

## THE ANXIETY OF THEORY

### *Hölderlin's Poetology as Skeptical Syndrome*

This chapter has two primary objectives: first, to show that the skeptical arguments of the human subject with itself “over its finitude” find a place in Hölderlin’s thought, and, second, to delineate the relationships between Hölderlin’s theoretical writings and his poems. Having done so, in chapter 3 I will be able to use Hölderlin’s own vocabulary for describing the stakes and achievements of poetry to read that poetry as seeking orientations within human finitude without reducing it to illustrated examples of theoretical or philosophical ideas (mine or Hölderlin’s). This chapter addresses the objectives I have set forth (first) by recharacterizing the problems of skepticism (in the broad sense in which I discussed it in chapter 1) in the temporally specific vocabulary Hölderlin uses to diagnose his era as in need of new strategies for the overcoming of finitude, and (second) by drawing out a contradiction, previously ignored by scholarship on Hölderlin, that runs through his theoretical texts: why do Hölderlin’s poetological texts try to do what, by their own lights, they cannot?

Hölderlin makes a strong distinction between discursive or theoretical and poetic language;<sup>1</sup> given that he assigns to poetry the task of mediating between the

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1. I am using the word “discursive” in the vulgar-Kantian sense to describe argumentation proceeding through conceptual reasoning; since not all poetry is completely nondiscursive all of the time, I will typically use “theoretical” to describe language that is predicated exclusively on argumentative reasoning by way of abstract claims.

antinomies of mind and world, nature and freedom, and given that he states repeatedly that this mediation can only be articulated in poetic language, why does he continue to attempt to effect this mediating work in theorizations of the possibilities of and procedures for writing poetry? I suggest that this contradiction derives from Hölderlin's struggle with the truth of skepticism, understood as a recognition that human subjects inevitably strive to have certainty (whether about the world, other minds, or the divine) that they cannot possess—and, moreover, that this dissatisfaction with the uncertain state of our knowledge is constitutive of human subjectivity.<sup>2</sup> The paradox of Hölderlin's theoretical texts conditions both the themes discussed and the stylistic or metatextual features of the texts themselves.<sup>3</sup> In what follows, I will analyze these features at some length to show the problems of finitude at work both in the content and in the form of Hölderlin's theoretical texts.

Finally, taking the self-contradiction of Hölderlin's texts seriously as a symptom of the struggle with the native dissatisfactions of subjectivity in its quest for certainty shifts the relation between his poetological texts and his poetry, enabling me to use Hölderlin's own language to elucidate the ways in which his poetry takes up the tasks of finding and testing the boundaries between language, mind, and world as matters of (unassured, processual) orientation toward acknowledgment rather than (certain, permanent) knowledge. Previous scholarship has either taken it for granted that the theoretical texts (if only we could understand them) provide an ideal rubric for reading Hölderlin's poetry, or it has discarded them as vestigial remnants of Hölderlin's philosophical studies that are irrelevant for his poetry.<sup>4</sup>

2. Cavell's account of the necessity of both striving and dissatisfaction, together with his linking of both to our condition as creatures possessing language, is the reason I continue to have recourse to his vocabulary of skepticism and acknowledgment, rather than simply shifting fully into Hölderlin's—sometimes inconsistent and opaque—vocabulary.

3. The latter, in particular, have not been taken into account by a scholarship that seeks to link Hölderlin's writings to any of a number of contemporary discourses, including but not limited to idealism, pietism, and receptions of Hellenism. Hölderlin did quite obviously participate in these discourses, and knowledge of them is a great help in understanding the historical specificity of his language and his projects. That specificity can, however, be limiting as well as explanatory, as it makes Hölderlin's project more historically conditioned than it needs to be. Still more problematically, the temptation arises in this mode of scholarship to use these external discourses as a way of decoding Hölderlin's texts such that the contradiction I highlight here disappears. On Hölderlin's relation to idealism, see Dieter Henrich, *Der Grund im Bewußtsein: Untersuchungen zu Hölderlins Denken (1794–1795)* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta Verlag, 2004); and Lawrence Ryan, *Hölderlins Lehre vom Wechsel der Töne* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1960). On his relation to pietism and revolution, see Gerhard Kurz, *Mittelbarkeit und Vereinigung: Zum Verhältnis von Poesie, Reflexion und Revolution bei Hölderlin* (Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 1975); and Priscilla Hayden-Roy, "A Foretaste of Heaven": *Friedrich Hölderlin in the Context of Württemberg Pietism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994).

4. In the former group, see, e.g., Dieter Burdorf, "Mikrologische Lektüre: Am Beispiel eines Bruchstücks aus dem Homburger Folioheft," in *Hölderlin und Nürtingen*, ed. Peter Härtling and Gerhard Kurz (Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 1994), 191–202; Dietrich Uffhausen, "Bevestigter Gesang: Hölderlins hymnische Spätdichtung in neuer Gestalt," in *Neue Wege zu Hölderlin*, ed. Uwe Beyer (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1994), 323–45; Ulrich Gaier, "Hölderlins vaterländischer Gesang 'Andenken,'" *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 26 (1988/89): 175–201; Martin Anderle, *Die Landschaft in den Gedichten Hölderlins: Die Funktion des konkreten im idealistischen Weltbild* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1986); Gerhard Kurz, "Das Nächste

I contend that the theoretical texts are indeed useful for reading Hölderlin's poetry in that they show us what poetry strives for, but not what it will look like or how it should be written. Taking Hölderlin's poetics as working within the difficulty of acknowledgment allows me to address the simultaneously historical and ontological, epistemological and moral, questions of fit between mind and world that the texts yearn to resolve.<sup>5</sup> It also allows me to understand Hölderlin's poetry not as philosophy rendered in verse, but as the expression of a yearning—with its frustrations and fulfillments—that is most fully articulated in poetry.

## Hölderlin's Context and His Cultural Critique

Johann Christian Friedrich Hölderlin was born in 1770—the same year as Ludwig van Beethoven and William Wordsworth—in Lauffen am Neckar in Württemberg.<sup>6</sup> At the time Württemberg was a member of the loose conglomeration of duchies and principalities under the Holy Roman Empire;<sup>7</sup> this lack of national unity becomes a theme in Hölderlin's poetry. Hölderlin was educated at a

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*Beste*," in *Interpretationen: Gedichte von Friedrich Hölderlin*, ed. Gerhard Kurz (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1996), 166–85; Michael Franz, "Hölderlins Gedicht 'Andenken,'" in *Friedrich Hölderlin*, special issue of *Text + Kritik*, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Andreas Döhler (Munich: e:t+k, 1996), 195–212; to some extent, Dieter Henrich, *The Course of Remembrance and Other Essays on Hölderlin*, ed. Eckhart Förster (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997). In the latter group, see, e.g., Roland Reuss, "Die eigene Rede des anderen": Hölderlins "Andenken" und "Mnemosyne" (Frankfurt a.M.: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1990); Cyrus Hamlin, "Die Poetik des Gedächtnisses: Aus einem Gespräch über Hölderlins 'Andenken,'" *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 24 (1984/85): 119–38; Götz E. Hübner, "Nach Port-au-Prince: 'Andenken' als Hölderlins geschichtspoetologisches Vermächtnis," *Le Pauvre Holterling* 9 (2003): 43–54. This divide also follows, to some extent, the divide between the *Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, edited by Friedrich Beißner, and the *Frankfurter Ausgabe*, edited by Dietrich Sattler; the former tends to present somewhat artificially completed versions, while the latter tends too far in the other direction and offers such a proliferation of versions, drafts, and fragments that it becomes difficult to decipher the text. For this reason, I cite from the Munich edition: Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. Michael Knaupp, 3 vols. (Munich: Hanser Verlag, 1992), which emphasizes readability, but not at the cost of creating coherence where none exists. All German versions of the texts cited in this chapter are from the Munich edition, hereafter cited as MA, followed by volume number and page number, so that the originals may be easily located.

5. One of the virtues of the view of language that I derive from Cavell's readings of Wittgenstein is that it helps to make these extremely ambitious goals for poetry comprehensible, even given Hölderlin's lack of audience in his own day: if changing the reader's orientation in language changes the world, it is not so far-fetched for poetry to take on the task of making world and subject more fit for each other.

6. David Constantine, *Friedrich Hölderlin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 1.

7. Prior to the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, the eighteenth-century Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation consisted of 462 more or less sovereign political entities, including secular states, imperial city-states, and church-held ecclesiastical territories. See, e.g., Eric Dorn Brose, *German History, 1789–1871: From the Holy Roman Empire to the Bismarckian Reich* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1997). For the specific situation in Württemberg, see Otto Borst, *Geschichte Baden-Württembergs: Ein Lesebuch*, ed. Susanne Quarthal and Franz Quarthal (Stuttgart: Theiss Verlag, 2004), esp. chaps. 8 and 9, for the effects of the Enlightenment and Revolution, as well as the at-best-ambivalent figure of Duke Carl Eugen (1737–93). On the transformation of (some) Catholic cloisters into Evangelical "Klosterschulen," see Borst, chap. 10.

Lateinschule in Nürtingen (where his family moved on his mother's remarriage) until the age of fourteen, and then at a Klosterschule in Denkendorff.<sup>8</sup> At the age of eighteen he began studying theology at the Tübinger Stift; because his education (from Denkendorff onward) was funded by the state, it was mandated that he should become a pastor in Württemberg, an obligation Hölderlin went to great trouble to avoid.<sup>9</sup> Instead, he repeatedly took up positions as a house tutor, first in Waltershausen and Jena, then in Frankfurt, Hauptwil (Switzerland), and Bordeaux (France).<sup>10</sup> Both Jena (1794–95) and Frankfurt (1796–98) were decisive: in the former, he studied philosophy at the university and worked out ideas that would remain influential in his poetry; in the latter, he fell in love with Susette Gontard, the wife of his employer.<sup>11</sup> She reciprocated; they were discovered, and Hölderlin resigned or was dismissed;<sup>12</sup> they continued to meet secretly for two years thereafter while Hölderlin lived (on an allowance from his mother, which she deducted from his patrimony)<sup>13</sup> and wrote in Homburg (1798–1800).<sup>14</sup> Following his employment in Hauptwil (1801) and Bordeaux (1802), he returned to his mother's house in Nürtingen before his friend Isaac von Sinclair secured him a position as court librarian in Homburg (1804–6).<sup>15</sup> In 1806 Hölderlin suffered a mental collapse and was institutionalized in the clinic of Dr. Ferdinand Autenrieth in Tübingen from 1806 to 1807. In 1807 Hölderlin was given three years to live and was released into the care of a Tübingen carpenter who had admired his

8. Constantine, *Friedrich Hölderlin*, 2.

9. *Ibid.*, 2–3. Constantine describes the effects of this commitment on Hölderlin as follows: "Until the end of his life, Hölderlin remained under the supervision of Württemberg's educational and church authorities, the Consistorium; and for all his movements, his jobs as house tutor 'abroad', he had to seek official permission. He was legally bound, from the age of fourteen, to a particular career; and thus bound also to orthodox belief. It is true that many of his fellows in the same predicament successfully resisted or evaded these requirements, and Hölderlin himself, until his mental collapse, was fending them off with some confidence; but the obligation or threat remained, more or less close; it coloured his view of his own homeland, became a constituent of the image of himself as a wanderer debarred from returning to and settling in his native country. The immediate representative of this obligation was not, however, a bureaucratic body, but Hölderlin's mother. She was a pious woman who wanted secure prospects for her eldest son. On both counts it answered particularly well that he should enter the Church. Hölderlin's relations with his mother were very adversely affected by the obligation she put upon him and which he was bound to resist. She acted properly according to her lights, and so did he according to his" (3).

10. I draw these dates from Constantine's "Chronology of Hölderlin's Life and of Contemporary Events," in *Friedrich Hölderlin*, 394–95.

11. Constantine, *Friedrich Hölderlin*, 61ff.

12. The precise circumstances are unclear (see Constantine, *Friedrich Hölderlin*, 80).

13. Constantine describes the Hölderlin/Gok family finances as follows: "From various sources, chiefly from his father, Hölderlin was to come into a considerable inheritance. His mother invested the money shrewdly and undertook that she would neither use the principal nor the interest to defray the cost of his upbringing but would pass on to him the whole enhanced amount—on one condition: that he remained obedient" (Constantine, *Friedrich Hölderlin*, 4). Hölderlin never requested and she never released the patrimony; although his brother and sister attempted to reduce his share of the inheritance after their mother's death, the court ruled against them and Hölderlin was wealthy when he died (300).

14. Constantine, *Friedrich Hölderlin*, 105.

15. *Ibid.*, 268–72.

earlier work; in fact he lived until 1843, becoming something of a local tourist attraction.<sup>16</sup> During the thirty-six years of his illness his half brother was the only member of his family who visited him, and that only once. None of his family attended his funeral.<sup>17</sup>

Within this brief outline, there are several key points for understanding Hölderlin's thought and his poetry. First, his education in Tübingen was influenced by the events that resonated throughout Europe at the end of the eighteenth century: the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 and the critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Hölderlin's access to Kant came through Immanuel Carl Diez, a teacher at the Stift, and was mediated (for Diez and his students) through the works of Karl Leonhard Reinhold and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi.<sup>18</sup> Hölderlin shared both his Kantian and his revolutionary enthusiasms with his schoolmates Hegel and Schelling, and both enthusiasms put him in opposition to the institutional culture of the Stift, which was funded by the conservative Duke Carl Eugen<sup>19</sup> and remained under the jurisdiction of the Lutheran Church's Consistorium, which objected to the Kantian elevation of reason over revelation and viewed the revolution as a potential disruption to the comfortable relation between church and state in Württemberg.<sup>20</sup> Although Hölderlin's poetry, especially in Denkendorff, uses some pietist diction and images, the strains of pietism to which Hölderlin was exposed fit neatly with the institutional church that Hölderlin rejected, making it likelier that pietistic language in his works derives in general from sentimentalism's deployment of this diction, and its use in Klopstock, in particular, whom Hölderlin strove to emulate in his earliest poetry.<sup>21</sup> Later he transferred his admiration to Friedrich Schiller, whose appeals to ancient Greece and engagement with Kantian philosophy influenced Hölderlin's

16. Ibid., 299–300.

17. Ibid., 300 and 313.

18. On Reinhold and Jacobi as mediators of Kant in general, see Dieter Henrich, "Die Anfänge der Theorie des Subjekts (1789)," in *Zwischenbetrachtungen: Im Prozess der Aufklärung*, ed. Axel Honneth et al. (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1989), 106–70. For Reinhold and Jacobi as Hölderlin's "Textfilter" in approaching Kant, see Manfred Frank, "Hölderlins philosophische Grundlagen," in *Hölderlin und die Moderne: Eine Bestandaufnahme*, ed. Gerhard Kurz et al. (Tübingen: Attempo-Verlag, 1995), 174–94.

19. The duke "paid [the Stift] six official visits during four years and regarded it very much as his" (Constantine, *Friedrich Hölderlin*, 20); on Carl Eugen's education reforms, see Borst, *Geschichte Baden-Württembergs*, chaps. 8–9.

20. On the orthodox Lutheran Church's (and its pietist subsection's) anti-Kantian sentiment, see Hayden-Roy, "A Foretaste of Heaven." Hayden-Roy's overarching argument is that the influence of pietism on Hölderlin has been greatly overstated without attention to the specific strains of pietism to which Hölderlin was exposed, specifically the more conservative segments of Württemberg pietism, which, she argues, have less in common with his thought than the speculative branches. She offers compelling evidence that overlaps in theoretical or philosophical concerns between Hölderlin and Friedrich Christoph Oetinger had more to do with their cultural situation of response to and critique of late Enlightenment and Kantian dualisms (8–17).

21. Indeed, views Hölderlin adopted/adapted from Klopstock's Moravian pietism often place him in opposition to the Württemberg pietism with which he grew up (Hayden-Roy, "A Foretaste of Heaven," 17).

own development, and who found Hölderlin his first house tutor position and published parts of *Hyperion*.<sup>22</sup>

It was through the tutorship secured for him by Schiller that Hölderlin was able to study philosophy in Jena,<sup>23</sup> where he met Schiller and Goethe and attended Fichte's lectures.<sup>24</sup> Hölderlin's presence in Jena in 1794–95 together with his time with Hegel and Schelling in Tübingen situates him in the initial scenes of post-Kantian philosophy in Germany. Since Hölderlin's engagement with idealism, in particular with Fichte, is crucial for the development of his thought, I discuss it in detail in my elucidation of the internal dynamics of Hölderlin's poetology. Hölderlin also met Novalis at the home of Immanuel Niethammer, a professor of philosophy, but despite the geographical and to some extent temporal proximity to the circle of Jena romantics (the Schlegels would arrive in 1796, Tieck and Brentano in 1798), there is a curious lack of contact between Hölderlin and the members of the Jena/Berlin romantic circle until Clemens Brentano's enthusiasm for the first strophe of "Bread and Wine," published as "Night" (in an almost certainly unauthorized version) in 1807, after Hölderlin's mental collapse.<sup>25</sup>

This lack of contact is the more perplexing because both Hölderlin and the Jena romantics were deeply influenced by Fichte's philosophy, in particular its "quest of the absolute,"<sup>26</sup> and the longing to overcome human finitude I have used Cavell to characterize as paradigmatic of human subjectivity. Cavell himself describes the struggle for acknowledgment as "the romantic quest [he is] happy to join" in *In Quest of the Ordinary*,<sup>27</sup> and reads Wordsworth and Emerson as among those who also undertake romantic revolutions in language and the recovery of the world. Nor is Cavell the only one to see romanticism as involved in the struggle over finitude: romanticism begins from and perpetuates a "relentless and obviously impossible drive to overcome the finitude of the human condition."<sup>28</sup> This drive, and the recast relations toward and within human subjectivity and its surroundings, are a

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22. Constantine describes Hölderlin's relation to Schiller as embarrassed and dependent (Constantine, *Friedrich Hölderlin*, 54). In his letters to Schiller Hölderlin expresses gratitude and poetic admiration and performs elaborate processes of self-criticism (see, e.g., Luigi Reitani, "'Mit wahrster Verehrung': Hölderlins Rechenschaftsbriebe an Schiller," *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 34 [2004/5]: 143–60), while in letters to friends he criticizes Schiller's aesthetics for not daring to depart sufficiently from Kant (e.g., his letter to Christian Ludwig Neuffer of 10 October 1794, in which he remarks that Schiller "has ventured a step less beyond the Kantian borderline than he should have done in my opinion"; Friedrich Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, ed. and trans. with an intro. Jeremy Adler and Charlie Louth [New York: Penguin, 2009], 34).

23. Constantine, *Friedrich Hölderlin*, 46.

24. *Ibid.*, 47.

25. *Ibid.*, 200.

26. Louis Dupré takes this quest as the unifying attribute of European romanticism (and as the title of his comparative study thereof: *The Quest of the Absolute: Birth and Decline of European Romanticism* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013]).

27. Stanley Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 9.

28. Dupré, *Quest of the Absolute*, 4.

central part of Hölderlin's poetology and of the stance toward finitude that, in the view of language I advance, poetry can seek to address but never alleviate entirely.

Thus, Hölderlin and this broad form of romanticism share with Jena romanticism a beginning with and departing from Kant and Fichte, a concern with the self-relation of the subject, and an attention to the recuperative work of language. But the Jena romantics offer fundamentally different responses to the finitude of the subject, the work of language, and the relation between poetry and philosophy.<sup>29</sup> The Jena romantic relation between language and subjectivity is perhaps most clearly expressed in Novalis's famous "Monologue," in which language speaks only of itself: "It is the same with language as it is with mathematical formulae—they constitute a world in [themselves]—their play is self-sufficient."<sup>30</sup> The play of these formulae exceeds all control of a speaking subject, and only in its freedom from subjective control can language "mirror . . . the strange play of relationships among things."<sup>31</sup> This is precisely the view of language I challenged in chapter 1; in what follows I show the extent to which it is foreign to Hölderlin's poetics. In Jena romanticism, the understanding of language as uncontrolled and self-referential play leads to the interrelated themes of the fragment and irony or *Witz* (wit).<sup>32</sup> Like Hölderlin, the Jena romantics see the absolute as unreachable; unlike Hölderlin, they seek to express that unreachability in the deliberate incompleteness of the fragment; irony, then, in the properly romantic sense, is the reflection of the fragment

29. In a footnote to their now-canonical work on romanticism, *The Literary Absolute*, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy offer a preliminary characterization of the overlaps and distinctions between Hölderlin, Jena romanticism, and idealism: "It would be a long and difficult task to specify the place Hölderlin occupied or the role he played in the genesis of romanticism or idealism, between 1794 and 1796 (or even beyond). . . . He still maintains relatively close relations to Schelling and Hegel and, like most everyone else at the time, is influenced by Fichte (whose lectures at Jena he may have attended). His first essays, especially those on the poetics of genres, are inscribed within, or, more accurately, begin to establish the future speculative dialectic. . . . In particular, the idea of a completion of philosophy on the level of aesthetics alone—and not on the level of knowledge, as Schiller affirmed at the time and as Hegel will always affirm—seems due to Hölderlin alone. . . . But none of this, it is true, will prevent Hölderlin's irreversible withdrawal from a 'constellation' to which . . . he never really belongs. Nor, above all, as his work on Greek tragedy and Sophocles indicates, will it prevent him from putting into question the dialectical model [of idealism] whose matrix he helped produce" (Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. and ed. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester [Albany: SUNY Press, 1988], 131–32). The task of fully elaborating Hölderlin's relation to idealism has been undertaken to great effect by Dieter Henrich in the decades since the publication of *The Literary Absolute*. See Henrich, *Der Grund im Bewußtsein*; Henrich, *Hegel im Kontext* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1971); Henrich, with David S. Pacini, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Henrich, *Grundlegung aus dem Ich: Untersuchungen zur Vorgeschichte des Idealismus; Tübingen—Jena 1790–1794* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2004).

30. Novalis, "Monologue," trans. Joyce Crick, in *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*, ed. J. M. Bernstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 214–15.

31. Ibid. One way of putting this is to say that Novalis is a better Heideggerian than Hölderlin; that Heidegger chose Hölderlin as the bearer of precisely the view that Hölderlin rejects represents one of the great—nonromantic—ironies of the history of philosophy.

32. See Simon Critchley, *Very Little . . . Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, and Literature*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004), 134.

on its own incompleteness against the (only imagined) completion of the absolute, while *Witz*, conversely, is a momentary and involuntary flashing forth of coherence and fullness.<sup>33</sup> This deliberate fragmentation, then, differs greatly from the failure or incompleteness or repeated revisions of many of Hölderlin's late poems, which have given him a reputation as a poet of fragmentation.

Finally, Jena romanticism undertakes to undo precisely the distinction between poetry (or nondiscursive language generally) and theory (or what the Jena circle will call "criticism") that Hölderlin insists upon, and that creates the paradox that marks his theoretical texts. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy modify Madame de Staël's criticism of romantic literature (that it is literary theory and not literature) to reflect that "[what the Jena romantics] invent is theory itself as literature, or, in other words, literature producing itself as it produces its own theory."<sup>34</sup> Hölderlin, by contrast, leaves Jena in 1795 and describes himself as fleeing the "tyrant" of philosophy, writing to (the philosopher!) Niethammer in February of 1796: "I miss having you to talk to. Even now you are still my philosophical mentor, and your advice to beware of abstractions is as precious to me as it was before, when I let myself get caught in them whenever I was at odds with myself. Philosophy is a tyrant, and I suffer its rule rather than submitting to it voluntarily."<sup>35</sup> In leaving Jena and the study of philosophy, Hölderlin is declaring himself once more for poetry as the proper mode of inhabiting finitude and accommodating the desire of that human finitude to transcend itself. But as Niethammer's advice to be on guard against abstractions and Hölderlin's description of having allowed himself to be entangled in them to the point of self-diremption show, the temptation of theoretical certainty is still alive in Hölderlin's thought and work. This temptation is the one that structures the dynamics of Hölderlin's thought; it is also the expression of the unfulfillable but paradigmatically human desire to exceed finitude once and for all that, in Hölderlin's case, leads to paradox.

## The Dynamics of Hölderlin's Thought

I contend that the paradox running through Hölderlin's theoretical texts appears as a symptom of anxiety about the political, moral, and aesthetic problem of finding a

33. Ibid. To be clear, this is only the *programmatic* stance of Jena romanticism, to which perhaps only Friedrich Schlegel adhered rigorously throughout his—barely distinguishable—theoretical and literary texts. One might plausibly argue that the greatest works of romanticism—Novalis's *Hymnen an die Nacht*, Brentano's *Godwi* and much of his poetry, Eichendorff's poetry and his *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts*, the novels of Jean Paul or, controversially, E. T.A. Hoffmann—end up, against this program, expressing something like subjective experience interested in its own expression and language use. Apropos Hölderlin, see Constantine's remark that even in Hölderlin's earliest poetry "there is nothing slight or trivial, very little that is even ordinarily light and pleasing in his first verses; nothing urbane or witty, ironic, lascivious, or playful" (Constantine, *Friedrich Hölderlin*, 12).

34. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 12.

35. Hölderlin to Immanuel Niethammer, 24 February 1796, in Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 67–68.

modern world to be a home for finite human subjectivity. Moreover, this worry is a temporally specific form of more general anxieties about human finitude symptomatic of a modernity in which previous locations for addressing such anxieties (e.g., family structures, religious institutions, feudal societies) have lost their ability to sustain conviction. In his discussion of the forms taken by skepticism and its attendant anxiety in the post-Kantian landscape, Cavell describes skepticism as the human subject's "argument with . . . itself (over its finitude)."<sup>36</sup> It is this argument that I want to follow in Hölderlin's theoretical texts, whose contradiction I understand as struggling to acknowledge the desire for infinite knowledge and at the same time the impossibility of that knowledge: the interest in ensuring full connectedness to the world or to other minds both investigates and succumbs to skeptical anxiety. These texts, moreover, highlight the stakes of poetry in Hölderlin's view: far from subscribing to language-centered or solely self-referential views on the nature of poetic production, he holds that poetry undertakes unifications that are at once political, religious, moral, individual, and more generally anthropological. Taking up Cavell's term, I understand these yearned-for unifications as matters of acknowledgment—of the subject's own finitude, of its distance from and yet responsibility to others, and of its own responsibility for the forms of life and language of a speaking community.

Hölderlin's philosophical engagement with finitude appears most directly in his engagement with German idealism, whose primary task was to achieve access to things-in-themselves (denied by Kant's critical philosophy) by deducing what Dieter Henrich has called the *Grund im Bewusstsein* (grounding in consciousness).<sup>37</sup> This ground or grounding would at once unite the human subject and assure knowledge of the external world. Hölderlin, however, realizes that such knowledge, qua knowledge, is impossible and that the idealist approach has important consequences for the subject and its access to the external world. The grounding sought by idealism, located in the human subject, was to ensure continuity between mind and world, thus also undoing the Kantian antinomies of reason and sensibility, nature and freedom. Linking these antinomies unequivocally and permanently, in turn, would guarantee that the mind can reach beyond itself, whether to the absolute, to the external world, or to other minds, thus relieving the anxiety of finitude. I contend that Hölderlin understands relatively early in his career that the act of locating the possibility of access to the external world in an adequate conception of the human mind is itself an attempt to make the problem of fit between mind and world a matter of knowledge (rather than, as I worked out in chapter 1, *acknowledgment*),<sup>38</sup> and that such knowledge is impossible. The search for a ground

36. Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary*, 5.

37. Henrich, *Der Grund im Bewusstsein*. Hölderlin's stance with regard to Kant and especially Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* is worked out by Frank, "Hölderlins philosophische Grundlagen."

38. See the section "From Knowledge to Acknowledgment" in chapter 1.

in and of consciousness moves everything inside the subject; if that move is successful, then there is nothing *other* to the subject, nothing separate, which is precisely skepticism's goal—and so, Hölderlin realizes, the world disappears. This quest for certainty—here via the knowledge of the unity of the subject—once more “converts metaphysical finitude into an intellectual lack,” performing the shift from knowledge to acknowledgment characteristic of (but not limited to) skepticism.

This realization is the locus of his critique of idealism, leveled primarily at Fichte's “absolute I” and its grounding of consciousness in the positing of that I by itself.<sup>39</sup> Hölderlin argues that, followed to its logical conclusion, Fichte's system not only dissolves the external world but negates the subject itself. Hölderlin writes to Hegel while attending Fichte's lecture course in Jena that “[Fichte's] absolute I (= Spinoza's substance) contains all reality; it is everything, and outside it there is nothing; therefore for this absolute I there is no object, for otherwise all reality would not be in it.”<sup>40</sup> Hölderlin then traces the consequences of the Fichtean absolute I with respect to consciousness, explaining that the Fichtean positing of a not-I by the absolute I (for Fichte the foundational act of consciousness) is incoherent: “But a consciousness without an object is not conceivable, and if I myself am this object then as such I am necessarily limited, even if only in time, and therefore not absolute; therefore no consciousness is conceivable in the absolute I.”<sup>41</sup> The inclusion of *alle Realität* (all reality) in the absolute I means that there is no external object for consciousness; the I itself cannot be the object of that consciousness because then it would be (as an object) limited, therefore not absolute. Finally, because there can be no object for consciousness, Hölderlin concludes that the absolute I cannot be conscious or self-conscious, and is thus nonpresent to itself: “And insofar as I have no consciousness I am (for myself) nothing, therefore the absolute I is (for me) nothing.”<sup>42</sup> The location of all reality inside an absolute subject, intended to ensure access to the world by anchoring it in a subjective mind, in fact not only dissolves the external world but also negates the subject itself.<sup>43</sup>

Despite this critique, Hölderlin insists on the importance of philosophy for modern culture as a whole and Germany in particular; like much of idealism, he

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39. In reading Hölderlin's critique of Fichte as his engagement with idealism, I am neither identifying idealism as a whole with the Fichte of the 1790s nor claiming that Hölderlin's primary contribution is in avoiding Fichte's mistakes. Whether or not Hölderlin gave the impulse to later idealist thought in Hegel and Schelling, he dropped largely out of contact with Schelling by 1795 (with the exception of a letter begging for contributions to a literary journal in 1799) and with Hegel by 1801, and certainly knew nothing of their philosophical works after 1806. I elaborate Hölderlin's Fichte critique here in some detail because it illuminates the dynamics of Hölderlin's own thought.

40. Hölderlin to G. W. F. Hegel, 26 January 1795, in Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 48.

41. *Ibid.*, 48.

42. *Ibid.*, 48.

43. This is not to say that Hölderlin understands any of Fichte, Hegel, or Schelling as saying that the absolute I is equivalent to an individual or personal subject; instead, Hölderlin uses Fichte's assertion that the absolute is subject-like to show the circularity of its self-positing and to hold that the absolute is occluded and unknowable, at least in theoretical knowledge.

views the acceptance of the laws of reason as having direct moral and thus political consequences. More specifically, although he is critical of the circularity of the positing of the subject by itself, Hölderlin adapts two of Fichte's main principles. First he maintains the idea of a *Wechselwirkung* (interaction, mutual influence) between opposed components as the principle of their unification (in Fichte's case I and Not-I; in Hölderlin, this will become a poetological principle of dynamic opposition). And second, Hölderlin ends his critique by reclaiming the Fichtean idea of *Streben* (striving) as a fundamental principle of human activity—precisely the kind of striving that Cavell understands as characteristic of the human subject's constitutive attempt to overcome its own finitude. Hölderlin gives a reading of the drive toward the infinite and to the ideal as what separates humans from animals, in a letter to his half brother in which he explains that it would be less human to live without such striving:

Why don't they [humans] live like the deer in the forest, content with little, limited to the ground, the food at their feet, where the connection with nature is like that of the baby to its mother's breast? Then there would be no anxiety, no toil, no complaint, little illness, little conflict, there would be no sleepless nights etc. But this would be as unnatural for man as the arts he teaches the animals are to them. To push life onwards, to accelerate nature's endless process of perfection, to complete what he has before him, and to idealize—that will always be the instinct that best characterizes and distinguishes man, and all his arts and works and errors and tribulations stem from it.<sup>44</sup>

This striving is a necessary component of human subjectivity for Hölderlin, and is part both of his engagement with idealism and of his recognition that human subjects constitutively strive to exceed their own finitude.

Moreover, Hölderlin particularizes his argument for the necessity of philosophy to the state of (nationless) German culture around 1800. Idealist philosophy is a necessary corrective to what Hölderlin describes as a German tendency of each individual to focus only on his own particular circumstance: "Everyone only feels at home where he was born, and only rarely do his interest and ways of thinking give him the ability or inclination to go beyond it."<sup>45</sup> Philosophy, in particular idealist philosophy, tends too far in the opposite direction, but in doing so helps compensate for the Germans' ostensible original limitedness:

Now, as the Germans found themselves in this state of anxious narrow-mindedness they could come under no more salutary influence than that of the new philosophy, which takes the universality of interest to an extreme and discovers the infinite

44. Hölderlin to Carl Gock, 4 June 1799, in Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 135.

45. Hölderlin to Carl Gock, 1 January 1799, in Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 119.

striving of the human breast. And even if it does orient itself too one-sidedly towards the great autonomy of human nature, still it is the only possible philosophy *for our time*.<sup>46</sup>

Hölderlin reiterates shades of his critique of Fichte—contemporary philosophy accords too much to the rational subject and pays insufficient attention to the external world—but explains that precisely this defect is a necessary condition of the philosophy of his era.

The difficulty with this philosophy, and the political program of rational (presumably) democracy it implies, resides in the fact that it can only conceive the ideal in terms of duty and necessity, rather than in terms of harmony and unification: “Apart from anything else, the disadvantage intrinsic to a political and philosophical education is that it may well connect people to the fundamental, incontrovertibly necessary conditions of law and duty, but how close are we then to the harmony of human kind?”<sup>47</sup> Philosophy can lead each subject to his duty, understood as necessary under the (freely accepted) law of reason, but cannot unify numerous subjects in a community bound by anything other than rationality or self-interest. It is thus unable to alleviate the anxieties of finitude, despite its drive toward systematicity and the absolute.

The task of unification—philosophical and political, intersubjective and intrasubjective, between nature and freedom, between reason and sensory perception—falls, in Hölderlin’s view, to poetry. It is this view of poetry that prompts Hölderlin’s rejection of the idea of poetry (or aesthetics more generally) as play (*Spiel*):

I was saying that poetry unites people differently from the way play does; that is, if it is genuine and has a genuine effect, it unites them with all their manifold suffering and happiness and aspiration and hope and fear, with all their opinions and errors, all their virtues and ideas, with all about them that is great and small more and more to form a live, intricately articulated, intense whole.<sup>48</sup>

This criticism is in part directed at Hölderlin’s poetic mentor, Schiller, who in his aesthetic letters shares the terminology of drive and varying interplay (*Trieb* and *Wechselwirkung*) that Hölderlin draws on from Fichte, but unites the two contrasting drives of human subjects (in his view the “sensuous impulse,” *Sachtrieb* or *Stofftrieb*, and the “formal impulse,” *Formtrieb*) via the idea of a *Spieltrieb* (play impulse), which is itself aesthetic.<sup>49</sup> Hölderlin, by contrast, makes the idea of unification in

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46. Ibid., 120.

47. Ibid., 123.

48. Ibid., 122.

49. Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. with intro. Reginald Snell (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 74. The relationship between Hölderlin and Schiller is, at least on Hölderlin’s side, vexed and complex, and exceeds the scope of my argument here. For a detailed treatment, see Reitani, “Hölderlins Rechenschaftsbriege an Schiller.”

poetry not merely a theme but a formal principle by way of a reconception of mutual influence or interdependency (what Fichte and Schiller call *Wechselwirkung*) as the active placing or positing of oppositions. The idea of active opposition as a necessary component of unification appears as a fundamental theme in Hölderlin's poetological texts, in which he attempts to spell out the procedures for poetry to perform its unifying work.

And in this attempt the contradiction with which I opened this chapter reappears: Hölderlin's texts attempt to perform the unifying work they themselves assign to poetry and not to discursive language. Hölderlin adheres at least in part to the idealist view that unifying the diremption of the human subject is part of linking mind and world. (Unlike idealism, he does not locate either unification solely within the mind.) Because Hölderlin asserts that the repair of human dividedness is the task of poetry, he makes the quest for fit between mind and world the task of finishing a poem; poetry is the place where the constitutive striving of the human subject and the impossibility of its fulfillment are played out. And finally, Hölderlin's attempts to depict the object of our constitutive striving lead him to attempt to elaborate discursive procedures for the writing of successful poetry. Because Hölderlin is alive to the anxious desire expressed in skepticism, his texts, against their own precepts, attempt to depict the certainty (of the subject, of our relation to the world or to other minds) they deny to discursive language.

Read in this light, Hölderlin's poetological texts represent his version of the skeptical fantasy of a private language.<sup>50</sup> In the desire for a language—not a code, not a translation—spoken only by one person, containing everything necessary for coherence within itself, the skeptic expresses the wish that communication might be unnecessary for intelligibility: if language itself offers all that is needed for understanding, then if I fail to understand or make myself understood, it is not my fault. Hölderlin's theoretical sketches, analogously, are driven by the desire to secure the success of any poetic enterprise in advance so that the process of unification and the perception of an aesthetic whole can be moved outside the poem itself. If such a system could be worked out, then poetic failure—the lack of cohesion in drafts or fragments, the loss of particularity in the unification of oppositions—would no longer haunt poetic labor.

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50. Cavell considers Wittgenstein's so-called private language argument as a linguistically inflected version of skepticism about other minds, specifically about communication. The standard reading of Wittgenstein understands him to assert that the idea of a complete language (not a code, not a translation) understood only by one person is antithetical to what a language is. See, e.g., Stewart Candlish and George Wrisley, "Private Language," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2011 ed. (article published 26 July 1996; substantive revision 29 September 2010), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/private-language/>. Cavell, by contrast, reads the desire that a language be fully internally motivated as a fear either of inexpressiveness or of uncontrolled or unintended expressiveness. See Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*, new ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 352.

## Poetics of Anxiety: Key Features

Hölderlin's attempts to delineate that, how, and why poetry is the proper location for the joining of mind and world are thus caught between the activity of striving for an impossible certainty in the relation of mind and world and the recognition that such certainty is impossible from within human finitude. In order to look more carefully at this tension—and the resultant paradox that his texts attempt to do what they prohibit—I identify six central features from his theoretical drafts. Three of these features are, loosely speaking, thematic; the other three can be described as metatextual. The thematic features elucidate the interplay between philosophical and poetological questioning, discursive and poetic language. They likewise take up the problems of diremption and unification that emerge from the specifically post-Kantian form of problems of finitude—namely, worries about fit between mind and world. And finally, these features will appear in poetry both as *themes* (filled in with specific content) and as organizing or formal *structures* whose successful deployment links poetry to the stakes for human mindedness explicated but not prescribed in Hölderlin's poetics.

1. The idea of *Vereinigung* (*unification*, or “making one”) of oppositions appears in the texts as both a philosophical and a poetological principle. Hölderlin sometimes shifts to the term *Zusammenhang* (understood literally as the hanging together of opposed or disparate moments, which I translate as *continuity*). Both poems and subjects are understood as divided or disparate in their relations to themselves and to the world or nonaesthetic life, and they thus need to be unified or to have their discrete parts revealed as fully continuous.
2. Hölderlin takes the previous principle of unification or continuity to occur via a process of *opposition*, *Entgegensetzung*, in an active sense of setting elements against each other. This placing activity itself both acknowledges the separateness and finitude of its components and offers a hope for their eventual continuity.
3. He develops a robust and specialized notion of the temporality of poetic (and so subjective) development. His idea of *dynamic temporality* begins with the realization that the yearning for full connection to the external world and other minds can be fully expressed only in the course of poetry—whereupon he retheorizes the progression of poetry into a series of moments that must each occur at a specified place in the systematized parts of a poem.

Three stylistic or metatextual features appear as a direct result of the skeptical anxiety that drives the texts to attempt to achieve what they cannot, and as such bear witness to the unspoken desire to resolve questions of subjectivity and poetry permanently. They bespeak an anxious drive toward totality: the quest for certainty needs to have every stage of poetic or subjective development spelled out in poetic

technique to ensure the overcoming of human finitude and the bridging of the gap between the mind and the external world. Moreover, these features underscore that Hölderlin's poetological or theoretical texts do *not*, as has been assumed, represent either a complete poetology or a philosophical system within or beyond idealism.<sup>51</sup> Since these metatextual features are frequently the most obvious things about the texts (making it all the more surprising that they have so often been ignored), I will typically give only brief examples of their presence after elucidating the less transparent thematic issues.

4. Hölderlin calls repeatedly for a *further step* for the completion of his oppositional structures, either remarking in the texts that something more is required or noting in paratexts that the text does not achieve its goal.
5. The drive toward totality prompts an ever-increasing *proliferation* of terms and conditions in each text: much of the difficulty of Hölderlin's writing derives from his tendency to put every potential correlative to a statement in between its beginning and its end.
6. And in consequence, the texts themselves are *incomplete*—even when Hölderlin does not mark the lack of achieved ending they break off, sometimes mid-sentence. Hölderlin (unlike, e.g., the Jena romantics) is not programmatically fragmentary: his texts postulate and strive toward a completed state that they almost never attain. The need to elaborate every step and every possible term makes it impossible for his texts to fulfill the tasks they set themselves.

## Hölderlin's Theoretical Oeuvre

In what follows, then, I give a developmental account of Hölderlin's theoretical texts from 1794 to 1800 as the questions of finitude he treats expand from epistemology to religion to poetry, genre, and history. Tracking these features—and the paradox from which they emerge—through Hölderlin's theoretical texts enables me to show that the problems of finitude appear both as truths to be acknowledged and as forces working anxiously on the texts themselves; here, as elsewhere, the problems of finitude find a place in the emotional life of the subject. Moreover, taking both the paradox of Hölderlin's texts and their metatextual features seriously represents a significant departure from previous treatments of his poetological texts: it has frequently been assumed that if only we could decipher Hölderlin's

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51. This assumption underpins the methodologies of Gaier and Ryan; both authors attempt to use Hölderlin's own earlier or later texts to fill in gaps or contradictions in any given document. Ryan, for example, asserts that his first task will be to present the *theory* of tones in its coherence, not only as a coherent whole but as a craftsmanly/poetic expression of a theory of mind centered on poetry (Ryan, *Hölderlin's Lehre vom Wechsel der Töne*, 3). While the texts' difficulty is registered, the reasons for that difficulty are not reflected upon. Moreover, both Gaier and Ryan (among others) succumb to the desire to pursue every singular detail, frequently rendering the explication nearly as obscure as the original.

poetological writings, they would yield a full system for reading his poetry. I contend instead that trying to paste them together into a complete poetological system elides both their central characteristics and the paradox in which they are inscribed. Most importantly, avoiding this drive to systematicity within the scholarship while nevertheless not discarding Hölderlin's poetological writings allows me to understand the theoretical texts as delineating the (immensely high) stakes for poetry in Hölderlin's view *without* attempting to read them as successfully prescribing what such poetry will look like. Instead, I track the development of Hölderlin's engagement with problems of finitude as they unfold in his texts, enabling me to turn in chapter 3 to readings of his poetry as attempting to achieve the stakes Hölderlin himself establishes.

My account thus begins with Hölderlin's recognition of the limits of human *knowledge* as expressed in theoretical discourse, arising in a fragment referred to as "Being and Judgment,"<sup>52</sup> written in 1795. Hölderlin attended Fichte's lectures in the winter semester of 1794–95,<sup>53</sup> and "Being and Judgment" points to the problematic circularity in Fichte's positing of the "I" by itself, the critique I sketched above.<sup>54</sup> The significance of Hölderlin's critique for my purposes is that he withholds access to the absolute from discursive knowledge, claiming that only in intellectual intuition do we have access to "*being as such*" (*Seyn schlechthin*).<sup>55</sup> The statement that the absolute is not reachable in discursive knowledge is the kind of move I have characterized as acknowledging the truth of skepticism—namely, as recognizing that the skeptic's quest for certainty draws attention to the absence of such certainty in our own world relations. Hölderlin recognizes that human knowledge is finite, but does not give up on the possibilities of subjective orientation altogether: he proceeds to consider the possibilities for human subjectivity's understanding of itself in the absence of such knowledge in terms of the subject/world relation and along the Kantian lines of the modalities of necessity, possibility, and reality.

In "Being and Judgment," Hölderlin thus offers an epistemological reading of the problem of human dividedness, the problem I explained as the particularly post-Kantian appearance of skeptical worries about human mindedness. He does so, moreover, in precisely the terms of active opposition and unification I elaborated above as central to his philosophical and poetological thought. Self-consciousness is possible only in the division of the I from itself ("But how is self-consciousness possible? By opposing me to myself, separating me from myself").<sup>56</sup> That division,

52. The Munich edition applies the editorial title "Seyn, Urtheil, Modalität" (MA 2:49–50). Adler and Louth translate "Being Judgment Possibility." I omit "Modality" or "Possibility" from the title because the modalities are not presented as italicized definitions or subject headings as "Judgment" and "Being" are.

53. Violetta Waibel, "Kant, Fichte, Schelling," in *Hölderlin-Handbuch: Leben—Werk—Wirkung*, ed. Johann Kreuzer (Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 2002), 90–106.

54. The Fichte critique and Hölderlin's resources for arriving at it have been discussed extensively and helpfully in the scholarship; see esp. Frank, "Hölderlins philosophische Grundlagen," 176.

55. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 231.

56. Ibid.

however, does not (must not) preclude the subject's recognition of itself in itself, at least to some extent ("but notwithstanding this separation recognizing myself in the opposition as one and the same. But to what extent the same?").<sup>57</sup> These two problems open up the questions of finitude in Hölderlin's oeuvre and establish the terms in which he will investigate them. "Being as such" is an example of indivisible unification (*Vereinigung*),<sup>58</sup> and the subject's identity sentence ("I am I"/"Ich bin ich") performs the kind of active opposition (*Entgegen-setzung*, "placing or positing *against*") that appears repeatedly in Hölderlin's poetological texts. Perhaps as a result of its brevity, the text does not enter into the obsessive delineation of further steps or the proliferation of terms that characterizes so much of Hölderlin's writing; he uses the term "intellectual intuition" (*intellektuale Anschauung*) as the capacity that can provide access to the Absolute Being, but does not explain how that capacity works nor how (or where) it ought to be cultivated, thus avoiding the anxious prescriptions for poetic production that will appear in later texts.<sup>59</sup>

Hölderlin takes up this line of inquiry in drafts for a set of letters on aesthetics, philosophy, poetry, and religion.<sup>60</sup> The letters expand the problem of human diremption and seek its resolution in aesthetics, using, once again, the structures of opposition and unification or continuity. Hölderlin discusses the agenda for his project in a personal letter:

In the philosophical letters I want to find the principle that will explain to my satisfaction the divisions in which we think and exist, but which is also capable of making the conflict disappear, the conflict between the subject and the object, between our selves and the world, and between reason and revelation,—theoretically, through intellectual intuition, without our practical reason having to intervene. To do this we need an aesthetic sense.<sup>61</sup>

Significantly, "conflict" (*Widerstreit*) appears in the singular, despite the list of oppositions, indicating that Hölderlin reads these conflicts as instantiations of a single condition of dividedness. Even as he rejects the Kantian solution of an appeal

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57. Ibid.

58. "*Being*—expresses the connection of subject and object. Where subject and object are absolutely, not only partly, united, namely so united that no division can be executed without damaging the essence of that which is to be separated, there and nowhere else can one speak of a *being as such*" (Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 231).

59. It should be noted briefly here that intellectual intuition was the locus of much of the idealist debate on reuniting the subject and/or accessing the absolute (again, in idealism these are one and the same goal; see Henrich, *Der Grund im Bewußtsein*). Kant claimed it was possible only in divine consciousness; Fichte, Reinhold, and Jacobi all attempt in various ways to show that intellectual intuition could be possessed by human subjects. See also Frank, "Hölderlins philosophische Grundlagen"; and Waibel, "Kant, Fichte, Schelling."

60. "I shall call my philosophical letters *New Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. And in them I will go on from philosophy to poetry and religion" (Hölderlin to Niethammer, 24 February 1796, in Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 68).

61. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 68.

to practical reason to link freedom and necessity, Hölderlin postulates the need for an aesthetic sense or meaning, which he begins to investigate in the arenas of poetry and religion.<sup>62</sup>

The project of elucidating poetry's tasks and capabilities prompts the introduction of Hölderlin's correlative to unification: what he calls continuity or connection (*Zusammenhang*). Hölderlin argues that human subjects know, rationally/theoretically, that they live in a "higher, more than mechanical *connection*" (*Zusammenhang*)<sup>63</sup> with an absolute or infinite, and that this relation supersedes physical causality. But this *Zusammenhang* cannot be experienced in real (particular, singular), rather than ideal (rational, universal), life. The task of poetry, for Hölderlin inherently religious, is to make this connection felt in its infinite qualities *and* in its concrete presence in real or actual life (*das wirkliche Leben*), linking ideal and real, mind and world, in aesthetic production.

In explicating that task, Hölderlin makes specific reference to the historico-literary category of myth, and to the genres of the lyric, the dramatic, and the epic.<sup>64</sup> Consequently, problems diagnosed as epistemological in "Being and Judgment" now take part in religious, aesthetic, and specifically literary projects. In a further passage, Hölderlin links the problem of standing in relation to a divine absolute to the problem of sharing that relation with other members of a human community, thus returning to the political dimension of seeking subjective orientation in an unsponsored world.<sup>65</sup> He also initiates the tic of self-qualification and proliferation of terms that will come to haunt his texts. These features place a substantial strain on the language of Hölderlin's text: although the first sentence of the text<sup>66</sup> asks a difficult but linguistically straightforward question (Why must human subjects make themselves an image or representation of their relations to their world?), it obscures the question by inserting numerous qualifying clauses between the beginning and the end of the question.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, Hölderlin connects each of his poetological terms with each other, deriving the genres of the

62. It is already clear at this juncture that although Hölderlin works within post-Kantian vocabulary and problems, he decisively rejects the Kantian aesthetic principle of disinterestedness and autonomy of artistic production.

63. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 235.

64. *Ibid.*, 238–40.

65. Successfully brought into human life, this continuity will be felt such that "everyone celebrates his own higher life and all celebrate a common higher life, the celebration of life, in a mythical way" (Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 239).

66. The text has been transmitted as a series of manuscript pages with great thematic consistency but without a clear order; although neither the Munich edition nor Adler and Louth list it first, the page that begins "You ask me . . ." (Du fragst mich . . .) is the only one in which the beginning of a sentence and the beginning of a manuscript page coincide.

67. The sentence thus reads: "You ask me why—even if man, according to his nature, rises above need and thus finds himself in a more manifold and more intimate relation to his world, even if, as *far* as he rises above physical and moral need, he always lives a higher human life, so that there is a higher, more than mechanical *connection*, a higher *fate* between him and his world, even if really this higher connection is most holy to him, since in it he feels himself and his world, and everything he possesses

lyric-mythic, the historic-mythic, and the epic-mythic, each of which functions on levels of plot (content) and presentation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the letters were never finished, in part because Hölderlin was unable to elucidate a place for all the terms in his system.<sup>68</sup>

What began as an explanation of the need for poetry thus becomes an attempt to derive terms and conditions that, should they be fulfilled, would guarantee poetry's success. Even when Hölderlin begins with a project that does not fall under the contradiction I read as guiding his texts—he never claims that the *need* for poetry cannot be stated discursively—the texts slide into the language of process and technique. The letters spend far more time on the different permutations of myth than they do on the potential for shared religious and moral life; the yearning for responsive attunement to the world, to other subjects, and to the divine disappears into poetological microelements that Hölderlin is unable to link to his satisfaction.

In the summer of 1799, Hölderlin began soliciting contributions for a literary journal. A letter to his publisher describes the journal's project—in the terms of opposition and unification I argue are characteristic of Hölderlin's engagement with problems of finitude—as “the union and reconciliation of theory with life, of art and taste with genius, of the heart with the understanding, of the real with the ideal.”<sup>69</sup> Hölderlin here adds further content to the generalized condition of dividedness presented in “Being and Judgment” and expanded in the letters. These themes are continued in literary-critical and poetological texts intended for inclusion in the journal.<sup>70</sup> In a series of seven maxims, Hölderlin theorizes the poetological import of the dynamic temporality of poetic works for the first time. He argues that a poet “must accustom himself not to wish to achieve the whole that he intends in the

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and is, as being united—why he has to *represent* the connection between himself and his world, why he has to form an idea or an image of his fate, which, strictly speaking, can neither really be thought, nor is available to the senses?” (Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 235). Adler and Louth keep much of Hölderlin's nested syntax, but some of it is combed out in translation. The original reads: “Du fragst mich, wenn auch die Menschen, ihrer Natur nach, sich über die Noth erheben, und so in einer mannigfaltigern und innigeren Beziehung mit ihrer Welt sich befinden, wenn sie auch, in wie *weit* sie über die (physische und moralische) Nothdurft sich erheben, immer ein menschlich höheres Leben leben, (in einem mehr als mechanischen *Zusammenhange*, daß ein höheres *Geschik* zwischen ihnen und ihrer Welt sei) wenn auch wirklich dieser höhere Zusammenhang ihnen ihr heiligstes sei, weil sie in ihm sich selbst und ihre Welt, und alles, was sie haben und seien, vereinigt fühlen, warum sie sich den Zusammenhang zwischen sich und ihrer Welt gerade *vorstellen*, warum sie sich eine Idee oder ein Bild machen müssen von ihrem Geschik, das sich genau betrachtet weder recht denken ließe noch auch vor den Sinnen liege?” (MA 2:53).

68. Hölderlin offers only “hints for the continuation” (Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 238), and the remark in the discussion of genres that “the lyrical-mythical is yet to be determined” (239).

69. Hölderlin to Johann Friedrich Steinkopf, 18 June 1799, in Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 142.

70. In this grouping I am including “The Standpoint from Which We Should Consider Antiquity” (Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 246–47); “Seven Maxims” (ibid., 240–43); “I Am Pleased . . .” (“On Achilles [I],” ibid., 249); “But Most of All I Love . . .” (“On Achilles [II],” ibid., 250–51); “A Word on the *Iliad*” (ibid., 252–53); and “On the Different Modes of Poetic Composition” (ibid., 254–57). The originals are to be found as “Der Gesichtspunct aus dem wir das Altertum anzusehen haben” (MA 2:62–64); “Frankfurter Aphorismen” (MA 2:57–61); “Am meisten aber lieb' ich . . .” (MA 2:64–65); “Ein Wort über die *Iliade*” (MA 2:66–67); and “Über die verschiedenen Arten, zu dichten” (MA 2:67–71).

individual moments, and to suffer that which is momentarily incomplete; his desire must be, that he surpasses himself from one moment to the next, *to the degree and in the manner that the object demands it*, until finally [he attains the main tone of the whole].<sup>71</sup> This is a recognition (on the thematic level) that poetry cannot be assured from the outset, and that poetic success does not follow a formula known in advance, but rather involves responsiveness, waiting, or even “suffering.” Instead, the poet must “bear the momentarily incomplete,” allowing the moments of a poem to succeed each other from one to the next in ways appropriate to the content (“in the manner that the object demands it”) rather than determined in advance by a poetological or philosophical system. Hölderlin will later attempt to systematize the self-superseding of a poem from moment to moment using genre and character designations; the tension between self-identity and boundary transgression will become a major principle in his depictions of poetry as working to construct subjectivity.

In the maxims, the concept of a progression from moment to moment that eventually yields a unifying “main tone” (*Hauptton*) works in conjunction with the ideas of unification (of disparate moments) and of opposition, as each moment stands in contrast to the previous and subsequent moments. Hölderlin describes the opposition of individual moments using the names of literary genres (epic, lyric, dramatic) to characterize affective modes (naive, ideal, and historic, respectively) appearing within single works. Several sketches on Homer’s *Iliad* work out some of the characteristics of each tone, but falter on the conflict between assigning tones to individual characters and the effort to read a primary tone out of an entire work.<sup>72</sup> The treatment of Homer also leads Hölderlin to differentiate emphatically between ancient and modern poetry, linking character types to epochs in history.<sup>73</sup>

Here, then, Hölderlin begins the systematization that he will eventually burden with an impossible proliferation of terms and clarifications. He also ties the poetic potential elucidated in the maxims back to the stakes of subjectivity that were barred from discursive language in “Being and Judgment.” Moreover, even in the relatively colloquial style he adopts for the journal, he is unable to complete any of the texts except the aphorisms; he considers only one of the several character types in any detail, making repeated marginal notes calling for further steps (e.g., “Examples presented

71. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 241. For an analysis of this text similar to mine but with specific reference to German idealism, see Richard Eldridge, “‘To Bear the Momentarily Incomplete’: Subject Development and Expression in Hegel and Hölderlin,” special issue, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 27, no. 2 (2006): 141–58.

72. So, for example, in the sketch “On the Different Modes of Poetic Composition” (Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 254–57), Hölderlin describes Achilles as ideal, but the *Iliad* as epic, and cannot balance the different characters and tendencies in poetic works to explain their existence as organically whole artworks.

73. See “The Standpoint from Which We Should Consider Antiquity,” and the remark in “On the Different Modes of Poetic Composition” that “everyone has his qualities and at the same time his own faults” and the character we most wish to have present in “great [upheavals]” is the naive or epic character, who lives simply and “wholly in the present” (Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 254–55).

in a lively manner" and "Expand").<sup>74</sup> Both the acknowledgment of human finitude and the anxiety to overcome it, then, remain constant in Hölderlin's theoretical writings as their scope widens from epistemology to religion to poetry to genre and history.

Hölderlin links the problems of divided subjectivity and its struggle to overcome human finitude most directly to his considerations of genre, epoch, and character in his attempts to write a tragedy on the death of Empedocles.<sup>75</sup> When the drafts run into difficulties, he turns to poetological explorations in an effort to overcome the problems of contingency that beset the literary work. In doing so, he projects his philosophically inflected poetic techniques into the constitution of the subject: the poetic problem of unification within a dynamic whole that changes over time becomes a problem for historical subjects (or, better, becomes once again a problem for human subjects, given the difficulties of self-identity in self-consciousness raised in "Being and Judgment"). Hölderlin takes the themes of opposition and unification and analyzes them within a single character (Empedocles) and within a historical era. Whereas in the journal sketches Hölderlin discussed the poetic enterprise of allowing momentary incompleteness to persist on the way to an aesthetic whole, in the "Ground of the *Empedocles*" he presents Empedocles as a figure whose desire to unite opposed character modes by himself within himself eventually proves fatal.<sup>76</sup> Empedocles becomes the "victim of his time"<sup>77</sup> rather than a poet or a hero because of the extremity of opposition present in his era: "The fate of his time, the [violent extremes in which he grew up,] . . . demanded a *sacrifice*."<sup>78</sup> The sacrificial victim unites the extremes of his age within himself, but such unity is fleeting and individual, and the victim or sacrifice perishes in his efforts to extend it. Such temporary unity and subsequent sacrifice appear "more or less with all tragic persons, who in their characters . . . are all more or less attempts to resolve the problem[s] of fate."<sup>79</sup> This structure, however, presents a problem for the plot of the tragedy, which also remained unfinished: if Empedocles's suicide is the inevitable result of his character's opposition to his era, he has every reason at any time for throwing himself into Mount Etna, and the actual act becomes contingent.<sup>80</sup>

74. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 246.

75. Hölderlin seems not to distinguish between tragedy and *Trauerspiel*, usually describing the *Empedocles* project as the latter. However, he discusses the project at length under the rubric of an analysis of *die tragische Ode* (the tragic ode).

76. Empedocles might also be seen as an instantiation (and condemnation) of the solipsism of the Fichtean "I am I" (Ich bin Ich). One cannot, for Hölderlin, secure human cognition of or relation to the absolute in a single subject, no matter how self-assured.

77. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 265.

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid., 265. Adler and Louth translate "problem of fate" in the singular, while the original is unambiguously plural: "*die Probleme des Schicksals*" (MA 1:873).

80. See Constantine, *Friedrich Hölderlin*, chap. 7. Hölderlin worried explicitly about the entry of contingency into tragic plot in a letter to Neuffer of 3 July 1799. He explains that "tragic subjects are made to proceed . . . with all possible sparing of accidentals" to "a whole that is full of powerful, meaningful parts" (Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 146).

Hölderlin applies the idea of fatal *Auflösung* (resolution or dissolution) of dissonances in individuality to the progress of history in a sketch beginning “The declining fatherland . . .” (*Das untergehende Vaterland . . .*), written on a page of the last *Empedocles* draft.<sup>81</sup> The theme of the ending and beginning of opposing moments, previously the finitude of moments in a poem, now extends all the way to the periodic dissolution of entire historical epochs. But whereas the aphorisms presented the poetic process as a patient progression lacking assurances of final completion or success, now the process of history appears as a series of catastrophes whose losses *must* necessarily be recouped into a new era.<sup>82</sup> It is the role of “the free imitation of art,” specifically tragedy, to render the catastrophe a “terrible but divine dream.”<sup>83</sup> Tragedy enumerates the loss of old worlds in the formation of new orders; the creation of a work of art from the experience of catastrophe renders that catastrophe part of a narrative of progress. This narrative enables “union of the gap . . . which sets in between the new and the past.”<sup>84</sup> Poetic work (here, tragedy) no longer preserves contrasts within unity; rather, in a move that would elide the problems of finitude opened but not answered by skeptical questioning, tragedy must smooth over any gap between human cognition of historical experience and an absolute or infinite cognition that can perceive historical tragedy as a seamless narrative progression.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, Hölderlin calls for a third stage of reflection of the ideal and the historical into each other, but does not work it out, drawing a line under an incomplete sentence and noting: “After these oppositions, the tragic union of the characters; and after this the opposition of the charters to the reciprocal and vice versa. After these, the tragic union of both.”<sup>86</sup> In “The declining fatherland,” then, anxiety over finitude, expressed as a need for wholeness, exceeds metatextual symptoms and appears in the thematic content on the level of individual subjects and entire historical epochs.

In his final attempt to treat poetological questions in abstraction of literary texts,<sup>87</sup> a draft convolution typically titled “When the poet is once in command of

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81. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 271; MA 2:72.

82. This dissolution allows a new world to emerge, and every decline (*Untergang*) initiates a new beginning (see Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 272–73).

83. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 272.

84. *Ibid.*

85. This “smoothing out” is what Eric Santner describes as “narrative vigilance” in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Narrative Vigilance and the Poetic Imagination* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986). Santner also provides the most succinct explanation of Hegel’s absence in this project, despite the Hegelian designation of the phenomenology as *der sich selbst vollbringende Skeptizismus* (self-completing skepticism). For all the tragedies of death and rebirth in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the philosopher-observer “is initiated in the ways of the dialectic and thus knows that these various tragic breakdowns are inscribed in a grand Comedy of Homecoming and Recognition” (Santner, 40). The two sketches on tragedy are Hölderlin’s most Hegelian texts (a fact perhaps explained by the proximity of the two thinkers at the time, as Hölderlin found Hegel a house tutor position in Frankfurt).

86. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 275.

87. The style of the text (it lacks the direct addresses and the fictionalized letter gestures that appear in the journal plan texts and the philosophical letters) and the sketched charts of poetic tones following it suggest that it was not intended for publication but was, like the *Empedocles* texts, an attempt to work through compositional difficulties. Hölderlin did write further poetological reflections as part of/in relation to his translations of Sophocles and Pindar.

the spirit . . ." (Wenn der Dichter einmal des Geistes mächtig ist . . .) and written in 1800. Hölderlin offers his most extended formulation of the processes of opposition and unification that make up poetry's project.<sup>88</sup> This draft, followed by several tables of permutations of genre designations (which Hölderlin here calls "tones") mapped onto components of poetic work, undermines efforts to designate a single genre or tone as paradigmatic or primary.<sup>89</sup> Instead, I track the six features I read as involved in problems of human finitude through several key moments of the text in order to understand its interweaving of the concerns that accrue to Hölderlin's investigations of human mindedness and poetic production.

In the interaction of these features, the text epitomizes Hölderlin's struggles to elucidate the tasks and possibilities of poetry and the anxiety that adheres to these struggles. My analyses of these features outline Hölderlin's picture of the tasks and problems of poetry while reinforcing the distinction between theoretical content and poetic language that forbids the direct application of his poetological schemata to his poetry. The themes of unity or continuity, active opposition, and dynamic temporality structure a contrast that drives much of the text: that between constancy (or identity) and change (or difference). These poles constitute an opposition that must be either harmonized or temporally suspended. Moreover, the smaller-scale oppositions that occur in the text (between kinds of content for a poem, for example, or between content, form, and what Hölderlin will call *Geist*, usually translated as "mind" or "spirit") all unfold in the temporal framework of the opposition between constancy and change. The textual symptoms indicating the presence of anxiety are also fully manifested here. Hölderlin calls for a further step repeatedly; perhaps the central experience of reading the text is one of having struggled through an extended series of unifications, only to arrive at a remark like "and when all this has been accomplished, still there is another stage." Further, the sheer number of terms and qualifications render the text extraordinarily difficult to read, and like so much of Hölderlin's theoretical work, it remained incomplete.

The first sentence presents two guiding oppositions, each of which will reappear throughout the text. The first opposition reiterates a version of the skeptical

88. Norbert von Hellingrath, who first published the sketch in his 1916 edition, titled it "Die Verfahrungsweise des poetischen Geistes" (The Poetic Spirit's Mode of Proceeding), which felicitously conveys the draft's emphasis on temporality and processuality.

89. That numerous illustrious readers have failed to agree on either a central tone or an order of tones for any given poem suggests that this is not the most fruitful approach. For example, Karlheinz Stierle and Dieter Henrich argue for the lyric/ideal tone as central, Gerhard Kurz and Werner Hamacher for the tragic, and Peter Szondi and Eric Santner for the epic. See Karlheinz Stierle, "Die Identität des Gedichts—Hölderlin als Paradigma," in *Poetik und Hermeneutik* 8 (1979): 505–52; Dieter Henrich, *Der Gang des Denkens: Beobachtungen und Gedanken zu Hölderlins Gedicht* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986); Kurz, *Mittelbarkeit und Vereinigung*; Werner Hamacher, "Parusie, Mauern: Mittelbarkeit und Zeitlichkeit, später Hölderlin," *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 34 (2004/5): 93–142; Santner, *Narrative Vigilance*; and Peter Szondi, "Überwindung des Klassizismus": Der Brief an Böhlendorff von 4. Dezember 1801," in *Hölderlin-Studien: Mit einem Traktat über philologische Erkenntnis* (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel Verlag, 1970), 85–104.

question of the fit between mind and world: Hölderlin worries about the integration of *Geist* and *Stoff*, where *Geist* suggests both mind/spirit in the idealist sense and the poetic topos of inspiration, while *Stoff* indicates content and is subsequently linked to the resistance to ideality of real life.<sup>90</sup> Hölderlin's second overarching opposition, the dichotomy between constancy and change or variation, continues the principle of reciprocity or interaction (*Wechselwirkung*) that he adapted from Fichte and Schiller, as well as the problems of identity and dynamic wholeness from his considerations of subjectivity and history. The integration of these four elements (*Geist*, *Stoff*, constancy/identity, and variation/difference) is Hölderlin's criterion for poetic success: stripped of its elaborate qualifications and correlative statements, the initial sentence reads: "When the poet is once in command of the spirit . . . then everything depends for him on the receptivity of the subject-matter to the idealic import and to the idealic form."<sup>91</sup> The sentence strays, however, into an attempt to clarify every condition for being *des Geistes mächtig* before reaching its conclusion three pages and eleven conditional *Wenn* clauses later:

When the poet is once in command of the spirit, when he has felt and appropriated the common soul, that is common to all and peculiar to each, has held it fast, assured himself of it, when further he is certain of the free movement, the harmonious alternation and onward striving, with which the spirit tends to reproduce itself in itself and in others, certain of the beautiful *progressus* planned in the ideal of the spirit and its poetic deductive mode, when he has understood that a necessary conflict arises between the most original demand of the spirit, which aims at the community and united simultaneity of all parts, and between the other demand, that commands it to depart from itself and reproduce itself in itself and in others in a beautiful progress and alternation, when this conflict always holds him fast and draws him on, on the way to realization . . .<sup>92</sup>

90. On account of the peculiar connotations of *Geist* and the potential material meaning of *Stoff*, I use both terms in German throughout. Adler and Louth translate these terms as "spirit" and "subject-matter."

91. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 277–79.

92. *Ibid.*, 277. Here, again, the grammatical necessities of translation in fact make the sentence easier to understand in translation than in the original, which reads: "Wenn der Dichter einmal des Geistes mächtig ist, wenn er [der Dichter] die gemeinschaftliche Seele, die allem gemein und jedem eigen ist, gefühlt und sich zugeeignet, sie [die Seele] vestgehalten, sich ihrer versichert hat, wenn er ferner der freien Bewegung, des harmonischen Wechsels und Fortstrebens, worinn der Geist sich in sich selber und in andern zu reproduciren geneigt ist, wenn er des schönen ihm Ideale des Geistes vorgezeichneten Progresses und seiner [des Progresses] poetischen Folgerungsweise gewiß ist, wenn er eingesehen hat, daß ein nothwendiger Widerstreit entstehe zwischen der ursprünglichsten Forderung des Geistes, die auf Gemeinschaft und einiges Zugleichseyn aller Theile geht, und zwischen der anderen Forderung, welche ihm [Geist] gebietet, aus sich heraus zu gehen, und in einem schönen Fortschritt und Wechsel sich in sich selbst und in anderen zu reproduciren, wenn dieser Widerstreit ihn [den Dichter] immer vesthält und fortzieht, auf dem Wege zur Ausführung . . ." (MA 2:77; the bracketed clarifications of the referents of pronouns are mine).

The strain on language is immediately apparent: Hölderlin's appositions make it difficult to tell which agents perform which actions; each qualification has several subordinate conditions. Finally, the clauses presented here represent only the first stage in a progression from the apprehension of the poetic spirit that Hölderlin then continues in the subsequent clauses' explication of poetic execution. Hölderlin adds complications to the most originary demands (*ursprünglichste Forderungen*) of the poetic spirit. He asserts that each tendency or drive only becomes palpable by a conflict with its opposite. Conversely, the variation demanded by the second drive or demand can be felt only in contrast to the unity of what Hölderlin calls *sinnliche Form* (sensory form). By the end of the eighth clause, then, Hölderlin has deployed the substantive terms "form" and "content" (*Gehalt*) and qualified them with the adjectives "ideal," "material," "sensuous," and "spiritual."<sup>93</sup> Any term (made up of the combination of one adjective and one noun) that remains constant will be opposed to the variation of another; the opposition between any two terms is made up for by the complementarity of another two.

The three features of unification or continuity, opposition, and dynamization continue to structure the process depicted. Unification appears in the original demand or tendency of the poetic spirit as well as in the several elements that remain constant throughout the poetic process. Opposition occurs in the second drive to variation or differentiation and in the varying elements of the poetic execution. Moreover, there is an implicit opposition for the poet to traverse in the contrast between the concrete or actual and the ideal: although Hölderlin does not say so directly, the use of terms like "material" and "sensual" indicates that in the course of poetic execution, *Geist* moves out of the sheerly ideal realm into the concrete or actual. Finally, both opposition and unification appear on a structural level in the dynamic conflict between (and eventual harmony of) constancy and change that unfolds across the temporal space of the poem. Hölderlin gives here the most detailed version of the work he has been ascribing to poetry: the temporal unfolding of a poem offers the possibility for the unification or continuity of oppositions that do not disappear but can nonetheless be felt as an aesthetic whole.

But the sentence itself seems to strive, against Hölderlin's own precepts, to complete this work. The extensive correlatives that appear between the first and last clauses try *themselves* to overcome the opposition between content and spirit by elaborating every step of the process for their interrelation. The sheer difficulty of following the sentence is an effect of the text's proliferation of terms and conditions. While Hölderlin does not explicitly call for further steps, he repeatedly introduces clauses with the word *ferner* (further, furthermore), indicating that he sees the clause as yet another step to be taken. And while the sentence is (somewhat miraculously) grammatically complete, the sequence it lays out is so detailed that the remainder of

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93. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 277–79.

the essay is unable to explicate most of its components in any detail: some disappear, others seem to change their referents throughout the piece, whose only gestured-at explications, footnotes, and repeated remarks that only the first stage of a process has occurred render its eventual incompleteness inevitable as Hölderlin once more tries to theorize the poetic process that he himself has denied to discursive presentation.

Rather than attempting to follow Hölderlin's (incomplete) explication of the terms in the first sentence, I will turn to perhaps the most striking instance of the active opposition of the poetic process: what Hölderlin calls the *Grund des Gedichts*, the ground, foundation, or even reason of (or for) the poem. After attempting to recreate the integration of *Geist* and *Stoff* in the first sentence, Hölderlin considers different kinds of material or content,<sup>94</sup> and then acknowledges the difficulty of making *Stoff* receptive to the poetic spirit.<sup>95</sup> Each poem begins from an initial conflict between *Stoff* and *Geist*, which Hölderlin claims must prove to be a necessary stage en route to the mutual completion of each by the other. In order to effect the transition from conflict to complementarity, Hölderlin deploys a new term, the "ground of the poem"; he also uses *Begründung* (foundation or even reason for existing). The primary characteristic of this ground is that it is self-oppositional: "It is characterized by the fact that it is everywhere opposed to itself."<sup>96</sup> Hölderlin locates the ground of the poem "between the expression (the representation) and the free idealic treatment,"<sup>97</sup> terms that point to the real or concrete execution in the content of the poem and to the (ideal, spiritual) *Geist* that must infuse both content and form, respectively. His description of the grounding or foundation (*Begründung*) as "the spiritually sensuous, the formally material,"<sup>98</sup> presents it as a figure of mediation between *Geist* (as spirit or mind) and the material, sensuous external world as they are worked together in poetic presentation.

Hölderlin makes this term extremely important for poetic success, as is perhaps clear in its designation as the ground or foundation, or even poem's purpose or cause. As such, it gives the poem "its seriousness, its firmness, its truth,"<sup>99</sup> and prevents it from falling into mannerism or empty virtuosity. And the unifying work of the ground of the poem occurs within the process of a poem's unfolding, in keeping with Hölderlin's conception of poetic temporality. The individual moments of the

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94. These seem to correspond to the characters or tones he discussed in the earlier essays and will incorporate into poetological schemata. *Stoff* can be "a series of events, or views, or realities," "a series of endeavours, ideas, thoughts, or passions," or "a series of fantasies, possibilities." The first corresponds to the naive or epic tone, the second to the heroic or tragic, the third to the ideal or lyric (Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 279).

95. "The poet is all too easily led astray by his subject, in that the latter, being taken out of its context in the living world, resists poetic limitation, in that it does not wish to serve as a mere vehicle for the spirit" (Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 280).

96. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 281.

97. *Ibid.*, 280.

98. *Ibid.*, 281.

99. *Ibid.*, 280.

poem's content oppose each other and the variation of the poetic spirit, and these oppositions occur as each moment proceeds into the next, eventually arriving at the aesthetic whole of a complete poem. But—perhaps due to the immensely high stakes for poetic unification and thus success attached to it—the *Grund* as an overarching term of mediation eventually collapses into a single stage of a greater reflective process. Hölderlin divides it into a “subjective” and an “objective ground” and proceeds to elaborate their roles and characteristics.<sup>100</sup> Here, as so often, a further step is necessary; moreover, that step prompts an additional proliferation of terms as a seemingly unifying term shifts to one side of an opposition to make room for a further reflective level, and the text succumbs to skeptical anxiety.

The theme of active opposition embodied in the ground of the poem reappears as a constitutive component of subjective and poetic identity in Hölderlin's presentation of what he calls the poetic I (*das poetische Ich*). The notion of a poetic subject links the questions of aesthetic wholeness and divided subjectivity that Hölderlin treated in his earlier texts to the poetic procedures he worked out throughout his career and develops in great detail here. Hölderlin introduces the poetic subject in a call for a further opposition in the progress of the poetic spirit to overcome its oscillation between wholeness and seriality. Here he makes explicit the analogy between the problems of wholeness for the subject and the problems of wholeness or completion for poetry: because the poetic spirit cannot simultaneously conceive of itself as self-identical and divided, it must place itself in relation to something outside itself in order to investigate the unity of those states. As Hölderlin has argued since his first theoretical sketches, the structure of divided identity or unified difference is precisely that of the human subject. The proper object in which the poetic spirit can grasp the overarching unity in its internal division is the poetic I. Hölderlin thus outlines a process of mutual completion on the part of the poetic subject and the poetic spirit.

The themes of unification or continuity, opposition, and dynamic temporality characterize the poetic subject as they do the poetic spirit: like the poetic spirit, the subject cannot think itself as simultaneously united and divided. Either it recognizes its own divisions (*Entgegensetzungen*), in which case the unity of its identity is illusory,<sup>101</sup> or it recognizes its own unity, in which case it is divided from the world and incapable of recognizing itself in its own past or future acts. In that case, it is not self-identical across time, and so its identity is once more an illusion. Instead, the subject must freely choose an object to which it can oppose itself in an act of harmonic opposition. The act of harmonic opposition permits the subject to perform the reflection necessary for comprehending an object as both cohesive and self-divided upon an external object before projecting them back into himself.<sup>102</sup>

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100. Ibid., 282.

101. Ibid., 285.

102. “Just because he [the human subject] is not so intimately connected with this sphere, he can abstract from it and from himself, insofar as he is posited in it, and can reflect upon himself” (Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 291).

Only in this act of free self-opposition and reflection can the subject understand itself as a being that encompasses both a state of indivisible, unreflected unity and reflective, rational self-consciousness in a subjectivity that persists across time. This self-understanding<sup>103</sup> is what Hölderlin calls the destiny or disposition of the human (*Bestimmung des Menschen*), and it can be reached only via poetic production.

The necessary relation between the poetic spirit and the poetic subject and the ability of the poetic subject to reach its destiny in poetic production also motivate Hölderlin's insistence on the necessity of individual and particular aesthetic production. He explicitly equates the progression of the subject to the progression of poetry before insisting that the poet's individual experience of the realization of his destiny gives rise to his poetic language. That language must be specifically his own in order to complete the linking of world, subject, and absolute in a successful work. If the poet uses language external to his subjective experience (i.e., if he tries to imitate another poet), the organic connection between the poetic *Geist*, the grounding of the *Geist* in *Stoff*, and the expression of their unification in a poetic work cannot occur.<sup>104</sup>

Hölderlin's final theoretical text, then, insists that the unification of the poles of human subjectivity that could make palpable the fit between self-conscious minds and the external world occurs only in poetic production.<sup>105</sup> He adds specific attention to the individual and communal use of language in which the poetic spirit and poetic subjectivity reflect into, enable, and complete one another. Both the arguments about the necessity of specific poetic production for the experience of aesthetic or subjective wholeness (a wholeness that does not overcome finitude but does point beyond itself) and the difficulty that results from the textual features indicating skeptical anxiety forbid the application of Hölderlin's theoretical texts directly to his poetic work. These texts do, however, elucidate the stakes for poetic production: any understanding by a human subject of itself as striving for something more than an individual pursuit of advantage must come in poetic activity, and that poetic activity must emerge out of particularized individual experience. In the next chapter, I will use the criteria for successful poetry loosely developed here as a general—but crucially, not directly prescriptive—framework for reading Hölderlin's late poetry. The themes of unification or continuity of oppositions across the space of a poem are complicated by their appearances in poetic works, but Hölderlin's poems work toward what his theoretical texts, by their own lights, cannot: a felt understanding of what it means to be subjects that are both aware of ourselves as limited, finite beings and alive to the world outside our limitations.

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103. The German word Hölderlin uses is *Erkenntnis*, which denotes both cognition and recognition (MA 2:92–93).

104. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 294–96.

105. Although Hölderlin does produce analytical texts about the writing of poetry after 1800, he does so only in conjunction with completed works by other authors.

# FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN, “BLÖDIGKEIT,” “DAS NÄCHSTE BESTE,” “ANDENKEN”

## Blödigkeit<sup>[1]</sup>

Sind denn dir nicht bekannt viele Lebendigen?

Geht auf Wahrem dein Fuß nicht, wie auf Teppichen?

Drum, mein Genius! tritt nur

Baar in's Leben, und Sorge nicht! [4]

Was geschieheth, es sei alles gelegen dir!

Sei zur Freude gereimt, oder was könnte denn

Dich belaidigen, Herz, was

Da begegnen, wohin du sollst? [8]

Denn, seit Himmlischen gleich Menschen, ein einsam Wild

Und die Himmlischen selbst führet, der Einkehr zu,

Der Gesang und der Fürsten

Chor, nach Arten, so waren auch [12]

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1. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. Michael Knaupp (Munich: Hanser Verlag, 1992), 1:443–44 (hereafter MA, followed by volume number and page number); cited by line number in chapter 3.

Wir, die Zungen des Volks gerne bei Lebenden,  
 Wo sich vieles gesellt, freudig und jedem gleich,  
 Jedem offen, so ist ja  
 Unser Vater, des Himmels Gott, [16]

Der den denkenden Tag Armen und Reichen gönnt,  
 Der, zur Wende der Zeit, uns die Entschlafenden  
 Aufgerichtet an goldnen  
 Gängelbanden, wie Kinder, hält. [20]

Gut auch sind und geschickt einem zu etwas wir,  
 Wenn wir kommen, mit Kunst, und von den Himmlischen  
 Einen bringen. Doch selber  
 Bringen schikliche Hände wir. [24]

### **Timidness<sup>[2]</sup>**

Of the living are not many well-known to you?  
 On the truth don't your feet walk as [on carpets]?  
 Boldly, therefore, my genius,  
 Step right into the thick of life! [4]

All that happens there be welcome, a boon to you!  
 Be disposed to feel joy, or is there anything  
 That could harm you there, heart, that  
 Could affront you, where you must go? [8]

For since gods grew like men, lonely as woodland beasts,  
 And since, [according to kinds], song and the princely choir  
 Brought the Heavenly in person  
 Back to earth, so we too, the tongues [12]

Of the people, have liked living men's company,  
 Where all kinds are conjoined, equal and open to  
 Everyone, full of joy—for  
 So our Father is, Heaven's God, [16]

Who to rich men and poor offers the thinking day,  
 At the turning of Time holds us, the sleepy ones,  
 Upright still with his golden  
 Leading-strings, as one holds a child. [20]

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2. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Poems and Fragments*, trans. Michael Hamburger, 4th ed. (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2004), 265; cited by line number in chapter 3; modifications in brackets.

Someone, some way, we too serve, are of use, are sent  
 When we come, with our art, and of the heavenly powers  
 Bring one with us. But fitting,  
 Skilful hands we ourselves provide. [24]

### Das Nächste Beste<sup>[3]</sup>

offen die Fenster des Himmels  
 Und freigelassen der Nachtgeist  
 Der himmelstürmende, der hat unser Land  
 Beschwäzert, mit Sprachen viel, unbändigen, und  
 [5] Den Schutt gewälzet  
 Bis diese Stunde.  
 Doch kommt das, was ich will,  
 Wenn  
 Drum wie die Staaren  
 [10] Mit Freudengeschrei, wenn auf Gasgogne, Orten, wo viel Gärten sind,  
 Wenn im Olivenland, und  
 In liebenswürdiger Fremde,  
 Springbrunnen an grasbewachsenen Wegen  
 Die Bäum unwissend in der Wüste  
 [15] Die Sonne sticht,  
 Und das Herz der Erde thuet  
 Sich auf, wo um  
 Den Hügel von Eichen  
 Aus brennendem Lande  
 [20] Die Ströme und wo  
 Des Sonntags unter Tänzen  
 Gastfreundlich die Schwellen sind,  
 An blüthenbekränzten Straßen, stillegehend.  
 Sie spüren nemlich die Heimath,  
 [25] Wenn grad aus falbem Stein,  
 Die Wasser silbern rieseln  
 Und heilig Grün sich zeigt  
 Auf feuchter Wiese der Charente,  
 Die klugen Sinne pflegend. wenn aber  
 [30] Die Luft sich bahnt,  
 Und ihnen machet waker

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3. MA 1:420–23; cited by line number in chapter 3.

- Scharfwehend die Augen der Nordost, fliegen sie auf,  
 Und Ek um Eke  
 Das Liebere gewahrend
- [35] Denn immer halten die sich genau an das Nächste,  
 Sehn sie die heiligen Wälder und die Flamme, blühendduftend  
 Des Wachstums und die Wolken des Gesanges fern und athmen Othem  
 Der Gesänge. Menschlich ist  
 Das Erkenntniß. Aber die Himmlischen
- [40] Auch haben solches mit sich, und des Morgens beobachten  
 Die Stunden und des Abends die Vögel. Himmlischen auch  
 Gehöret also solches. Wolan nun. Sonst in Zeiten  
 Des Geheimnisses hätt ich, als von Natur, gesagt,  
 Sie kommen, in Deutschland. Jezt aber, weil, wie die See
- [45] Die Erd ist und die Länder, Männern gleich, die nicht  
 Vorüber gehen können, einander, untereinander  
 Sich schelten fast, so sag ich. Abendlich wohlgeschmiedet  
 Vom Oberlande biegt sich das Gebirg, wo auf hoher Wiese  
 die Wälder sind wohl an  
 Der bairischen Ebne. Nemlich Gebirg
- [50] Geht weit und streket, hinter Amberg sich und  
 Fränkischen Hügeln. Berühmt ist dieses. Umsonst nicht hat  
 Seitwärts gebogen Einer von Bergen der Jugend  
 Das Gebirg, und gerichtet das Gebirg  
 Heimatlich. Wildniß nemlich sind ihm die Alpen und
- [55] Das Gebirg, das theilet die Tale und die Länge lang  
 Geht über die Erd. Dort aber rauschen, über spizem Winkel  
 Frohlokende Bäume. Gut ist, das gesetzt ist. Aber Eines  
 Das ficht uns an Anhang, der bringt uns fast um heiligen Geist Barbaren  
 Auch leben, wo allein herrschet Sonne
- [60] Und Mond. Gott aber hält uns, wenn zu sehn ist einer, der wolle  
 Umkehren mein Vaterland.
- [P. 74 in upper margin: "Zwei Bretter und zwei  
 Brettchen *apoll envers terre*]  
 Gehn mags nun. Fast, unrein. Bei Ilion aber auch  
 Das Licht der Adler. Aber in der Mitte  
 Der Himmel der Gesänge. Neben aber
- [65] Am Ufer zornige Greise, der Entscheidung nemlich; die alle  
 Drei unser sind.
- Das Tagwerk aber bleibt,  
 Der Erde Vergessenheit,

- Wahrheit schenkt aber dazu  
 [70] Den Athmenden  
 Der ewige Vater.
- [P. 75 "Vom Abgrund nemlich" Marginal note: Die *apriorität* des Individuellen über das Ganze]  
 und kehr' in Hahnenschrei  
 Den Augenblick des Triumphs  
 Werber! keine Polaken sind wir  
 Vom Abgrund nemlich haben  
 [5] Wir angefangen und gegangen  
 Der Gelehrten halb  
*Μα τον ορκον*<sup>[4]</sup> in Zweifel und Ärgerniß,  
 Denn sinnlicher sind Menschen  
 In dem Brand  
 [10] Der Wüste  
 Lichttrunken und der Tiergeist ruhet  
 Mit ihnen. Bald aber wird, wie ein Hund, umgehn  
 In der Hitze meine Stimme auf den Gassen der Gärten  
 In denen wohnen Menschen  
 [15] In Frankreich  
 [ ]<sup>[5]</sup>  
 Frankfurt aber, neues zu sagen, nach der Gestalt, die  
 Abdruck ist der Natur,  
 [20] Des Menschen nemlich, ist der Nabel  
 Dieser Erde. Diese Zeit auch  
 Ist Zeit, und deutschen Schmelzes.  
 Ein wilder Hügel aber stehet über dem Abhang  
 Meiner Gärten. Kirschenbäume. Scharfer Othem aber wehet  
 [25] Um die Löcher des Felses. Allda bin ich  
 Alles miteinander. Wunderbar  
 Aber über Quellen beuget schlank  
 Ein Nußbaum sich und Beere, wie Korall  
 Hängen an dem Strauche über Röhren von Holz,

4. "By the oath"; see Dieter Burdorf, *Hölderlins späte Gedichtfragmente: "Unendlicher Deutung voll"* (Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 1993), 360.

5. Here the Munich edition incorporates text from a separate column from the left margin into the main text; I have omitted that text to preserve the startling lexical coherence between *Frankreich* and *Frankfurt* in Hölderlin's manuscript.

- [30<sup>6</sup>] Aber schwer geht neben Bergen der Frohe weg ]  
 Aus denen. Rechts liegt aber der Forst.  
 Ursprünglich aus Korn, nun aber zu gestehen, bevestigter Gesang von  
     Blumen als  
 Neue Bildung aus der Stadt.  
 Bis zu Schmerzen aber der Nase steigt
- [35] Citronengeruch auf und von dem Öl aus der Provence und wo  
     Dankbarkeit  
 Und Natürlichkeit mir die Gasgognischen Lande  
 Gegeben. Erzogen aber, noch zu sehen, hat mich  
 Die Rappierlust [und des Festtags gebraten Fleisch
- [40] Der Tisch und braune Trauben, braune]<sup>[7]</sup>  
     und mich leset o  
 Ihr Blüthen von Deutschland, o mein Herz wird  
 Untrügbarer Krystall an dem  
 Das Licht sich prüfet
- [45] Vor      Deutschland

### [The Nearest the Best/] What Is Nearest<sup>[8]</sup>

- open the windows of heaven  
 And the night spirit [let] loose  
 The heaven-stormer, who has persuaded our land  
 With many unruly languages and
- [5] Has rolled his rubble  
 Up to this hour.  
 But what I want will come,  
 When  
 Therefore like the starlings
- [10] With shouts of joy, when in Gascony, places, where many gardens are,  
 When in [the] olive land, and  
 In lovely foreign lands,  
 Fountains on paths overgrown with grass  
 The unknowing trees in the desert

6. At this point the Munich edition skips from 25 to 35 in its line numbering; my numbering diverges hereafter rather than preserving the error.

7. The following lines are omitted in the Munich edition but are clearly integrated—as much as any of the text fragments in this section are—in the manuscript. See chapter 3, figure 2.

8. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Selected Poems of Friedrich Hölderlin*, trans. Maxine Chernoff and Paul Hoover (Richmond, CA: Omnidawn, 2008) 370–75; cited by line number in chapter 3; modifications in brackets.

- [15] Stung by the sun  
And the heart of [the] earth  
Opens itself, where  
Around the hill of oaks  
From a burning land
- [20] The streams and where  
On Sundays among dances  
The thresholds are hospitable to guests  
On streets strung with garlands, quietly swaying.  
For indeed they sense home,
- [25] When straight from pale yellow stone  
The waters ripple silver  
And holy green appears  
  
On a damp meadow of the Charente,  
  
Tending the clever senses. but when
- [30] The air prepares a way for itself  
And the North Wind, blowing sharply,  
Makes their eyes wide-awake, they fly off,  
And corner to corner  
Becoming aware of what is more dear,
- [35] For they are always guided by exactly what is nearest,  
They see the holy forest and the flames of growth  
Blossoming fragrantly and the clouds of song far away  
And breathe the breath of songs. It's human  
To have perceptions. But the heavenly
- [40] Also have something like that in them, and in the mornings they watch  
The hours and at evening the birds. To the heavenly  
This also pertains. [Very well, then.] But at those times  
[Of mystery I should, as though from nature, have said]  
"They are coming in Germany."
- [45] But now, because the earth is like the sea,  
And the countries are like men,  
Who cannot pass one another,  
But scold each other, so I say, [well-forged, nocturnally,]  
The mountain range bends in the highlands,
- [50] Where in pastures the forests overlook  
The Bavarian plain. For mountain ranges go far and stretch beyond  
Amberg and the Franconian hills. These are famous. Not for nothing  
Someone bent the mountain of youth sideways  
And turned it to face toward home.

- [55] For the Alps are wilderness to him and  
 The mountain range that divides the valley and stretches full-length  
 Over the earth. But there [rustle over craggy peaks  
 Joyful trees. Good is that which is solidly affixed.  
 That contests our annexation, it robs us almost of the holy spirit      Barbarians
- [60] also live, where alone the sun rules  
 And the moon. But God preserves us, when one is to be seen who will  
 Overturn my fatherland.<sup>9</sup>]
- Let it run now. Nearly impure, [      ] But near Ilion  
 There was also the light of eagles. But in the middle
- [65] The heaven of songs. But nearby,  
 [Scornful] old men on the shore of decision, all three  
 Of which are ours.
- [But the daily work remains  
 Of the earth's forgottenness
- [70] Truth unto the mortal  
 Gives, however  
 The eternal father.]
- [P. 75 Marginal note: "The apriority of the individual over the whole"]  
 [and turn at the cocks' crow  
 The moment of triumph  
 Supplicants!      no Polacks are we]
- <sup>[10]</sup> We began of course at the abyss  
 And have gone forth like lions
- [5] [through the learned  
*Μα τον ορκον*<sup>11</sup>] In doubt and anger,  
 For men are more sensual  
 In the heat
- [10] Of deserts  
 Drunk with light, and the spirit of animals

9. At this point the English editions (Chernoff and Hoover as well as Hamburger) follow the Stuttgart edition with some additions from the Frankfurt edition; no translations as yet have been based on the Munich edition, and therefore the translation of lines 57–62 is my own.

10. Chernoff and Hoover translate this section separately under the editorial title "Beginning at the Abyss." Hölderlin, *Selected Poems of Friedrich Hölderlin*, trans. Chernoff and Hoover, 392–95; cited by line number in chapter 3.

11. "By the oath." See note 4 above.

Lies down with them. But soon, like a dog  
My voice will wander in the heat  
Through the garden paths  
[15] In which people live  
In France.  
[ ]  
Frankfurt, rather, for to speak of nature  
[20] Is to take its shape, human nature, I mean  
[Navel] of this earth, our time  
Is also time, and of German making.  
An overgrown hill hangs above  
My gardens. Cherry trees. But a sharp breath  
[25] Blows through the holes in stone. And there I am []  
All things at once. A wonderful  
Nut tree bends over  
The well springs and        itself. Berries like coral  
Hang on the bush above the wooden downspout  
[30] Which they used to make of corn,  
But now,  
Quite frankly, it sings most forcefully of flowers,  
As news from town, where the smell of lemons  
And oil from Provence rises almost painfully  
[35] To the nose, [this thankfulness  
And naturalness the region of Gascony  
has given me.] Still to be seen,  
What tamed and nourished me,  
A love of the skewer and holiday roast,  
[40] The table and brown grapes, so ripe  
                                and gather me [o]  
[You flowers of Germany], o my heart is turning  
Into the truest crystal, in which  
The light [tests itself]  
[45] when        Germany

Andenken<sup>[12]</sup>

Der Nordost wehet,  
Der liebste unter den Winden

12. MA 1:473–75; cited by line number in chapter 3; modifications in brackets.

Mir, weil er feurigen Geist  
Und gute Fahrt verheißet den Schiffern.  
Geh aber nun und grüße  
Die schöne Garonne,  
Und die Gärten von Bourdeaux  
Dort, wo am scharfen Ufer  
Hingehet der Steg und in den Strom  
Tief fällt der Bach, darüber aber  
Hinschauet ein edel Paar  
Von Eichen und Silberpappeln;

[12]

Noch denket das mir wohl und wie  
Die breiten Gipfel neiget  
Der Ulmwald, über die Mühl',  
Im Hofe aber wächst ein Feigenbaum.  
An Feiertagen gehn  
Die braunen Frauen daselbst  
Auf seidnen Boden,  
Zur Märzzeit,  
Wenn gleich ist Nacht und Tag,  
Und über langsamen Stegen,  
Von goldenen Träumen schwer,  
Einwiegende Lüfte ziehen.

[24]

Es reiche aber,  
Des dunkeln Lichtes voll,  
Mir einer den duftenden Becher,  
Damit ich ruhen möge; denn süß  
Wär' unter Schatten der Schlummer.  
Nicht ist es gut,  
Seellos von sterblichen  
Gedanken zu seyn. Doch gut  
Ist ein Gespräch und zu sagen  
Des Herzens Meinung, zu hören viel  
Von Tagen der Lieb',  
Und Thaten, welche geschehen.

[36]

Wo aber sind die Freunde? Bellarmin  
Mit dem Gefährten? Mancher  
Trägt Scheue, an die Quelle zu gehn;  
Es beginnet nemlich der Reichtum  
Im Meere. Sie,  
Wie Mahler, bringen zusammen

Das Schöne der Erd' und verschmähn  
 Den geflügelten Krieg nicht, und  
 Zu wohnen einsam, jahrlang, unter  
 Dem entlaubten Mast, wo nicht die Nacht durchglänzen  
 Die Feiertage der Stadt,  
 Und Saitenspiel und eingeborener Tanz nicht. [48]

Nun aber sind zu Indiern  
 Die Männer gegangen,  
 Dort an der luftigen Spiz'  
 An Traubenbergen, wo herab  
 Die Dordogne kommt,  
 Und zusammen mit der prächt'gen  
 Garonne meerbreit  
 Ausgethet der Strom. Es nehmet aber  
 Und giebt Gedächtniß die See,  
 Und die Lieb' auch heftet fleißig die Augen,  
 Was bleibet aber, stiften die Dichter. [59]

### Remembrance<sup>[13]</sup>

The north-easterly blows,  
 Of winds the dearest to me  
 Because a fiery spirit  
 And happy voyage it promises mariners.  
 But go now, go and greet  
 The beautiful Garonne  
 And the gardens of Bordeaux,  
 To where on the rugged bank  
 The path runs and into the river  
 Deep falls the brook, but above them  
 A noble pair of oaks  
 And white poplars looks out; [12]

Still well I remember this, and how  
 The elm wood with its great leafy tops  
 Inclines, towards the mill,  
 But in the courtyard a fig tree grows.  
 On holidays there too  
 The brown women walk

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13. Hölderlin, *Poems and Fragments*, trans. Hamburger, 577–79; cited by line number in chapter 3.

On silken ground,  
 In the month of March,  
 When night and day are equal  
 And over slow footpaths,  
 Heavy with golden dreams,  
 Lulling breezes drift.

[24]

But someone pass me  
 The fragrant cup  
 Full of the dark light,  
 So that I may rest now; for sweet  
 It would be to drowse amid shadows.  
 It is not good  
 To be soulless  
 With mortal thoughts. But good  
 Is converse, and to speak  
 The heart's [meaning], to hear many tales  
 About the days of love  
 And deeds that have occurred.

[36]

But where are the friends? Where Bellarmine  
 And his companion? [Some]  
 [Are] shy of going to the source;  
 For wealth begins in  
 The sea. And they,  
 Like painters, bring together  
 The beautiful things of the earth  
 And do not disdain winged war, and  
 To live in solitude for years, beneath the  
 Defoliate mast, where through the night do not gleam  
 The city's holidays  
 Nor music of strings, nor indigenous dancing.

[48]

But now to Indians  
 Those men have gone,  
 There on the airy peak  
 On grape-covered hills, where down  
 The Dordogne comes  
 And together with the glorious  
 Garonne as wide as the sea

The current sweeps out. But it is the sea  
That takes and gives remembrance,  
And love no less keeps eyes attentively fixed,  
But what is lasting the poets provide.

[59]