had appeared as an appendix to *Politics of Friendship* in French, but we were missing the “*Geschlecht III*” essay, which Derrida himself had announced several times as the very center, the magnetizing piece of the whole *Geschlecht* series. But he never brought himself to publishing it.⁶ We do not know the reasons why it was not published within Derrida’s lifetime, since after all he gave a lecture extracted from the seminar notes in Chicago in 1985 where he announced he had another hundred pages or so at least prepared if not ready to go on the same topic. So at least a draft already existed in that year. Therezo, as one of the editors of the text, claims that it is possible that, had the seminar sessions been published in some form, they would “have stuck very close to the seminar.”⁷ But this is of course a hypothesis, unconfirmed as such, or even belied at the limit, by the very fact of Derrida’s withholding of the publication. One of the things we may never know is whether Derrida withheld publication of his central or magnetizing piece in the *Geschlecht* series because he was unsatisfied with it. It needed more. Derrida may have normally written his seminar notes with care, but the fact that these particular notes were unpublished by him keeps us from assuming that Derrida considered them ready enough. This fact has an intrinsic relation to Moore’s book: Derrida’s text has been published, but Derrida’s signature of it is to a certain extent undecidable. This undecidability must have born some weight on Moore’s writing process. Something serious was missing in the Derridean approach, and a consideration of pain might be part of it.

If we accept Therezo’s own claim, in the second footnote in his Preface, that “the entirety of the four *Geschlechter* indeed constitute Derrida’s most sustained confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) with Heidegger,” a claim that scholars like David Farrell Krell and Françoise Dastur might have endorsed, and if we add to it the thought that *Geschlecht III* is in fact the magnetizing center of the series, then it turns out that *Geschlecht III* might constitute a privileged place to

examine Derrida's career-long confrontation with Heidegger.⁸ *Dialogue on the Threshold*, which will have turned out to be both a book on Heidegger's confrontation with Trakl's poetry and at the same time a book about Derrida's confrontation with Heidegger, ciphers more than just a commentary on Heidegger's two essays on Trakl's poetry from the early 1950s. It is an exposition of Moore's own general relation both to Heideggerian thought and to the legacy of Heideggerian thought in Derrida's work, and in deconstruction more generally, even if this latter aspect of it is internally at least partially questioned by what is undecidable regarding Derrida's withholding of the publication of his final essay in the *Geschlecht* series.

What was it that Derrida found so magnetizing in Heidegger's Trakl text, specifically in the second of the Trakl essays, from 1953, titled "Language in the Poem: A Discussion on Georg Trakl's Poetic Work" (GA 12: 31–78)? The core of Derrida's engagement with Heidegger's Trakl texts has to do with the vexing question of Heidegger's notion of the "other beginning." It is vexing because, while it could be considered the dead center of Heidegger's entire oeuvre, Heidegger never gave that "other beginning" to us, and he only spoke of his work and of the work of his generation, perhaps also of ours, as merely preparatory, preparatory to an other beginning whose need, while grounded in the history of being as Heidegger understood it, could only produce contingent, unforeseen, and always singular results. Derrida is engaged in reading the Heideggerian text, certainly also in the *Geschlecht* series but by no means only there, through the desire not just to understand but also to critique Heidegger's hints regarding what the preparation, that is, the preparation in thought of the other beginning, which is also a preparation for an other beginning of thought, might consist or have consisted of. If we may be allowed to think of deconstruction as a transitional gesture of thought, already in itself pointing to something else, merely glimpsed or imagined, Derrida himself wanted to prepare the other beginning, if there is to be one, taking Heidegger at his word, but in his own way, following his own tropology, in order to produce the possibility of alternative contingent, unforeseen, and singular results.

Stiegler would have called all of this the possibility of a “bifurcation.”⁹ Does this possible bifurcation go through pain or is it to remain a primarily theoretical endeavor?

Early in the seminar, in the pages that were later presented in Chicago, Derrida says: “We might say that ‘before’ Being and Nothingness there is Place, that which gives rise and makes it so that there is Being and Nothingness gathered together. If place is regularly, typically defined by gathering (*Versammlung*), our entire approach to the Heideggerian gesture will have to question this privilege of gathering and all that it entails.”¹⁰ A few pages later Derrida, referring to a specific poem and its function in the Heideggerian reading of Trakl, indicates the precise place where Heidegger will find the gathering: “In his *Gespräch* with Trakl, Heidegger lets himself be oriented by the hearing or the precursory listening of this ‘*Ein*’ in ‘*E i n Geschlecht*.’ Such will have been the place.”¹¹ As such, it would be the proximate place of the *Gedicht*, the silent vortex of Trakl’s work that the poems convey without saying it. The wandering Stranger seeks it in *Abgeschiedenheit*, a word difficult to translate but that has to do with departure, farewell, separation. And with the pain of it. What will be left behind by the Stranger who departs and separates himself is the corrupted or decomposed form of the human for the sake of a return to something other: and this “return,” that Derrida engages early on, is a return to a gentler and more peaceful form of *Geschlecht*, a *Geschlecht* without discord, a unifying or gathering *Geschlecht*: a return to an un-polemical One, perhaps even a pain-less one.¹²

Gathering and return, then: *Versammlung* and *Rückkehr*. Both of them struggle with pain. These are the notions Derrida interrogates most forcefully, not with the primary intention of indicating a disagreement, although disagreement there is and there may well further be, rather with the intention of questioning Heidegger’s reading strategy in terms of its own contingency, its own options never determined by necessity. A case in point has to do with Heidegger’s interpretative decision concerning the issue of whether Trakl should be understood as a primarily Christian poet. Heidegger insists – and Derrida gives us

contrarian considerations against Heidegger's insistence, that is, showing its contingency, perhaps its arbitrariness – that Trakl speaks about something “more originary” than Christianity or indeed Platonism, even if it will have made both Platonism and Christianity possible. By the same token, and in spite of the German idiomaticity that Heidegger pursues, of which he will make a considerable deal, the return, understood as return to a home, a *Heimat*, is not simply the return to Germany, but also to something more originary than Germany even if Germany only becomes possible in its wake: it is the land of evening, the *Abenland*, the land of the (possible, desired, perhaps not quite promised [or was it in fact promised by Trakl, Heidegger, or Derrida?]) other beginning. Heidegger speaks, and says that Trakl speaks, of a gathering that exceeds both Germany and Platonic Christianity, even if Germany and Platonic Christianity could or would only repeat such a gathering, but already necessarily in a corrupted or decomposed way. There is the gathering of a return and the return of a gathering, and those are the fundamental motifs of a passage, an *Überschritt*, or step-beyond, an *Übergang* into the evening land, which is also the passage toward a new dawn. “The *Abendland* named by Trakl . . . is at once more originary, more matutinal, and consequently more portentous of the future, richer with promise than the European or Platonic-Christian . . . Occident,” Derrida says.¹⁵ The *Abendland* thus becomes the site or the place for the removal of the bad and discording, corrupt or decomposed *Geschlecht* in favor of a new unifying duplicity, a new difference, which is a difference between the sexes and the lineages of the human that will be gentler and more peaceful, a unity in difference, not an indifferent unity. This is intriguing, perhaps even beyond Heidegger's habitual tone, hence all the more thought-worthy.

In the last session of the Trakl seminar, the Thirteenth Session, Derrida turns to *Geschichte*, certainly as opposed to *Historie*. There is a reference in the poem “*Abendland*” to the “ancient legend of the forest,” which signals for Derrida “the buried history” of Germany, or of the *Heimat* that would have become Germany.¹⁴ What is *geschichtlich* in Trakl's poem is the fact that, rather than providing information, “it

makes history and destiny happen, it is in itself the event.”¹⁵ Trakl’s poetry will have named the destinal sending that, Heidegger says, “saves,” *rettet*. Derrida continues: “This salvation is at once arche-originary – because it is a question of the strike that gives humanity its proper stamp and makes it come into itself, into its essence, saving it from what is not or must not be – at once arche-originary and to come.” And this is the proper “return,” but with a twist. “The movement toward the future is a return toward the arche-origin.” “The return is not an accidental or supplementary predicate of dwelling or the homeland (*Heimat*), it is the essential movement that originally constitutes or institutes the homeland or country as a promise of dwelling;” “the country (*Land* or *Heimat*) appears as such only from out of the promise of return, even if, de facto, one has never left it, and even if, de facto, one never has to get back to it. It is in this way that the originary country announces itself, as it were: in the return as promise, the promised return which is also necessarily and irreducibly the return of the promise.”¹⁶ With it, “death or mourning” are transfigured “into promise and salvation of the future.”¹⁷ Derrida’s interpretation concludes there, somewhat frustratingly. We should not take this cut as necessarily an indication of a perspectival agreement. Clearly, Derrida was interested in the messianic promise, but he theorized it as a promise that would find no resolution into any form of presencing, but would remain structurally to-come.¹⁸ We may not know how Derrida would have ultimately passed judgment on the Heideggerian understanding of a futural salvation, given all of its nuances.

Before I finally address Moore’s commentary on pain in Heidegger I want to mention two additional features of Derrida’s consideration of the Heideggerian essay on Trakl regarding both *Versammlung* and the specific manner of the constituting *Rückkehr*, the return that saves. One imagines that Derrida would have stuck to his guns in terms of denouncing what he had in some previous essay rather irreverently called the “closed autism” of the Heideggerian gathering and also that he would denounce the circular self-gathering return to the promise of dwelling in the proper. But I find it significant that, in two short

comments, Derrida dismantles his own strategy. As much as he dislikes the frank idiomaticity of the Heideggerian text, its overwrought Germanness, he admits that the Heideggerian *Geschlecht* must after all be “bound to an idiom, a place, a land” and not to a “humanity in its abstract universality of a species, namely, in its ahistoricity.”¹⁹ In the same or similar way Derrida says much earlier in the seminar:

If there were only gathering, sameness, oneness, place without path, that would be death without phrases. And this is not what Heidegger wants to say, since he also insists on movement, the path of the stranger, the path toward others, and so on. . . . To say that there is divisibility does not come down to saying that there is only divisibility or division either (that, too, would be death). Death lies in wait on both sides, on the side of the phantasm of the integrity of the proper place and the innocence of a sexual difference without war, and, on the opposite side, that of a radical impropriety or expropriation, or even a war of *Geschlecht* as sexual discord.²⁰

Two possibilities open up, in radical reciprocal tension. What is properly messianic in Trakl or Heidegger but also in Derrida dwells between the two extremes, notwithstanding the different emphases, which are themselves a matter of interpretation.

But, if the Derridean critique does not finally hold, or not completely, if he himself relativizes it and perhaps even dismisses it, then what is essential in the Derridean reading? Is there anything essential in the Derridean reading, beyond its general interpretative quality? It seems to me the importance of the Derridean *Geschlecht* series, of his engagement with Heidegger through it, must be referred to the clarification concerning under which circumstances Derrida himself would be or would have been willing to go along with the Heideggerian notion of the other beginning, which, through his Trakl interpretation, acquires messianic overtones, even if not Christian. The epigraphs I have used come from sections in Heidegger’s 1944 seminar on the

Heraclitean *logos*, where Heidegger is struggling to extract from the elusive Heraclitean fragments an understanding of what *logos* could mean before the Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysical hijacking of it for their understanding of logic, of *episteme logike*. Those are remarks that involve very fundamentally the tropes of gathering, foregathering, collecting, and harvesting as a preparation for a fundamental historical return to the arche-originary, that is, to the premetaphysical. They make Derrida uncomfortable as signs and portents of what is to come, of the to-come, which is also the *Zu-Denkende*, the to-be-thought. So – what does all of this have to do with Moore’s fundamental position in his book *Dialogue on the Threshold*?

Is pain in Heidegger to be reduced to the pain of return, *nostalgia* (*nostos-algos*)? Is pain in Heidegger more than just a necessary announcement and forerunner of history in an essential sense, of the *historical* event, hence the true preparation for the other beginning, which can only be a historical one, always to be understood as an adventure into the originary, as a return to the originary or arche-originary for the sake of an other beginning?²¹ Pain must be undergone, but is pain still waiting for us beyond the *nostos*? And, if it is, is it the same pain? In order to prepare to answer this question, Moore discusses a “selection of notes published in a limited German edition” with the title *Über den Schmerz*, *On Pain*, certainly not available to the general public. There, he tells us, “Heidegger goes so far as to claim that pain is being itself . . . pain belongs to the very structure of being” (111). He adds: “Heidegger does, to be sure, highlight the importance of pain in his lectures on Trakl. For instance, we read that pain separates, but . . . it also intimately holds together what it has separated; searing pain leads some to storm heaven . . . but pain can also become gentle and let all things shine in their essence; pain produces not gloomy isolation but gleaming community; pain sustains the difference between things and world; pain is the source of life” (112). “We must learn to stop thinking about pain, thus from a perspective outside of it. We must instead learn to start ‘thinking painfully’ – from the side of pain as the assertion of being, . . . which ad-assertion is the appropriative event as the truth of

beyng itself” (118). These are fighting words, major words, but they are not enough. “Indeed,” Moore tells us, “in *On Pain* we learn, remarkably, that pain is the *sine qua non* of Heidegger’s longstanding project to think otherwise: “The human being and pain otherwise, and only therein is the Other Thinking determined” (126). Pain essentially holds sway, therefore, provided an appropriation of it is enacted, as beyng itself in its truth. “In Heidegger’s reading,” Moore tells us, “pain not only furnishes us with a new way – perhaps the only way – to experience truth itself and understand beyng itself. Pain also furnishes our dwelling with delight and serenity. Or better: pain, properly experienced, is this dwelling. Heidegger has moved from the truth of pain as the self-showing sheltering of thing and world to pain as our proper abode” (129). If so, then pain is the site of *Versammlung* and *Rückkehr*; and not just the path to it. But then a transformation of pain must be conceived. I will come back to this in reference to *Country Path Conversations*.

We now understand better, I think, both the double possibility of *Geschlecht*, as discord and insurrection, and as gentle releasement. We might even understand better the need for a gathering that is also a return, now to be conceived as a localization (*Erörterung*) of pain. Granted that the other beginning comes to us once we establish a proper relation to pain, “we must learn to heed the pain of beyng, beyond or before all programs and praxis” (129). But what does this mean? What is this localization of pain other than the word, or the call, for an existential and corporeal embodiment? We will no longer think about pain, we will simply think painfully, on the way to a transfiguration of pain, a releasement. Trakl himself “would have twisted free from the culmination of metaphysics in the will to power as the will to will, from active nihilism and the eternal return, precisely because he would have been attuned to the fundamental, non-metaphysical, gentle gathering of pain” (135). This is the ultimate reason why Trakl is the poet of his generation and, as such, “a precursor of Paul Celan” (168). A poet with an eye too many, Moore says, like Oedipus and Hölderlin himself. Perhaps even like Heidegger himself.

We could find further confirmation of this in texts where Heidegger thematizes the need for an “overcoming” of metaphysics. In “The Overcoming of Metaphysics,” a text from 1938–39, the references to “wrenching,” to “dis-turbance,” acquire a deeply existential character, which Heidegger points out explicitly: “The *over-coming* of metaphysics is existential [*da-seinshaft*]. It cannot be accomplished by writing a ‘book’ about it. Anything seeming like such a ‘book’ has literally a different essence” (GA 67: 39/34).²² This *over-coming*, a wrenching transformation, implies a displacement for or even from philosophy:

The only task that remains for human beings, and that too only when they are wrenched into the transformation of their essence, is to be prepared for the transition into the overcoming. . . . In the instant that *metaphysics is overcome through beyng*, things get serious with philosophy because a decisive moment in the history of beyng arrives; philosophy cannot wish to console itself with its knowledge, cannot wish to seek solace, cannot wish to traffic in such solace. (GA 67: 11–12/10–11)

The wrenching of the essence is pain – conflict and discord that aim toward releasement. In 1938–39 Heidegger calls it dis-turbance (*Entsetzen*) as fundamental attunement. “This *dis-turbance* pulls human beings out of the manipulation of beings and displaces them into the ungroundedness of the truth of being, such that they ‘know’ not yet what is ‘happening’ to them and how” (GA 67: 18/16). Pain is in other words the reminder that something is wrong, and it holds as such. In “The Evening Conversation: In a Prisoner of War Camp in Russia, between a Younger and an Older Man,” a text written in 1945, the dis-turbance is uncannily connected to the messianic waiting, which is a waiting without awaiting, a “pure waiting,” a “waiting for the coming” that can only be described as “an enigmatic commemorating (*Andenken*)” (GA 19: 218/141), outside of time, or at least within “a still-concealed dimension of time” (GA 19: 218/141), and which can only be named a “burning pain” in wait of “what is healing” (GA 19:

219/142). This is “the pain that arises when the human is barred from thinking” (GA 19: 221/143). Pain commemorates, it even commemorates the silent impossibility of commemorating, and, by so doing, embodies a *Rückkehr*, which, in “The Evening Conversation” but also in “The Triadic Conversation,” connects to the unprethinkable (*das Unwordenkliche*). Pain is therefore the impossible memory of the unprethinkable – and it is pain because it is an impossible memory.²⁵ Is the unprethinkable the only possible horizon of both *Versammlung* and *Rückkehr*? But unprethinkability, which points to the placeless place – is that not the region of the *khora*, the messianic *Gegnet* of deconstruction, the locality of Heidegger’s *beyng*, and the site of the poetic word?

It is tempting to develop this through a clarification of the relation John of the Cross’s “spiritual song” and “dark knight of the soul” or the transverberative extases of Teresa of Avila among other references may have to do with the arche-originary experience of place and the destining of history. It would also be important to look at other moments in Moore’s writing, for instance his work on Reiner Schürmann’s reading of the *Beiträge* in the final part of *Broken Hegemonies*.²⁴ But I must leave that for another time. My interest was only to indicate how Moore’s book definitely supplements the Derridean reading and opens another eye in each of us regarding the experience of the other beginning, the pain that accompanies any possible or impossible new birth, and the preparation for it, but also its outcome. There is an existential import to Moore’s interpretation of Heidegger on Trakl that was missing in Derrida. The existential (*da-seinshaft!*) is Moore’s supplement. That is, I think, all I wanted to point to, recognizing it as a significant, necessary critical accomplishment that must continue to be thought.

NOTES

- 1 In the eighth lecture of *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine"* Heidegger will determine the "fundamental attunement" regarding "the necessary renunciation of the calling of the gods of old" as "holy mourning" (GA 39: 87/79). In Lecture Nine an additional determination is presented: "holy mourning in readied distress" (GA 39: 107/97). The "readiness" involved concerns "the historical mission of a people" (GA 39: 104/95). In Lecture Seven Heidegger had already indicated that the "originary community" is of a sacrificial character: "Precisely death—which each individual human being must die for him- or herself, and which individuates each individual upon themselves to the most extreme degree—precisely death and the readiness for its sacrifice first of all creates in advance the space of that community out of which comradeship emerges" (GA 39: 73/66). Needless to say, this holy mourning in distressed anticipation of the return of the sacrificial community is not precisely the fundamental attunement that might enable a thinking relationship to the Anthropocene. At best it could be said that a "holy mourning for the Earth is a modification of Heidegger's notion of holy mourning for the gods of old in Hölderlin, but the Anthropocene will not let itself be reconciled to any particular provenance of historical Dasein, as it encompasses them all. See Bambach, *Of an Alien Homecoming: Reading Heidegger's "Hölderlin"* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2022), for a sustained and thoughtful analysis of Heidegger's Hölderlin writings.
- 2 There is no emphasis on the sacrificial in "Hölderlin's 'Earth and Heaven,'" which is a text that thematizes the infinite relation of world and earth, mortals and gods. The anticipation of an other beginning is here expressed under a different light: "Does the occidental still exist? It has become Europe. Europe's technological-industrial domination has already covered the entire earth. On the other hand, the earth, as a planet, has already been included in the interstellar-cosmic space which is placed at man's disposal by

the planned projects of man. The earth and heaven of the poem have vanished. Who would dare to say whither? The in-finite relation of earth and heaven, man and God, seems to have been destroyed. Or has it never yet appeared within our history *as* this in-finite relation, purely joined together by the gathering of the voices of destiny, never yet become present, never yet been founded as a whole within what is highest in art? Then it could not have been destroyed; rather, in the worst case, it could only have been displaced and denied its appearing. Then it would be up to us to think about this denial of the in-finite relation” (GA 4: 176/200).

3 See Vioulac, *Apocalypse of Truth. Heideggerian Meditations* (with a Foreword by Jean-Luc Marion, translated by Matthew J. Peterson, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021) and Stiegler, *The Neganthropocene* (edited and translated by Daniel Ross, London: Open Humanities Press, 2018), 233.

4 The unpublished essay by Rafael Fernández López, “Thinking the Pain of Being, or Life’s Entanglement with Planetary Death” is a fascinating reflection on “planetary death” in the wake of Heidegger’s meditation on the pain of death in *The Event* and additional reflections by Jean-Luc Nancy, Werner Hamacher, Claude Romano, and Parvis Emad. I suppose Fernández’ essay is one of the first attempts to link pain in the Heideggerian vein and the more extreme (but certainly imaginable) consequence of the Anthropocene: “My aim is to envisage pain in terms of the unfelt symptom of a ubiquitous and impersonal loss, a loss that is always to come, occurring as the very unexperienceable limit with which existence is always entangled. I call this loss planetary death” (1). And: “Thinking of the pain of planetary death responds to the need to think of death as an unfelt other that engulfs us all in the current epoch of climate change” (2). The essay ends in a rejection of the notion that mourning, whether in disquiet or otherwise, is an adequate *Stimmung* in the face of the pain of planetary death (a consequence of intensified *Ge-stell*): “Thinking in this manner does not entail thinking as an act of anticipatory mourning; mourning is only possible over a specific,

determinable loss. The loss of the planet is indeterminable and cannot be confined within an expected form, that is, it defies any horizon of expectation. Thinking is thus awakening to that which is always already *other* than any definable loss: an unfelt *other* that haunts us all, in Nancy's words, as 'the Real (or the Nothing)' that 'neither precedes nor follow the world' but is instead the world in which life is entangled" (12).

5 Therezo, "Preface," in Jacques Derrida, *Geschlecht III. Sex, Race, Nation, Humanity*; (translated by Katie Chenoweth and Rodrigo Therezo, edited by Geoffrey Bennington, Chenoweth, and Therezo, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 3.

6 For a study of the *Geschlecht* series I must refer to David Farrell Krell, *Phantoms of the Other: Four Generations of Derrida's Geschlecht* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015) and to Herman Rapaport, *Derrida on Exile and Nation. Reading Fantom of the Other* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022). But see also *Política común* 14 (2020) for nine careful essays on *Geschlecht III*. See Derrida, "Geschlecht 1: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference" and "Heidegger's Hand (*Geschlecht* II)" in *Psyché. Inventions of the Other*, Volume 2 (edited by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 7–26 and 27–62. For the fourth *Geschlecht* essay see Derrida, "Heidegger's Ear. Philopolemology," translated by John Leavey, in John Sallis editor, *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 163–218.

7 Therezo, "Preface," 6.

8 Therezo, "Preface," 3, note 2. See Krell, *Phantoms of the Other* and Dastur, "Heidegger and Derrida on Trakl" (in Daniel O. Dalstrom ed., *Interpreting Heidegger: Critical Essays*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 43–57). But there are textual sites, such as the recently published 1991–92 seminar *Répondre – du secret. Séminaire (1991–1992)* (Paris: Seuil, 2024) or the older *Donner le temps II* (1978–79) (edited by Laura Odello, Peter Szendy and Rodrigo Therezo. Paris: Seuil, 2021), that might lay claim to the same title.

- 9 For an extended treatment of “bifurcation” versus “disruption,” see Bernard Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism* (London: Polity, 2019) and also Stiegler, *Neganthropocene*. If for Stiegler the Anthropocene is the name of the epochless epoch of disruption and catastrophe, marked by a generalized functional stupidity and hyperproletarianization under the powers of algorithmic governmentality, all that is left is the possibility of a neganthropic bifurcation that will open a new horizon and would reconstitute the capacities of knowing how to do, how to live, and how to think. This bifurcation, which is a departure from the crisis point of *Ge-stell*, is repeatedly described as necessary but unlikely, almost impossible, never granted. It would however mark a transformation of the essence of pain.
- 10 Derrida, *Geschlecht III*, 10.
- 11 Derrida, *Geschlecht III*, 27.
- 12 See Derrida, *Geschlecht III*, 34.
- 13 Derrida, *Geschlecht III*, 114. See also 105, 115.
- 14 Derrida, *Geschlecht III*, 147. See also 146.
- 15 Derrida, *Geschlecht III*, 150.
- 16 Derrida, *Geschlecht III*, 153. For “*rettet*” see 152.
- 17 Derrida, *Geschlecht III*, 156.
- 18 Derrida clarifies in a discussion with Vincenzo Vitiello his understanding of messianicity, already explained in *Specters of Marx*. See “Christianity and Secularization,” translated by David Newheiser, *Critical Inquiry* 47 (Autumn 2020): 138–48. He tells Vitiello, repeating some motifs that were already expressed by Heidegger in *Country Path Conversations*: “One cannot await without waiting within a horizon, whereas what I call messianicity is this paradox of an awaiting that does not know what it awaits and which does not even include anticipation. It could come or it could not come. *Perhaps* . . . In the radical *perhaps* of which Nietzsche speaks I await someone, something, but I do not know if it will be someone or something, I await that which comes without waiting. That which comes, if it comes, should surprise

me absolutely, surprising my awaiting and coming where I do not wait for it. If one waited only for that which one awaits, there would be no coming, no surprise, there would truly be no waiting for the future as such” (“Christianity” 142–43). The question then emerges as to whether such a structure is already the “secularization of a religious tradition of which we are still the heirs and of which we keep the memory” (143). And then Derrida says something that does not appear in other parts of his texts, an interesting *hapax legomenon* that might in fact define the reach of Derrida’s messianicity and its necessary implication in the “other beginning” of thought: “But on the other hand . . . there is also the possibility of desecularizing—that is to say, of emancipating this discourse not only from every determinate religion but even from secularization insofar as it remains a doublet of religion. I have often said . . . that the word, messianicity, I am ready to abandon it at any time, as soon as I will have been understood” (143). But Derrida remains skeptical, or uncertain, regarding whether or not his position aligns with the Heideggerian one. He moves on to a discussion of the *khora*, the messianic *khora*, and says: “In the *Contributions to Philosophy*, when Heidegger speaks of the God who comes, I do not know whether he is holding a discourse that has an affinity with what I was trying to say about *khora*—I’m not sure. . . . It would be necessary to look closely at Heidegger’s text, and to see if what he says about the God who comes would agree with what I have attempted to suggest here about messianicity” (147). Without piety, it can be said that Derrida’s desecularization is a path to or a condition of postmetaphysical thought.

19 Derrida, *Geschlecht III*, 153.

20 Derrida, *Geschlecht III*, 81–82.

21 This is a question that cannot be fully answered without a sustained interrogation of one of Heidegger’s most cryptic texts, namely, *The Event*, written in 1941–42, and centrally concerned with the issues of “the first beginning,” “the other beginning” and the transition between the two. Of course, as we will see,

Moore pioneers this question (but see also Emad, “Heidegger on Pain: Focusing on a Recurring Theme of His Thought,” in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 36.3 [1982]: 345–60), but he does not dwell at great length on the 1941–42 text. Section VII, “The Event and the Human Being” (GA 71: 189–204/161–71), and the A Subsection of Section x, “Directives to the Event,” namely, “The Enduring of the Difference (Distinction). Experience as the Pain ‘of’ the Departure” (GA 71: 233–245/201–11), are only among the parts of the book that merit attention in our respect. The book ends with reflections on Hölderlin’s poetry that have not yet been incorporated into the secondary bibliography on Heidegger’s interest in Hölderlin and poetry in general. A companion volume is *On Inception* (GA 70), written right before *The Event* in 1941. This is work that I cannot do at present—but I will someday.

22 The word “*da-seinshaft*” is not very frequently used in Heidegger, but see for instance “‘*Transzendenz*’ zugleich *Da-seinshaft*. *Da-sein* heißt: Hineingehaltenheit in das Nichts (S. 19), d. h. *er-eignet in die Wahrheit des Seyns*” in GA 82: 426/333. The English translator, Scott M. Campbell, avoids a direct translation of it (as a noun, not an adjective) and renders that passage as “‘*Transcendence*’ likewise that is of the nature of *Da-sein*. *Da-sein* means: being held out into the nothing (p. 19), i.e., *appropriated into the truth of being*.” To be distinguished, of course, from Heidegger’s notion of the *existentiell*. The meaning of “*da-seinshaft*” as existential remains to be further interpreted. We are no longer in *Being and Time*, and we might add that “*da-seinshaft*” refers neither to the ontic nor to the ontological as understood in that work, or not without several mediations: “Philosophical psychology, anthropology, ethics, ‘politics,’ poetry, biography, and historiography pursue in different ways and to varying extents the behavior, faculties, powers, possibilities, and destinies of *Da-sein*. But the question remains whether these interpretations were carried out in as original an existential manner as their *existentiell* originality perhaps merited. . . . *Existentiell* interpretation can require existential analysis . . . Only when the fundamental structures

of Da-sein are adequately worked out with explicit orientation toward the problem of being will the previous results of the interpretation of Da-sein receive their existential justification” (GA 2: 16/SZ 14). The term for “existential” is *esistenzial*, and it refers to the existential analytic as fundamental ontology. *Da-seinshaft*, with its strange partial italicization, no longer does. It points to something else that even the quote from *On My Own Publications* (GA 82) does not clarify—the usage in “Overcoming” is more suggestive. I thank Laurence Hemming for mentioning the GA 82 passage to me.

- 23 In “Evening Conversation:” “The coming is presumably that before which nothing can be thought: the unprethinkable” (GA 77: 231/150). In “*Ankhibasie: A Triadic Conversation*” “It is . . . in the unprethinkable that the essence of the human is released into the open-region (*Gegnet*)” where “the open-region appropriates (*ereignet*) the essence of the human to its own (eigenen) region” (GA 77: 146/95). Towards the end of the volume Heidegger adds: “the burning pain that we are unable to be there for the unnecessary and are enslaved only to the useful, which by itself is the nothing and so null that it drives forth the deepest degradation of the human-being” (GA 77: 241/158).
- 24 See Moore and Guercio, “Heidegger, Our Monstrous Site. On Reiner Schürmann’s Reading of the *Beiträge*,” *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 41.2 (2021): 4. Schürmann’s is a diagnostic reading of Heidegger as a monstrous site that is pulled by both centripetal and centrifugal forces, that imagines it can re-root itself in the very soil that its own critique of metaphysics had scattered to the winds, and that would seek to found a new Germanic homeland even after it had painfully demonstrated that the only home we will ever have is *nomadic*—a home in homelessness on whatever ‘narrow strip of terrain upon which it is given to us to advance’” (113).

Comments on *Dialogue on the
Threshold* by Ian Moore

John M. Rose

It has been a pleasure to read Ian's brilliant book on Heidegger's appropriation of Georg Trakl's poetic voice. I certainly recommend it as required reading, for I feel I have discovered through Ian's work a secret Heidegger about which I have been unaware. As Kate has so deftly pointed out, there are a great number of fruitful themes that Ian has uncovered, such "as madness and maternity, pain and Christianity, and sexual difference and color theory (213). But these are not exactly couplets in this ascending tricolon, but seemingly random points of thematic focus. I wonder if these are in dialogue with each other, or might they be nodes of various on-going dialogues. In his *Postscript*, Ian even admits: "Although, in the end, Heidegger shrank back from the implications of his encounter with Trakl's poetry, although he supposed the work for the sake of the secret Germany, Heidegger, to his credit...for a time, was touched by a pained, perverse, particularly Christian author whom Heidegger would, remarkably, come to call the poet of his generation" (213). There is a lot of dynamic movement in the dialogues that Ian elicits between Heidegger and Trakl, not to mention that dialogue Ian himself has with both the thinker and the poet. To get a sense of the expansiveness of his work, and the full breadth of the encounter between Heidegger and this tortured poet, you must read Ian's book for yourself.

Which leads me to wonder about the threshold of this dialogue, and thus my first question for Ian. Are we on the threshold of dialogue here, a dialogue that Heidegger never quite attained? Or is the threshold between the interlocutors of the dialogue, Heidegger, Trakl, and Moore? And are we invited into the dialogue? I can't help but think that Ian references all of the above, but I would like some clarification on "the threshold" as we step across it into Ian's work.

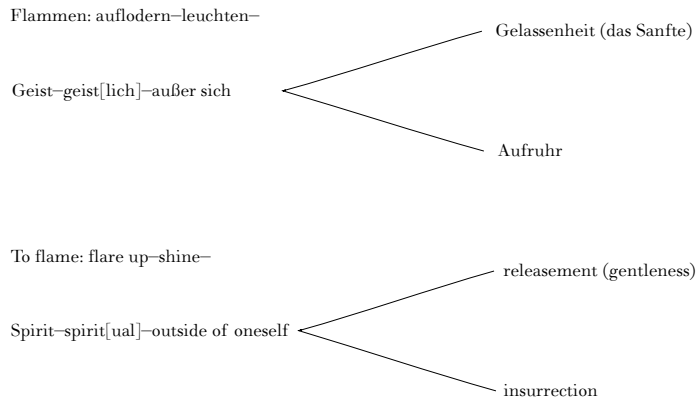
Second, I would invite Ian to address further the topic of “the secret Germany,” perhaps with reference to the silence on this secret that pervades the dialogue when focusing on other topics. How central to the various themes of the book is the secret Germany? I would like to know more about this secret. It seems to be a well-kept secret, for every time I ask our scholarly friends about the secret Germany, they briefly bring up Stefan George and say no more.

Third, I invite Ian to say more about the last two sentences of the Postscript that, while referencing the late Reiner Schürmann’s *Broken Hegemonies*, states categorically “Heidegger’s reading of Trakl marks at once the most extreme flight from the confines of his philosophy theretofore and the most extreme search for confinement to centralized authority. Heidegger’s reading of Trakl is an exemplary site for thinking today” (214). I would like to hear more of what Ian has in mind about Heidegger’s reading of Trakl “for thinking today.” Ian’s comment is a such a teaser, and I would like to know what Ian really thinks calls for thinking today. There is a lot here that suggests itself, and I would like to know Ian’s excellent and generous mind.

Thresholds: Of Pain, Dialogue, and
the Secret Germany in Heidegger's
Engagement with Trakl and Beyond

Ian Alexander Moore

I would like to begin my reply to the thoughtful commentaries of Katherine Davies, Alberto Moreiras, and John Rose by filling out the sketch of the genesis of *Dialogue on the Threshold* that Moreiras provides in his text. Although I didn't know it at the time, I can now trace the book's origins back to a discovery I made in 2016. As I was sifting through the unprocessed archives in the castle of Heidegger's hometown of Meßkirch, I came across an old copy of Georg Trakl's poems with some marginalia in what appeared to be Heidegger's hand. A typewritten note by Heidegger's nephew, folded into quarters and inserted in the volume, soon confirmed my suspicion about the author of these annotations, one of which I couldn't help but find astounding given my work on Meister Eckhart at the time. To the right of Trakl's distressing poem "Gródek,"¹ in which "the hot flame of spirit" is said to be "nourished today by a mighty pain, / The unborn grandchildren" (*Die heiße Flamme des Geistes nährt heute ein gewaltiger Schmerz, / Die ungeborenen Enkel*), Heidegger had written:²



What was striking about this marginalium was not just its suggestion that *Geist*, in being outside of itself (that is, as Gothic *gheis*), can move in radically opposed directions. Even more striking was Heidegger’s characterization of one of these poles as *Gelassenheit*, a term coined by Eckhart in the thirteenth century as a synonym of another one of his neologisms, *Abgeschiedenheit* (“detachment,” “departedness,” or, as Peter Hertz renders *Abgeschiedenheit* in *On the Way to Language*, “apartness”). In his two lectures on Trakl – “Language,” from 1950, and “Language in the Poem,” from 1952 – Heidegger never uses the word *Gelassenheit*. Nor does he trace the origins of *Abgeschiedenheit*, despite frequent recourse to etymology for other key terms, and despite claiming that *Abgeschiedenheit* is the very site around which all of Trakl’s poetry is centered. This was, to be sure, worth investigating. But I wasn’t yet prepared to face the enigma of Heidegger’s “Trakl.” For, as David Krell had written in the 1990s:

Heidegger’s own discussion of Trakl’s poetry remains startling, bewildering, so that it is no exaggeration to say that the extended essay on Trakl [“Language in the Poem”] is of an order of difficulty that is unmatched by any of Heidegger’s other essays. Compared to it, “Time and Being” (1962) and the *Beiträge* (1936–38) are child’s play.³

When, however, I had completed my dissertation, and the opportunity presented itself to comment on Derrida's newly discovered seminar sessions on Heidegger's reading of Trakl,⁴ I decided to revisit Heidegger's work on the poet. Initially, I concentrated on the role of *Abgeschiedenheit* in "Language in the Poem." In dialogue with Derrida, who did little with *Abgeschiedenheit* in his seminar, I argued that this term was not only the most deconstructible term in Heidegger's text, indeed even more so than the polysemic *Geschlecht* ('gender,' 'species,' 'race,' 'generation,' etc.), but also opened onto a form of love and letting-be that Heidegger seemed to want to foreclose in his essay on Trakl. I soon realized that a monograph would be necessary even to begin to do justice to the place of Trakl in Heidegger's thinking. Whether or not my book ended up doing so, I, for one, gained far more insight into Heidegger's lifework than I had expected.

One of the most important things I learned was that, after his failed Nazi rectorate, Heidegger's politics went underground, becoming almost entirely absorbed by the myth of the Secret Germany as announced by the "voice of beyng," Friedrich Hölderlin (or rather, by the idiosyncratic interpretation of the poet by George-Circle members Norbert von Hellingrath and Max Kommerell), and subsequently by the "poet of the yet concealed evening land," Georg Trakl (or rather, by Heidegger's idiosyncratic interpretation of the poet) (GA 70: 167/138; GA 12: 77/197).⁵ Heidegger's interpretation of Trakl, for all its brilliance, again and again privileges a specific language (that is, German), a particular people (that is, those who can authentically hear that language), their specific leaders (Germans), and a specific place (Germany or rather its coded *Abend-Land*, not the Latinate "Occident" but "Land of Evening"). Detachment, in Heidegger's reading of Trakl, is not a call away from place, time, multiplicity, and language, let alone the way in which the Son is born in the soul and all things become sheer God to you, as it was for Eckhart – and I say this despite Trakl's avowed Christianity and love for all humans, as Heidegger was well aware, and despite the evidence linking Trakl to Eckhart. It is, rather, detachment *from* the corrupt Occident and from any sense of sympathy for

the demise of its decadent denizens – a demise over which, Heidegger claims scandalously, Trakl could only jubilate – and it is detachment *toward* a coming land inhabitable only by those with ears to hear not Jesus but the German language of “beyng,” whose song Trakl learns and adapts from (Heidegger’s) Hölderlin. Heidegger maintains that Trakl (1887–1914), who was born just two years before him, is “the poet of our generation.”⁶

Regarding the Secret Germany (*das Geheime Deutschland*) and its connection to the other beginning (*der andere Anfang*), on which both Rose and Moreiras comment, I would note first that from at least 1932 on (GA 35: 270–71/206), Heidegger’s thinking can as a whole be oriented around the notion of the other (or “second,” GA 94: 209/153) beginning, which is not a repetition of the initial Greek beginning but a retrieval of possibilities which that first beginning left undeveloped, did not catch sight of, or covered over – above all the possibilities of considering being (“beyng”) on its own terms (not in relation to entities) and of heeding the transformative event of appropriation (GA 65: 5–6/7, 171/135). Even if the phrase “other beginning” appears less frequently after World War II (see, however, GA 102), the idea continues to play a role in Heidegger’s later corpus, whether it be a matter of becoming mortals as one fold among others, of thinking rather than philosophizing, of corresponding to “beyng,” of letting be, of openness to the mystery, of saying yes and no to technology, or even of a god saving us. Indeed, I suspect it may be one of the best ways to describe the aim of Heidegger’s later thought as a whole, since it covers not only the periods of Heidegger’s enthusiasm for National Socialism and his subsequent retreat toward the Secret Germany, but also the more voluntaristic language of the 1930s and the more serene language from the 1940s onward. *Heidegger, after the “turn,” was always in search of the other beginning . . .*

However, two key questions are whether the other beginning as outlined here can, for Heidegger (which is not, of course, to say, for us or in itself), be separated from the conservative-revolutionary myth of the Secret Germany, and, if so, what this would look like. In order to answer these questions, I will develop one of the possibilities that

Moreiras highlights at the end of his commentary and that I touch on in the book's epilogue. I am referring to Reiner Schürmann's *Broken Hegemonies*, particularly his notions of the tragic double bind and of the possibility of a *dessaisie* (an "unclenching" from hegemony) that has been afforded to us in late modernity thanks to Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and a few others.⁷ Pain will play an important role here, although the way I want to develop it differs from the emphasis I placed on it in the fourth chapter of *Dialogue on the Threshold*.

First, regarding the myth of the Secret Germany: Derrida was, to be sure, suspicious of the acute Germanocentrism of Heidegger's reading of Trakl. This is one of the reasons why, to the irritation of some of his students, he devoted so much time to it in his multi-year seminar-series on "Philosophical Nationality and Nationalism."⁸ Derrida observes that Heidegger hears in Trakl's poetry the call of "a certain Germany – not the *de facto* national Germany [...] – " to become the place of the Land of Evening.⁹ However, Derrida does not focus on the historical background of the myth in the George-Kreis, nor, in any detail, on Heidegger's enduring commitment to it – a commitment that Lacoue-Labarthe summarized well when he wrote that "the concern for the *single* Germany will have never left Heidegger."¹⁰

There is much to say about this theme of the Secret Germany, which not only lent itself to appropriation by the Third Reich but was also, in Claus von Stauffenberg's attempt on Hitler's life in July 1944, the battle cry for its overthrow. However, in reply to a question by Rose about this, I will just offer the following remarks.¹¹ The Secret Germany refers to the belief that the fate of the West and indeed of the entire globe depends on a select group of German thinkers (if not just one thinker) in dialogue with a select group of German poets (Hölderlin, above all, who is, in Hellingrath's words, "the most German poet"¹² and, in Heidegger's, "the poet of the Germans" [GA 39: 214/195, 220/201] and even "the most German of the Germans" [GA 16: 333]). For those with ears to hear (that is to say, for the true Germans or even, in one of Heidegger's tellings, the true Swabians), Hölderlin fundamentally speaks not of the Germany of party politics, administration,

and international diplomacy, nor of the Germany of newspapers, radio, and the university, but of the hidden Germany that is the Germany to come. As for its territory, the Secret Germany supposedly transcends, or better subtends, geographic and political borders, yet it cannot so easily be separated from such borders either, however tied to language or spirit it may be.

The Secret Germany is perhaps best encapsulated in a quotation from Hellingrath. In his 1915 lecture “Hölderlin and the Germans,” Hellingrath attempts to make Hölderlin, not the cosmopolitan Goethe, the true voice of the Germans:

We call ourselves the “people [*Volk*] of Goethe” because we see him as the highest that our tribe [*Stamm*] can achieve, as the highest thing that has grown on our trunk [*Stamm*], with his rich, well-rounded humanity, which compels even distant people who may not understand what is deepest about him to respect him. I call us the “people of Hölderlin” because it lies deep within the German essence that its innermost glowing core, which is infinitely far below the slag crust that is its surface, comes to light only in a *secret* Germany [*in einem geheimen Deutschland*], expresses itself in human beings who must at least be long dead before they can resonate and be seen, and in works that only ever confide their secret to a very few, indeed are completely silent to most, and are in all likelihood [*wohl*] never accessible to non-Germans; because this secret Germany is so certain of its intrinsic value or so innocently unfamiliar with its own significance that it makes no effort at all to be heard or seen. And because, if Goethe, despite his greatness and his true glow, was allowed to expand to such a breadth of existence that even those who lived with him, even his countryfolk, could not overlook him, Hölderlin is at the same time the greatest example of that concealed fire, that secret

realm [*Reich*], that quiet, unnoticed configuration
[*Bildwerdung*] of the divine glowing core.¹⁵

It would also take me too far astray to tell the story of Hellingrath's lecture, whose reach extends from Rilke and George through Heidegger and Carl Schmitt all the way to Goebbels and Hitler.¹⁴ Instead, I will just note Heidegger's most glaring adaptation of Hellingrath's line of interpretation, which can be found in the 1934–1935 lecture course *Hölderlin's Hymns: "Germania" and "The Rhine"*: "The fatherland, our fatherland Germania – most forbidden, withdrawn from the haste of everyday life and the bustle of activity. The highest and therefore the most difficult, that which comes last, because fundamentally first – the origin withheld in silence [*der verschwiegene Ursprung*]" (GA 39: 4/4).¹⁵

To return to the first of the questions with which I began: can the other beginning be dissociated from the chauvinistic connotations of the myth of the Secret Germany? My answer, which begins a response to another one of Rose's questions, is yes, indeed even, on some level, in Heidegger's own thought. The oft-touted claim that Heidegger's philosophy and politics are *as such* inextricable strikes me, if meant literally, as narrow-minded, sensationalist, and empirically falsifiable. But this separation requires critical vigilance. I believe it requires us to see conflicting tendencies not only in Heidegger the man but in the place Heidegger inhabited, a place or *topos* that we have by no means left and that, according to Schürmann, we cannot as such leave. In his topology of the broken hegemony of modernity, Schürmann argues that the problem with the site occupied by Heidegger is not so much that there are both centripetal and centrifugal forces at work, but that Heidegger maximized the move to the center.¹⁶ To shift metaphors, he allowed his vision to become monofocal, rather than heeding the double legislation at the base of reality – a *tragic* double bind from which there is no way out, but paying attention to which can help prevent the worst of tragedies. Heidegger's failure, on this reading, would consist in his disregard for the double bind, in tragically maximizing certain phenomena at the expense of all others and in blinding himself to their always imminent collapse. Schürmann believes Heidegger learned his

lesson in the 1930s, becoming like Oedipus at Colonus, but this cannot be right in view of the Trakl-material from the 1950s, in which I see an even more stubborn insistence on centralization.

How does this relate to the second question I posed above, namely: what would it mean to preserve the other beginning without the Secret Germany? What, in other words, would it mean to redeem the promise of the other beginning without succumbing to the nationalistic temptations of the Secret Germany (and here I mean more than Heidegger's misadventure with National Socialism). It would not mean centrifugality, singularity alone. It would not mean, as Schürmann often accused Derrida of doing, "consigning [...] the *archai* to the philosophical tools henceforth obsolete and then going off to settle happily in a place deprived of principles."¹⁷ It would not mean unclenching from universals altogether. Rather, preserving the other beginning without the Secret Germany would mean recognizing the impossibility of simple legislation, of normative simplicity. It would mean a different sort of an-archy than the "without why" that Heidegger and the early Schürmann saw in Meister Eckhart and considered to be the highest form of life – a sort of an-archy that, while not entirely without metaphysics, nonetheless resists the pull toward hegemonic maximization.¹⁸ It would mean recognizing both gathering and scattering, *Versammlung* and *dissémination*, as simultaneously legislative. In Schürmann's words:

The transition toward the other beginning means the possible assent to conflictual being [*l'être conflictuel*]. The only salvation [*salut*] is to recognize unclenching [from hegemony] as legislating. [...] The other beginning indicates the awakening to the tragic condition [...]. It is an other, discordant time; an other, concealing-revealing truth; an other being-there, deferred by the possible; an other thinking, contentious because responsible for [non-sublatable] differing [*responsable du différend*]; an other being, turned against itself; an other originary speaking, where the No holds itself up against the Yes – these are so many figures of the

double bind [*double prescription*] becoming, with the other beginning, the sole phenomenological issue.¹⁹

Yet, as Moreiras points out, Derrida also espouses something of a double bind in this remarkable passage of *Geschlecht III*:

If there were only gathering, sameness, oneness, place without path, that would be death without further ado [*mort sans phrases*]. [...] To say that there is divisibility does not come down to saying that there is only divisibility or division either (that, too, would be death). Death lies in wait on both sides, on the side of the phantasm of the integrity of the proper place and the innocence of a sexual difference without war, and, on the opposite side, that of a radical impropriety or expropriation, or even a war of *Geschlecht* as sexual dissension.²⁰

I will return to the issue of sexual difference momentarily. Here I just want to note that, whether or not Derrida would, in the end, go as far as to espouse the tragic double bind as Schürmann understands it, he is closer to Schürmann than the latter typically lets on.²¹

Coming now to the matter of pain, on which Moreiras focuses: preserving the other beginning without the Secret Germany would mean interpreting one of the Greek words for pain, *algos*, not only, with Heidegger, as a force of super-gathering (*alpha intensivum + legein*) (GA 9: 404/304-305), but also, and at the same time, as a counterforce of un-gathering (*alpha privativum + legein*). I admit I did not see this in my book, where I was concerned less with the tragic double bind than with stressing, against Heidegger, the ungathering at work in the traumatic life and poetry of Trakl. Heidegger's conception of pain, though partial, is thus not simply an analgesic, as I had contended.²² The partiality of the pain that it safeguards nevertheless, and despite itself, feeds the fire of insurrectionary spirit.

I would say, then, that "pain is beyng itself" because it is a figure of the tragic double bind. Existentially, we become who we are in according with this double bind. Such accordance would, in my view, mark

the other beginning of thinking and being: “The human and pain otherwise, and only therein is the Other Thinking determined [*Mensch und Schmerz anders und nur darin beschlossen das Andere Denken*].”²⁵ Pain both gathers and scatters, indeed in such a way that we cannot take recourse to some *tertium*, to some higher court of appeal, that would resolve the tension for us. This is accordingly not a contradiction (*Widerspruch*) that could be resolved through logical clarification or dialectical sublation, but rather what Schürmann (after Wittgenstein and Lyotard) calls an irresolvable differing or “differend” (*Widerstreit, différend*). What, then, calls for thinking today? To think this painful differing not only at the level of our being, but at the level of being itself. Heidegger, less as a man or authority than as a symptom or discursive regularity of our “monstrous site,”²⁴ is exemplary to this end.

What I am suggesting in the epilogue of *Dialogue on the Threshold* is that we have much to learn not just from the Heidegger of the 1930s (on whom Schürmann focuses in *Broken Hegemonies*), but also from the postwar Heidegger, especially his lectures on Trakl from the early 1950s, despite the violence and combat – or rather, in some respects, given what I just said, *because* of the violence and combat.

Davies is right to ask “whether – and on what terms – any meaningful exchange between these two figures unfolds,” especially in view of the German-nationalist agenda that, his protestations to the contrary notwithstanding,²⁵ Heidegger nevertheless paradoxically foists on Trakl – that is, on the drug-addled, Austrian poet in love with decay and obsessed with his sister, the poet who fantasized about leaving his homeland for Russia and once expressed the wish that all Germans would die by the executioner’s axe, the self-avowed Protestant from Catholic Salzburg who was driven into a psychiatric ward and then to suicide by his extreme compassion for his wounded comrades at the battle of Gródek, the favorite poet of socialist writer Franz Fühmann and a privileged poet for serialist and atonal settings (including by Adorno), the poet whom Wittgenstein supported financially and of whom he once wrote: “Today [Ludwig von] Ficker sent me poems of poor Trakl,

which I find brilliant but do not understand. They did me good. God with me.”²⁶ Can we really speak of a *Gespräch* here?

By “dialogue” in the book’s title, I did mean, in part, to signal something closer to the combat that Davies outlines, namely, the “old quarrel between philosophy and poetry.”²⁷ I would, however, hesitate to relegate this dialogue to metaphysics simply speaking (in Heidegger’s pejorative sense of the word) and hence to conflate it with German *Dialog* (in Heidegger’s restricted understanding of the word). For, in this quarrel between Heidegger’s philosophy and Trakl’s poetry, there are moments of *Gespräch*, moments in which Heidegger not only helps to open the poetic word to thinking (here I have in mind his stress on global perdition [*Unheil*] and on the holy [*das Heilige*] and the possibility of healing [*Heilung*] and salvation [*Heil*] in Trakl’s poetry) but also lets himself be claimed by the language of the poetic word. Heidegger, the sexagenarian philosopher from Meßkirch, is confronted with the need to deal, more or less directly, with Trakl’s themes of sexual difference, incest, decay, pain, animality, color theory, salvation, and eschatology, themes often kept outside the domicile and domain of legitimate philosophical discourse and inquiry. Even if he polices the threshold, Heidegger, to his credit, is not entirely inhospitable to the *poète maudit*.²⁸ Or, to shift directions, even if he does not venture as far as Trakl invites, and even if he turns back in, Heidegger, to his credit, crosses the threshold. To reply directly to Davies and Rose: I see my book not only as “rehabilitat[ing] the possibility of a genuine conversation,” as Davies writes, but, additionally, as taking Heidegger further, even as I am also trying to bring myself and my readers to, as Mikhail Bakhtin puts it, the “*threshold[s]* of final decision.”²⁹

One such threshold, to recall my earlier remarks, concerns the scope of our concern: do we privilege the particular or the universal? Do we grant validity only to one, or do we attempt to hold them together and, if so, as sublatale or as an insuperable double bind? Another threshold of final decision, to which I return frequently in the book, is between Christ and “beyng.” A third, related threshold, and with this I take up Davies’s later remarks, is whether gender, and in particular

the feminine, matters for philosophy or “thinking.” In a few places throughout his oeuvre, Heidegger answers in the affirmative.

Perhaps the most noteworthy place in which Heidegger crosses this last threshold (if only momentarily) is in his second Trakl-lecture, “Language in the Poem.” Heidegger recognizes the importance of the figure of the sister for Trakl, in whose poetry she often appears as a symbol for security or transfiguration, but also for guilt or agony. Heidegger also recognizes the possibility of a gentle, primal sexual difference at the very origin of being and language, prior to its calamitous lapse into discord. Further, recent research at the Germany Literary Archive also turned up a thoroughgoing preoccupation with the figure of the sister in notes Heidegger presumably wrote in preparation for “Language in the Poem.” One note resembles an indexical entry, in which Heidegger jots down page numbers for over a dozen references to the “sister” in his copy of the Salzburg edition of Trakl’s collected works.⁵⁰ It is but one of nearly one thousand pages of notes on Trakl in Heidegger’s literary remains and should give us a sense for the immense labor he put into what would become just two lectures on the poet, lectures in which Heidegger was also, by the way, trying to come to terms with the past and ingratiate himself with the conservative postwar elite.⁵¹

Nevertheless, despite his recognition of and research into the figure of the sister, Heidegger severs her ties to body and blood, particularly that of *Blutschuld*, which literally means “blood guilt” or “blood crime” but also refers to incest in Trakl. (It should also be remembered that Trakl considered his poetry to be partial expiation for sin, which incest epitomized for him.) Heidegger then systematically subordinates the sister – along with Trakl’s “wild blue game,” with which she is often linked – to the figure of the masculine stranger, whom she – and we in her wake – are called on to follow beyond or beneath the degenerate cast of the contemporary *Geschlecht* into a purified *Abend-Land*. This, in spite of her leadership in many of Trakl’s poems, and in spite of her strange amalgamation with Christ as a promise of a gentler sexual difference and an androgynous *ONE Geschlecht*.⁵²

What is going on here? A double reading, it seems to me, is called for. The feminine is indeed subordinated to and, if not exactly erased, at least obscured by the masculine. As Davies shows, this is not the first time we see such subordination or erasure in Heidegger's life and thought. Yet, for all the evasion and suppression, where else does Heidegger, with such intensity and risk, lend an ear to, in Trakl's words from the poem "Geistliche Dämmerung" ("Spiritual Twilight"), "the lunar voice of the sister that ever sounds through the spiritual night" (*Immer tönt der Schwester mondene Stimme / Durch die geistliche Nacht*)? Where else does the twofoldness of being itself (and not simply of a region of beings) so closely overlap with sexual difference?⁵⁵ Where else, Derrida asks, can we find anything like this engagement of thinker and poet that is not in turn indebted to Heidegger? Derrida continues, and here I echo him: "if anyone among you can provide a counterexample, from another culture or another language, the example of an analogous attempt that is not tied to the German language and that does not suppose Heidegger's path-breaking [endeavor], this would be of the utmost interest."⁵⁴

Davies wonders whether Heidegger's "*Dialog*" with Trakl is a stillbirth. Perhaps it was a stillbirth *for Heidegger*, insofar as he recoiled from and, especially in the case of animality, subsequently disowned that to which his encounter with Trakl had given birth. However, *for us*, the texts survive. The children live on. And, I hope to have shown, they have much to teach us.

NOTES

- 1 One of Trakl's most important and well-known compositions, and "perhaps the most iconic World War One poem in the German language" (Rüdiger Görner, "Georg Trakl," in *A History of World War One Poetry*, ed. Jane Potter [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press], 424-40 [429]), "Gródek" takes its title from the battle that eventually drove Trakl to the point of suicide. I am no longer satisfied with the translation of Trakl's poem that I offered in my book (*Dialogue on the Threshold: Heidegger and Trakl* [Albany: SUNY Press, 2022], 140-41, 222-23, 289-91). Here is how I would instead render "Gródek" today:

In the evening the autumn woods resound
 With deadly weapons, the golden plains
 And blue lakes, over which the sun
 More gloomily rolls on; the night envelops
 Dying warriors, the wild lamentation
 Of their shattered mouths.
 Yet calmly in the willow vale red clouds,
 Indwelt by a raging god, take shape,
 The blood that was shed, lunar coolness;
 All roads open onto black decay.
 Under golden boughs of night and stars
 The shadow of the sister sways through the silent grove
 To greet the spirits of the heroes, the bleeding heads;
 And softly the dark flutes of autumn resound in the reeds.
 Oh, prouder grief! you brazen alters,
 The hot flame of spirit is nourished today by a mighty pain,
 The unborn grandchildren.

*Am Abend tönen die herbstlichen Wälder
 Von tödlichen Waffen, die goldnen Ebenen
 Und blauen Seen, darüber die Sonne
 Düst'rer hinrollt; umfängt die Nacht
 Sterbende Krieger, die wilde Klage*

*Ihrer zerbrochenen Mänder.
Doch stille sammelt im Weidengrund
Rotes Gewölk, darin ein zürnender Gott wohnt,
Das vergossne Blut sich, mondne Kühle;
Alle Straßen münden in schwarze Verwesung.
Unter goldnem Gezweig der Nacht und Sternen
Es schwankt der Schwester Schatten durch den schweigenden Hain,
Zu grüßen die Geister der Helden, die blutenden Häupter;
Und leise tönen im Rohr die dunkeln Flöten des Herbstes.
O stolzere Trauer! ihr ehernen Altäre,
Die heiße Flamme des Geistes nährt heute ein gewaltiger Schmerz,
Die ungeborenen Enkel.*

- 2 Heidegger's personal copy of Georg Trakl, *Die Dichtungen: Gesamtausgabe, mit einem Anhang Zeugnisse und Erinnerungen*, ed. Kurt Horwitz (Zurich: Die Arche, 1946), located in the Martin-Heidegger-Archiv der Stadt Meßkirch (as cited, with a photograph of Heidegger's annotation, in Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 97, 223).
- 3 David Farrell Krell, *Lunar Voices: Of Tragedy, Poetry, Fiction, and Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 61.
- 4 Jacques Derrida, *Geschlecht III: Sexe, race, nation, humanité*, ed. Geoffrey Bennington, Katie Chenoweth, and Rodrigo Therezo (Paris: Seuil, 2018) / *Geschlecht III: Sex, Race, Nation, Humanity*, trans. Chenoweth and Therezo (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).
- 5 I was also fortunate to be able to read a draft of Charles Bambach's *Of an Alien Homecoming: Reading Heidegger's "Hölderlin"* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2022) during this time. See especially chapter 1, sections II–III, as well as the forum on his book published in *Gatherings* volume 14. For Heidegger's direct references to the Secret Germany, see GA 16: 290; GA 94: 154–55/114.
- 6 As reported in a letter from Gerhard Stroomann to Ludwig von Ficker, August 25, 1952, in Nachlass Ludwig von Ficker, call number 041-048-025-001, <http://edition.ficker-gesamtbriefwechsel>.

[net/#/briefe/nach-partnerinnen/ebge7a4c-d896-4b88-a6d3-0885d1960072](https://briefe.nach-partnerinnen/ebge7a4c-d896-4b88-a6d3-0885d1960072). Here and below, translations for which I do not cite an English edition are my own.

- 7 Reiner Schürmann, *Des hégémonies brisées*, 2nd edition (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2017) / *Broken Hegemonies*, trans. Reginald Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003). See also the précis in Reiner Schürmann, “‘Only Proteus Can Save Us Now’: On Anarchy and Broken Hegemonies,” ed. Francesco Guercio and Ian Alexander Moore, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 42, no. 1 (2021): 53–90 (70–81).
- 8 On the larger context of the series (especially the 1984–1985 seminar, from which the sessions on Trakl have been extracted), see Herman Rapaport, *Derrida on Exile and the Nation: Reading Phantom of the Other* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021). The first session of the 1984–1985 seminar is available under the title “Onto-Theology of National Humanism (Prolegomena to a Hypothesis),” *Oxford Literary Review* 14, no. 1 (1992): 3–23. On *Geschlecht III* in the context of Derrida’s other three texts on *Geschlecht* in Heidegger, see David Farrell Krell, *Phantoms of the Other: Four Generations of Derrida’s Geschlecht* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015).
- 9 Derrida, *Geschlecht III*, 156/137.
- 10 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, “Présentation,” in Martin Heidegger, *La pauvreté (die Armut)* (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2004), 21.
- 11 These remarks build on a lecture I gave at Brown University in April 2024. The lecture will be published under the title “Von Hellingrath’s Hölderlin, Heidegger’s Poetics, and the Myth of the Secret Germany” in a volume edited by Ioannis Dimopoulos and Kristina Mendicino (De Gruyter).
- 12 Norbert von Hellingrath, *Zwei Vorträge: Hölderlin und die Deutschen, Hölderlins Wahnsinn*, 2nd edition (Munich: Bruckmann, 1922), 22.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 16–17.

- 14 See Wolfgang Martynkewicz, *Salon Deutschland: Geist und Macht 1900–1945* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2009), 257–306, and Norbert von Hellingrath und die *Ästhetik der europäischen Moderne*, ed. Jürgen Brokoff, Joachim Jacob, and Marcel Lepper (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2014).
- 15 Heidegger is referring more directly to a Hölderlin-fragment in the fourth volume of Hellingrath’s edition of the poet: “Concerning what is highest, I will be silent [*schweigen*]. / Forbidden fruit, like the laurel, is, however, / Above all the fatherland. Such, however, each / Shall taste last” (cited in GA 39: 4/4). But notice how the first part of the lecture course begins: “We shall now read and listen to the poem ‘Germania.’ The authoritative edition from which I cite is the six-volume edition of Norbert von Hellingrath and his friends. [...] Perhaps the German youth will one day come to remember the creator of their Hölderlin edition, Norbert von Hellingrath, who, at the age of twenty-eight, was killed in action at Verdun in 1916—or perhaps they will not” (GA 39: 9/9).
- 16 See the final four chapters of Schürmann, *Des hégémonies brisées / Broken Hegemonies*.
- 17 Schürmann, *Des hégémonies brisées*, 724 / *Broken Hegemonies*, 630.
- 18 Contrast, on the one hand, GA 10: 57–58/37 and Schürmann’s *Maître Eckhart ou la joie errante: Sermons allemands* (Paris: Payot & Rivages, 2005; first published in 1972), 197 / *Wandering Joy: Meister Eckhart’s Mystical Philosophy* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne, 2001), 116–17 with, on the other, *Des hégémonies brisées*, 722 / *Broken Hegemonies*, 629. On the “without why” in Eckhart (*âne/sunder warumbe* in Middle High German, *sine principio* in Latin), see, for example, Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, herausgegeben im Auftrag der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft, 11 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936–), DW 1: 90,11–91,2; LW 3: 16, §19.
- 19 Schürmann, *Des hégémonies brisées*, 648, 659, 661 / *Broken Hegemonies* 562, 571, 573 (modified).

- 20 Derrida, *Geschlecht III*, 106–107/81–82 (modified).
- 21 On several occasions, Schürmann quotes, out of context, the following passage from Derrida’s early work in order to situate him on the side of transgression and hence to distinguish him from Schürmann’s own position of double legislation or legislation-*sive*-transgression: “[one can] decide to change terrain, in a discontinuous and irruptive fashion, by brutally placing oneself outside, and by affirming an absolute break.” Jacques Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1972), 162 / *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 135. Yet this is a caricature of Derrida. For a more nuanced reading, see Schürmann’s lecture course *Systems and Breaks: On Foucault and Derrida*, ed. David McCullough and Ian Alexander Moore (Zurich: Diaphanes, forthcoming).
- 22 Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold*, 134.
- 23 Martin Heidegger, *Über den Schmerz*, ed. Dietmar Koch and Klaus Neugebauer, *Jahresgabe der Martin-Heidegger-Gesellschaft* (2017–2018), 50–51. (I have emended the editors’ transcription of *anderes* to *anders* based on the facsimile of Heidegger’s manuscript on page 26.) Contrast this conception of pain as an irresolvable double bind with Heidegger’s pacification of the phenomenon: “it [the essence of pain] is beyng itself! Because this is, inceptively, grace and the gentle—the never-urging—but rather always only serene, consensual in beings, what speaks assuringly, hence the gathering of releasement: indwelling is not ‘work’ and action, but rather the wholly Other—namely, the *determinative attuning* of the human to his inceptive essence [*es das Seyn selbst! Denn dieses anfänglich die Huld und das Sanfte—die Nie-drängende—sondern stets nur still, einvernehmlich im Seienden, Zu-sprechende deshalb die Ge-lassenheit: die Inständigkeit ist nicht ‘Arbeit’ und Aktion, sondern das ganz Andere—nämlich die Be-stimmtheit des Menschen in sein anfängliches Wesen.*]” *Ibid.*, 50.
- 24 Schürmann, *Des hégémonies brisées*, 593 / *Broken Hegemonies*, 515. See also Francesco Guercio and Ian Alexander Moore,

- “Heidegger, Our Monstrous Site: On Reiner Schürmann’s Reading of the *Beiträge*,” *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 42, no. 1 (2021): 93–114.
- 25 See, for example, GA 9: 338/257, 341–42/260, as well as the eleventh session of Derrida, *Geschlecht III*.
- 26 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Geheime Tagebücher 1914–1916*, ed. Wilhelm Baum (Vienna: Turia & Kant, 1991), 45–46.
- 27 *Plato’s Republic: The Greek Text*, vol. 1, ed. B. Jowett and Lewis Campbell (Oxford: Clarendon, 1894), 607b6.
- 28 Benjamin Brewer takes up the “problem of *hospitality*” as “the dilemma of the threshold par excellence” in his review of *Dialogue on the Threshold*. See Brewer, “Difficult Conversations,” *Research in Phenomenology* 54 (2024): 123–30 (125). Other reviews of the book have since appeared in *Symposium* (2024), <https://www.c-scp.org/2024/11/15/ian-alexander-moore-dialogue-on-the-threshold-heidegger-and-trakl> (by Harris B. Bechtol); *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* 14 (2024): 227–235 (by David Farrell Krell); and *Filosofický časopis* 3 (2024): 534–536 (by Aleš Nývák).
- 29 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 61.
- 30 “Konvolut: Notizen zu Georg Trakl,” *Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach*, call number 75.7372,3, page 40. Pages 39–55 are devoted to the theme of the sister.
- 31 On the setting and social-political context of Heidegger’s Trakl-lectures, see chapter 1 of *Dialogue on the Threshold* and especially the booklet that resulted from the research I conducted with Tobias Keiling after preparing my monograph for publication: Keiling and Moore, *Heidegger (und Trakl) auf der Bühlerhöhe* (Marbach am Neckar: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 2023). The latter has been published in English with revisions under the title “Spoiling the Party? Heidegger’s Lectures on Trakl at Spa Bühlerhöhe,” *b2o Review* (December 15, 2023), <https://www.boundary2.org/2023/12/tobias-keiling-and-ian-alexander-moore>

- spoiling-the-party-heideggers-lectures-on-trakl-at-spa-buhler-hohe/.
- 32 See Trakl's poems "Passion" (first version) and "Abendländisches Lied" ("Song of the Occident"), as well as Richard Detsch, *Georg Trakl's Poetry: Toward a Union of Opposites* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983), part I. Cf. GA 12: 74-75/195.
- 33 For more on the productive potentials and limitations of sexual difference in "Language in the Poem," see, for example, Ellen T. Armour's essay "'Through Flame or Ashes': Traces of Difference on *Geist's* Return," in *Feminist Interpretations of Martin Heidegger*, ed. Nancy J. Holland and Patricia Huntington (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 316-33, which draws on the work of Derrida and Irigaray. Irigaray, for her part, comments briefly on Heidegger's curious consignment of the possibility of a new dawn to Trakl's figure of the dead boy in *L'Oubli de l'air chez Martin Heidegger* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1983), 108-109 / *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, trans. Mary Beth Mader (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 119-20. See also Irigaray's edited volume, *Challenging a Fictitious Neutrality: Heidegger in Question* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).
- 34 Derrida, *Geschlecht III*, 161/141.