3

Calls for Communion

Hölderlin's Late Poetry

In chapter 2, I read Hölderlin's theoretical or poetological texts as struggling both thematically and metatextually with the dissatisfactions of subjectivity, a struggle I used the horizon of skepticism in the broad sense elaborated by Stanley Cavell to characterize as the subject's "argument . . . with itself (over its finitude)."[1] Because Hölderlin works within the historical paradigm of post-Kantian German philosophy, particularly idealism, he addresses problems of finitude in terms of unification: of the subject, of mind and world, of reason and freedom. Hölderlin contends (as I showed in the previous chapter) that philosophy undertakes to *solve* the problem of unification once and for all, performing the shift from metaphysical finitude to intellectual lack that I analyzed as skeptical.[2] Hölderlin likewise understands that the quest for certain *knowledge* necessarily fails. He succumbs, however, to the anxiety over finitude that drives such efforts in his theorizations, even as he

1. Stanley Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 5.

2. Of course, not everything that we would today call philosophy operates according to this logic; as I discussed in the previous chapter, precisely at the moment Hölderlin is making this genre distinction between poetry and philosophy, Jena romanticism is experimenting with nonsystematic styles of philosophical or theoretical writing; later writers such as Nietzsche or Kierkegaard also come to mind. I discuss the overlaps and significant disagreements between Hölderlin and Jena romanticism in the section "Hölderlin's Context and His cultural Critique" in chapter 2.

sees unification not as a problem to be solved but as a task to be undertaken in poetry, repeatedly and without advance assurances of success. This paradox, I argued, shifts the relation between poetry and theory or poetology.

The question of the relation between poetry and theory becomes particularly acute in the period of Hölderlin's work that I treat in this chapter—namely, the years between his return from Bordeaux in 1802 and his institutionalization in 1806. Hölderlin had returned to his mother's house in Nürtingen in poor health, and his condition was likely worsened by learning of Susette Gontard's death in 1802. He remained in Nürtingen until 1804, when he moved at Sinclair's instigation to Homburg to work as court librarian until 1806; during these years, reports have him working diligently—causing both his mother and friend further concern for his health—but he did not write any abstract meditations on the purpose or techniques of poetry.

Moreover, it is possible to identify, at least in general terms, a shift in poetry in these years. Hölderlin's poetry can be loosely divided into five periods, although with significant overlaps: first, poems from his school years in Maulbronn and especially Tübingen (1786–93); then, works (including poems but also most of the poetological texts, as well as the novel *Hyperion* and the attempts at the *Empedocles* tragedy) written as he was winning his way to poetic and philosophical maturity (1794–1800); third, a period of formal mastery and cohesion, producing the long-form elegies and other poems (1800–1802); fourth, the period from 1802 to 1806 under consideration here, which exhibits a simultaneous expansion and concretion of Hölderlin's poetic world; and finally, the poetry written after his mental collapse in 1806, which contracts to a limited set of images and forms.[3]

Particularly compared with the years immediately prior, the poems from the period between 1802 and 1806 that I consider in this chapter exhibit a wide range of forms: Hölderlin increasingly experiments with poems in irregular or free rhythms

3. This is only a loose division; the boundaries are not absolute. Winfried Kudszus has argued for an incorporation of Hölderlin's "latest" (post-collapse) work into the main corpus of his poetic writings, based on stylistic features (see Kudszus, *Sprachverlust und Sinnwandel: Zur späten und spätesten Lyrik Hölderlins* [Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 1969]). Although I recognize some similarities and occasional overlaps between periods, I by and large share David Constantine's view of the matter: "Since 1826 Hölderlin's editors and the accompanying scholars have designated more and more of his work as fit for general consumption. Now there is nothing, not one legible word in the whole corpus of his writings, which any serious reader would dismiss as of no consequence. . . . There are two critical attitudes which, I think, need combatting. One is Bertaux's: that Hölderlin, perhaps like Rimbaud, fell silent of his own accord and isolated himself in silence. The other is Sattler's: that in the Tübingen poems Hölderlin worked through, in reverse, all the forms and phases of the first half of his creative life, to finish, Sattler says, 'im schimmernden *Wohllaut* der letzten Gedichte, in wiedererlangter Kindheit [in the shimmering euphony of the last poems, in a childhood reattained].' Neither of these theories seems to me to make any sense whatsoever, and both, I think, do Hölderlin serious injustice. To say that a writer who (as is well known) fought with all his resources against mental collapse fell silent deliberately, seems to me merely insulting, and a hypothesis deriving from the falsest romanticism. And likewise to pretend that the rhyming quatrains signed by Scardanelli are in any sense, moral or aesthetic, a culmination" (David Constantine, *Friedrich Hölderlin* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988], 306).

while also continuing to write in some of the meters he adapted from ancient Greek poetry. The spheres of reference for his poetry change, too: from references to southwest Germany (Hölderlin's native soil) and ancient Greece they expand to France, the Near East, the Vatican, Poland, and the Americas; figures in the poems now include not only gods and demigods (Dionysus, Christ, Heracles) but specific historical figures (Columbus, potentially the Marquis de Lafayette, and a character from *Hyperion*, Bellarmin). While these changes result in a poetry of exceptional vividness,[4] they also present considerable difficulties as regards cohesion or occasionally even coherence.[5]

It might seem, therefore, that Hölderlin has abandoned his poetics of unification and moved on to an atomized, fragmentary, and particularized poetic world. And if we look in this poetry for unequivocal instances of the three particular tones—the lyric, the epic, and the dramatic—that Hölderlin attempts to map out in his earlier poetologies, or if we attempt to identify the specific poetic moments of each one, we will indeed be forced to conclude that the earlier poetology has been abandoned. But if we understand this kind of prescriptive, one-to-one relation between poetry and theory to be prohibited by the paradox I read as resulting from Hölderlin's anxiety over finitude, then it becomes clear that *what* Hölderlin's poetry strives for remains consistent, even as *how* his poetry undertakes its tasks changes after 1802. Indeed, the simultaneous expansion and concretion of the poetry from this period represent not a departure but an ever more rigorous attempt to fulfill the tasks of Hölderlin's earlier poetologies, and it is for this reason that I concentrate on it here. These works represent the culmination of Hölderlin's career-long struggle to create world orientations in language out of a divided subjectivity;[6] the rigor with which he pursues this program also brings it to the brink of failure.

4. See, e.g., Annette Hornbacher, "Wie ein Hund: Zum 'mythischen Vortrag' in Hölderlins Entwurf 'Das Nächste Beste,'" *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 31 (1998/99): 227; Rolf Zuberbühler, *Hölderlins Erneuerung der Sprache aus ihren etymologischen Ursprüngen* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1969), 20; and Gerhard Kurz, "Vaterländischer Gesang," in *Interpretationen: Gedichte von Friedrich Hölderlin*, ed. Gerhard Kurz (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1996), 166–85.

5. This concretion, combined with the frequently fragmentary character of Hölderlin's late work and his psychological breakdown, has resulted in readings of Hölderlin as a protomodernist shattered subject working with an aesthetic program of fragmentation. See, e.g., Werner Hamacher, "Parusie, Mauern: Mittelbarkeit und Zeitlichkeit, später Hölderlin," *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 34 (2004/5): 93–143; Roland Reuss, *"Die eigene Rede des anderen": Hölderlins "Andenken" und "Mnemosyne"* (Frankfurt a.M.: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1990); and Götz E. Hübner, "Nach Port-au-Prince: 'Andenken' als Hölderlins geschichtspoetologisches Vermächtnis," *Le Pauvre Holterling* 9 (2003): 43–54. This approach is both anachronistic and overly influenced by the biographical; while many of Hölderlin's drafts are fragmentary and unfinished, they posit and work toward a finished state indicated by the format of many of the manuscripts.

6. I am not arguing that only this subsection of Hölderlin's poetry may be read as striving to create lyric orientations that inhabit finitude; quite the contrary, throughout his career Hölderlin sees poetry as partaking in projects of cultural reform that involve—even if Hölderlin himself had not yet worked this out in detail—an engagement with the finitude of human subjectivity.

And his poetic tasks remain exceptionally ambitious. First, Hölderlin argues that successful poetry should create harmony between people (*Menschenharmonie*). Second, it is for Hölderlin only through poetic activity that the subject reaches its purpose or destiny (*Bestimmung*) as a self-divided and yet continuous entity. Third, in his view poetic representation enables human subjects to feel as well as deduce their place in a higher continuity between nature and the divine, and it unites subjects in a community that endeavors to overcome the limitations and isolation of its era. Finally, and perhaps the most difficult, all of this work (each of these tasks) must be accepted and attempted anew each time in each poem, since Hölderlin's acknowledgment of human finitude establishes that its success cannot be assured at the outset. And even if an authorial sense of success in achieving poetic closure occurs, because Hölderlin's poetic goals demand awaiting responsiveness from others (readers, hearers), even finished poetic work cannot fully banish anxiety, since there is no assurance that the poet's words will find any response (and indeed, a great part of Hölderlin's oeuvre did not in his lifetime).

As indicated by the distinction between theoretical and poetic language, as well as Hölderlin's poetic temporality in his command to the poet to "suffer that which is momentarily incomplete,"[7] poetic achievement for Hölderlin centrally involves experiences of waiting or responsiveness on several levels. The poet must be responsive to the world in its finitude, particularity, and separation from the subject, and to the finitude of particulars and their separation from and opposition to each other. He must likewise create a space for, rather than forcing, responsiveness from other minds or a larger community, as evidenced in Hölderlin's political stakes for poetry, in his adapting his poetic programs to his culture, and in his repeated use of figures of individual or cultural communication such as travel, letters, song, or conversation (*Gespräch*). And finally, the poetic rather than discursive or philosophical nature of poems involves openness or responsiveness to the reader: unlike idealism, in which the reader simply has to accept (and—less easily—comprehend) an entire system in which each part is supposed to follow from the first principles, a poem does not control every relation from its beginning to its end. Instead, the writing poet and the reading reader hold together each poem's (occasionally disparate or challenging) images, create temporal continuity between beginning and end, and are free to find, test, and accept or reject the orientations in language and to the world that suggest themselves as they orient their attentiveness to the poem. Hölderlin's thematizations of responsiveness and waiting reveal his recognition that lyric orientations cannot be successfully established once and for all, even as the desire that grounds the search for certainty bespeaks a fundamental human desire. In response he neither forces a coercive community nor gives up altogether on the possibility of shared attunement in our finite and fallible orientations.

7. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, ed. and trans. Jeremy Adler and Charlie Louth (New York: Penguin, 2009), 241.

Without a view of language that takes language and world as mutually influential in a form of life, it becomes difficult if not impossible to see how Hölderlin can ask poetry to undertake the unifying and orienting tasks he assigns to it.[8] But if human subjects learn language and the world together, along the lines of community, then the achievement of cohesion or unity within the linguistic working through of a poem poses the possibility of a radically new world orientation—for Hölderlin, unified oppositions, continuous communities, and dynamically changing but coherent worlds. This is precisely the project of revivifying culture through language (in Thoreau's terms) or the "convening on the social contract" (in Bernstein's) that I elaborated as a response to finitude that seeks acknowledgment rather than knowledge, inhabitation rather than overcoming, orientation rather than systematization.[9] Moreover, the increased concretion and particularity of the works from the years between 1802 and 1806 locate this acknowledgment ever more persistently in a finite and earthly ordinary, one whose fitness for subjectivity must constantly be rediscovered in the face of encroaching rationalism, national conflict, and modern isolation. To understand Hölderlin's poetic striving toward these goals I turn to the themes derived from but never fully realized in his poetological or theoretical texts as taking up the problems of finitude—namely, unification/continuity (*Zusammenhang*), opposition (*Entgegensetzung*), and dynamic temporality, as they develop and modulate in poetic form. These themes appear in his late poetry on both thematic and structural or formal levels (which become quite difficult to distinguish from one another) as the poems offer and explore various particular modes of inhabiting finitude.

Simply put, according to Hölderlin the completion of a poem is the creation of cohesion between the oppositions of discrete (thus opposed to one another) moments or images within the dynamic temporality that develops between the beginning and end of the poem. This process is perhaps easier to understand on the level of semantic content (rather than form or structure): poetic portrayals of active opposition occur in presentations of particular groups, landscapes, cultures, animals, and images, which often appear as separate or isolated from one another; themes of continuity, connection, or unification are portrayed through images of physical connection; the progress of a poem elaborates the dynamic temporality in which opposition and unification converge. Formally or structurally, dynamic poetic temporality relies on the opposition between individual moments and an entire work that Hölderlin elaborates, but necessarily (and by his

8. Therefore, readers who subscribe to a view of language as working only on itself because it fails to refer perfectly to the world will tend also to subscribe to the view that Hölderlin's late poetry is a poetry of fragmentation, failure, and loss that abandons his earlier poetics. This approach risks erasing the immense struggle for cohesion apparent—as I show below—even in Hölderlin's unfinished drafts.

9. See the section "Skepticism and/in the Ordinary" in chapter 1.

own lights) cannot execute, first in his journal sketches and later at great length in the overarching opposition between constancy and change in "When once the poet . . ." On a macro level of form, then, unification of or cohesion between oppositions occurs in the formal incorporation of different themes, images, or moments of a poem into an aesthetic whole; on a micro level, poetic form may separate groups or images via line breaks, or it may interrupt and isolate the cohesion of syntax via enjambment or fragmentation; that syntax itself may isolate particulars in paratactic constructions that render the relationships between them unclear.

The three poems I consider in this chapter take different approaches toward the problems of finitude, and consequently the features of continuity, opposition, and dynamic temporality appear in them in different ways. They thus offer a reasonably comprehensive picture of the most complete unfolding of problems of finitude in Hölderlin's work in his most ambitious period, and may consequently be deemed representative for this period of his oeuvre. "Blödigkeit" (Timidness), the first poem I treat, participates in the program of Hölderlin's "*Nachtgesänge*,"[10] as they foreground the lack of communal connectedness or continuity and allow isolation to persist as a preliminary call for union; "Blödkigkeit" in particular states a paradoxical call for poetic confidence based only on the lack of any assurances that could justify such confidence. The second poem I treat is a long-form draft fragment, "Das Nächste Beste" ("Whatever Is Nearest" or, more literally, "The Nearest the Best"), which seeks to integrate maximal sensory particularity into a large-scale poetic narrative; its self-imposed program of prioritizing the individual over the whole on the way to aesthetic cohesion eventually fails, leaving the poem a draft and reiterating that poetic unity and all it seeks to accomplish carry no guarantees of success. Finally, "Andenken" (Remembrance), perhaps Hölderlin's best-known work from this period, unfolds a startling number of finite oppositions that are held together by the work's strict thematic and formal symmetry; both the poem's midpoint and its final lines call for the kind of responsiveness from and to others that I read as central to Hölderlin's poetic inhabitations of finitude that yearns to exceed itself. In all three cases, I derive the terms of unification or continuity, opposition, and dynamic temporality from the images and forms of the poem being treated, unfolding them via careful description of the work before demonstrating its participation in Hölderlin's ambitious goals for poetry.[11]

10. *Nachtgesänge* is usually translated as "night songs." See, e.g., Friedrich Hölderlin, *Selected Poems and Fragments*, trans. Michael Hamburger (London: Penguin, 1994); and Hölderlin, *Selected Poems of Friedrich Hölderlin*, trans. Maxine Chernoff and Paul Hoover (Richmond, CA: Omnidawn, 2008); since the term is a neologism of Hölderlin's, I use the German *Nachtgesänge* throughout.

11. The three poems are provided in the original German with English translations directly preceding this chapter. Line numbers cited in the discussion of the poems in this chapter correspond to the German text and translations there provided.

"Blödigkeit" (Timidness)

"Blödigkeit" is one of the so-called *Nachtgesänge* written in 1803; the title (or genre designation) comes from a letter Hölderlin wrote to his publisher, Friedrich Wilmans, describing the poems being submitted; Wilmans then applied the term to the group of poems he published in 1805. In the letter, Hölderlin hints at a program for the poems (a set of nine short poems including asclepiadic and alcaic odes and poems in free rhythms[12]) as poetry written specifically for his era, understood as one in which limitation and isolation form the grounds of a call for community. The program Hölderlin hints at in his letter suggests a stance of deliberate participation in the limitations of modern culture: "I am in the middle of going through a few [*Nachtgesänge*] for your almanac. . . . It is a joy to sacrifice oneself to the reader and to enter with him into the narrow limits of our still child-like culture."[13] The ideas of boundedness ("narrow limits") and the tentativeness or timidity that might be described as childlike accurately describe both the themes and the material presentation of "Blödigkeit," as I show below; conversely, "timidity" describes the programmatic stance of the *Nachtgesänge* as a whole, in which poetic work seeks to show the isolated particulars (groups, objects, cultures) of the external world as calling forth and awaiting a community of responsiveness that has not yet arrived. Hölderlin thus acknowledges both the isolation and separation of the world as he finds it and the impossibility of undoing such isolation (and thus overcoming human finitude) once and for all.

I suggest that "Blödigkeit" and the *Nachtgesänge* as a group accept the uncertain task of creating unsponsored continuity between opposed or isolated groups, states, or objects. In doing so, the ode in particular and the *Nachtgesänge* together offer one set of responses—shaped by the features of opposition, continuity, and dynamic temporality—to the problems of finite subjectivity struggling to make sense of its own experience that I read as paradigmatic both for Hölderlin and for acknowledgment of human finitude. Poem and program undertake this task in the presentation of radically opposed states that are both held apart and mediated by poetic form, as, for example, in "Hälfte des Lebens" (Half of Life) or in the portrayal of unmediated cultural and temporal separation undermined by zeugmatic syntax in "Lebensalter" (Ages of Life). In my readings of Hölderlin's poetological texts in chapter 2, I showed his linking of poetic activity and human subjectivity to be his response to the post-Kantian form of problems of human finitude and world orientation. The striving of poetic activity toward a future unreachable cohesion between the components of the world both acknowledges the separateness that

12. Especially since it is unclear whether the poems were published in the order Hölderlin intended, I avoid the term "cycle" in referring to them. On the ordering of the poems, in particular the placement of the three in free rhythms together at the end, see Wolfram Groddeck, "*Lebensalter*," in Kurz, *Interpretationen*, 153–65.

13. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 217; MA 2:927.

motivates such striving and, in the successful instantiations and formal manifestations of both separateness and continuity of the *Nachtgesänge*, reminds an isolated modern culture that there is a unification still to be yearned for.

"Blödigkeit," the only asclepiadic ode in the *Nachtgesänge*, is in fact a heavily revised version of an earlier ode entitled "Dichtermuth" (usually translated as "The Poet's Courage"). While "Blödigkeit" seems to narrate a progression from assertive fearfulness to modest confidence, it also holds open a tension between uncertainty and destiny, skill and hesitation. The poem begins with an address, apparently from the poet to himself, then continues this address over two strophes and three rhetorical questions (in lines 1–2 and 5–8); it seems to answer those questions (or rather justify their implied answers) over the third through fifth strophes. Finally (lines 21–24), it appears to offer a concluding declaration about a group (in the first-person plural), presumably poets, that contributes its own skill to the task of aesthetic mediation between the isolated or opposing orders, including heavenly and earthly, as well as human, animal, and divine.

Because of its status as a revised version of an earlier poem, "Blödigkeit" also returns to the question of the shift in Hölderlin's poetic strategies that I raised at the opening of this chapter. Here, too, I argue that the later draft is more particular and concrete; moreover, it addresses explicitly the challenges to cohesion posed by this increased concretion and links them to the poetic task of the *Nachtgesänge* in calling attention to the divisions and isolation of Hölderlin's contemporary culture.[14] Diction changes between the two poems show that, in general, the transition from first to last versions changes descriptions of simply present affinities to expressions of cognitive work (e.g., the first line changes from "Isn't everything alive already in your blood?" to "Of the living are not many well-known to you?"—from blood

14. Walter Benjamin usefully points out key differences between "Blödigkeit" and its earlier versions in his 1916 interpretation of "Dichtermuth" and "Blödigkeit." Walter Benjamin, "Two Poems by Friedrich Hölderlin: 'The Poet's Courage' and 'Timidity,'" in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 1:18–36. With a normative valence that I accept, Benjamin differentiates between what he calls myth or the mythical (*Mythos, das Mythische*) and the mythological (*das Mythologische*). Benjamin understands the mythological as a poem's inclusion of elements from the cultural reservoir of mythologemes; the mythic refers to the intensity and indissolubility of the relations between elements within a poem, that is, to precisely the intensive connectedness between disparate or even opposing elements that I characterize using Hölderlin's vocabulary of *Zusammenhang*. Wolfram Groddeck sees this conception of myth as evidence that Benjamin did read some of Hölderlin's theoretical texts, which he could have accessed in Böhm's 1911 edition. Groddeck also points out a slippage in Benjamin's use of the term "mythic" from an unequivocally positive to a destructive concept even within the Hölderlin essay, one that he explains will ramify further in Benjamin's later essay on Goethe's *Wahlverwandschaften*. See Wolfram Groddeck, "Ästhetischer Kommentar: Anmerkungen zu Walter Benjamins Hölderlinlektüre," *Le Pauvre Holterling* 1 (1976): 20. "Dichtermuth" is, Benjamin argues, "mythological"; in "Blödigkeit," by contrast, all of the elements in the poem are fully and intensively woven into one another, making it (for Benjamin) "mythic." Benjamin elegantly points out the transition in the poems in miniature in the change of the title: *Dichtermuth* is a compound neologism of Hölderlin's, forced by necessity and derived from a false relation to the people; *Blödigkeit*, by contrast, is a word in general usage (Benjamin, "Two Poems," 24).

relation to knowledge or familiarity; the heavenly father grants "the thinking day," no longer "the joyful day" [line 17], etc.).[15] Regardless of the precise terms in which the poem's opening questions are posed (affective or cognitive, passive or active), the apparent stating of the program that justifies the poet's assurance introduces the most radical departure between versions (lines 9–20).[16]

In both versions, the third and fourth strophes present the grounds for the poet's potential achievement of continuity or cohesion between opposed or separate groups; the two strophes accomplish this presentation, however, in radically different ways. The syntax differs greatly between the two versions: in "Dichtermuth," the inversions and interjections are less prominent than those in the corresponding lines in "Blödigkeit," in which two direct objects (the heavenly and humans, *Himmlischen* and *Menschen*) are designated as alike (*gleich*) in their similarity to *ein einsam Wild* (lonely as woodland beasts, 9). The subject of the sentences, *der Gesang* (song), does not appear until the third line of the strophe, and a description of the activity of *Gesang* precedes the naming of its agent: *Gesang* leads both humans and heavenly beings toward *Einkehr* (return or refuge).[17] "Blödigkeit" uses syntax that makes the terms of comparison between the heavenly and the earthly unclear; the insistence on

15. Jochen Schmidt, *Hölderlins später Widerruf in den Oden "Chiron," "Blödigkeit" und "Ganymed"* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1978), 113. As should be obvious from my reading Hölderlin's late work using terms from (though not direct application of) his poetological texts, I disagree with Schmidt's main claim that Hölderlin's revisions of earlier texts represent a full-scale recantation (*Widerruf*) of his earlier poetics.

16. After this crucial point, "Dichtermuth" has an extra strophe, and the poems end very differently. "Dichtermuth" makes the setting sun an image of the death of the sun god, and requires submission to transience modeled by the god of mortals, culminating in praise of beautiful death.

17. See Robert André, "Hölderlins Auf-Gabe und die Ode *Blödigkeit*," in *Das Denken der Sprache und die Performanz des Literarischen um 1800*, ed. Stephen Jaeger and Stefan Willer (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2000), 63. Benjamin describes the weaving together of these groups or elements in "Blödigkeit" as "an infinite chain of series (*Reihen*)" (Benjamin, "Two Poems," 25). The idea of a row or series helps level the seemingly hierarchical relation of heavenly and earthly beings that appears in the poem (lines 9–12, 16–20, and 22–24). By using the term *Reihe* or "series," Benjamin makes a useful analogy between Hölderlin's poetic composition and the musical strategies of serialism, contemporaneous with the essay, in which the use of a twelve-tone compositional row avoids the teleological organizational structures of Western tonal harmony but does so without insisting on either sameness or unorganized multiplicity. For a discussion of Benjamin's *Reihe* as the negation of vertical hierarchies of organization, see Giovanni Scimonello, "Benjamin, Adorno und Hölderlin: Interpretation der Ode 'Dichtermuth/Blödigkeit,'" in *In Bildern Denken: Studien zur gesellschaftskritischen Funktion der Literatur*, ed. Giovanni Scimonello and Ralph Szukala (Bielefeld: Aithesis Verlag, 2008), 11–32. Scimonello also points out that Adorno takes this description of the poem and attempts to formulate a discussion of Hölderlin's late style in general in the parataxis essay (25–26). I would contend that there is nothing in the concept of parataxis, understood as next-to-ness, that means it must take on the fragmentary and rupturing connotations Adorno assigns to it in the essay, and so my adoption of the term does not conflict with my discussion of *Zusammenhang* or continuity in Hölderlin's late works. I am not, of course, suggesting any kind of influence or direct relation whatsoever between twelve-tone composition and Hölderlin; rather, Benjamin's analogy is a helpful heuristic for imagining what he, and by extension Hölderlin, could mean by nonhierarchical organization leading to intensive interpenetration of elements. I demonstrate below that the principle of organized, noncontingent proximity, an instantiation of the theme of *Zusammenhang* or continuity, structures both the form and the thematic material in the ode "Blödigkeit."

Arten ("kinds" or even "species," line 12) differentiates orders of beings, from animal to human to divine. The fourth strophe of "Blödigkeit," then, amounts to a paradox: the heavenly and humans are asserted to be alike (*gleich*) precisely insofar as they are different according to kinds (*nach Arten*).[18] Moreover, the two versions present different temporalities: in "Dichtermuth," the grounds for the poet's confidence rest on the history of poetry: ever since mortals have sung, poets' songs have brought joy to the hearts of men. In "Blödigkeit," by contrast, it remains ambiguous whether the "turning of Time" (18), in which song will lead both humans and gods toward *Einkehr*,[19] has passed, occurs in the moment of the poem's speaking, or is yet to come.

The ambiguity of both syntax and temporality complicates the poem's statement of its own task and the grounds for the poet's confidence (in lines 9–16): particularly if the crucial moment in which each of the orders is led toward homecoming has not yet arrived, the role of song (*Gesang*) in securing continuity between opposed orders that would found the poet's confidence is fundamentally unclear. In a circularity that at once seems to trap the poet in uncertainty and to tighten the relations between gods, animals, and men (which should counteract that uncertainty), the poem posits its own task or program as justification for the risk of undertaking that task. This circular self-grounding seems to explain the change in the poem's title from "Dichtermuth" to "Blödigkeit": given that the poem's assurances are grounded only in its self-risking task, timidity would be the natural standpoint from which to confront the undertaking of writing poetry.

And yet "Blödigkeit" ends with a cautious statement of poetic talent or ability, emphasizing the contribution of mortal poets to their task of bringing the heavenly (22–24). It does so, moreover, in a way that reiterates the separateness of gods and men and the role of the human poet in creating a continuity between them: the poets bring skillful, suitable, or fitting hands to their poetic task:

> Doch selber
> Bringen schikliche Hände wir.
>
> (23–24)

Hölderlin repeats the verb *bringen*, describing both what it is the poetic task to bring ("of the heavenly powers . . . one," 22, 23) and what poets themselves bring to the task ("skillful hands," 24). *Schicklichkeit* (with connotations of propriety, seemliness, and expediency) and *Geschicktheit* (adroitness, deftness, skill) bespeak an aptness or ability (in keeping with the insistence on contribution *nach Arten*, according to one's kind, in the fourth strophe) that contrasts with the modesty and uncertainty attaching to the concept of timidity. The poem thus instantiates

18. André, "Hölderlins Auf-Gabe," 64.

19. *Einkehr* is further related to *Wende* ("turning"; in line 18, "turning of time") by way of *kehren*, "to turn."

an ambiguity, tension, or openness between opposing semantic fields: the terms *Schicklichkeit* and *Geschicktheit* are semantically aligned with the contemporaneous rhetoric of perfectibility, but the poem also emphasizes the deficiency in presence of mind and confidence that are attached to *Blödigkeit*.[20]

The poem thus presents its own program as one of being ungrounded or unsponsored; it does so via tensions between confidence and timidity on both semantic and formal levels. Line 2 of the poem provides its own figure or image for the formal (both spatial and temporal) organizing capacities of poetic work. This poetic work, for which the poets' hands are later described as *schicklich* (skillful), reiterates the presence of the poets at the turning of time—the word carries connotations of being in the right place at the right time, able to take action. Further, the sense of *place* spatializes poetic capabilities, taking up the idea of *Ge*legen*heit* ("opportunity, occasion, or chance," but containing *legen*, the word for "to place or lay something down," 5) and the curious simile "On the truth don't your feet walk as [on carpets]?" (2). Hölderlin's figure of the carpet indicates the organization of truth (*Wahres*) into an aesthetic rather than systematic or hierarchical schema; "weaving" or "patterning" might be understood as a figure for what poetry can do that, according to Hölderlin, philosophy or theory cannot.[21] The unification or connection of oppositions I have read as occurring across the temporal unfolding of a poem occurs in the space of the simile; the physicality of the foot that steps onto true things (*Wahrem*) as on carpets underscores the concreteness of the figure of continuity even as the form of the ode temporalizes the idea of patterned organization and repetition.

But this creation of continuity or cohesion in the space and time of the poem is undermined by tensions within the poem's form and by the circularity in its self-describing narrative; these tensions are held open by both form and program. Particularly in the three verses I examined in detail, the structure of the asclepiadic ode is overrun by the poem's syntax:[22] repeated enjambment causes phrases to spill

20. On the historical semantics of *Blödigkeit* (timidity, timidness), see Georg Stanitzek, *Blödigkeit: Beschreibungen des Individuums im 18. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1989), 272.

21. Benjamin points to the patterned carpet as related to the principle of the arabesque as a visual representation of an infinity filled with particulars. See Benjamin, "Two Poems," 28; and Beatrice Hanssen: "Just as the Oriental ornament was consumed in and by the absolute, so the early Romantics' idea of a progressive *Universalpoesie*, Benjamin implied, held out the promise of an infinite process of completion or consummation (*Erfüllung*). . . . Yet he refused to read this endless expanse of infinitude as the reign of a syncopating, empty, mechanical time. Instead, the distance between the present and the as yet inaccessible future for him unmistakably carried messianic overtones, pointing to the however distant, yet possible return of plenitude" (Beatrice Hanssen, "'Dichtermuth' and 'Blödigkeit': Two Poems by Hölderlin Interpreted by Walter Benjamin," *MLN* 112, no. 5 [1997]: 794).

22. Hans Jürgen Scheuer points this out as well. In doing so, however, he reaches considerably outside Hölderlin and appeals to Horace's description of such forms as *disiecti membra poetae*, "the limbs of the mutilated poet," thus linking it to the earlier versions' depictions of rivers, temporal flow, and the death of the poet as a trope of poetic vulnerability centered around the mutilated body of Orpheus. Since "Blödigkeit" is the version with the most extreme enjambment and also the version that discards the stoic ending with the death of the poet, this seems to me a misguided application of a genuinely helpful insight. See Scheuer, "Verlagerung des Mythos in die Struktur: Hölderlins Bearbeitung des Orpheus-Todes in der Odenfolge 'Muth des Dichters'—'Dichtermuth'—'Blödigkeit,'" *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 45 (2001): 271–72.

over from lines into strophes, and in fact, strophes 3 to 5 are made up of a single sentence. The questions that open the poem are not answered; their being asked suggests that the questions themselves are in response to uncertainty on the part of the speaker. And the third strophe, which looks like an answer to those questions, is in fact not an assurance that the connectedness the poem asks for in the first strophe exists or is achievable. Instead, the poem's assurances are grounded only on a statement of its own program: the attempted cohesion between opposed and isolated groups that will nevertheless maintain their individual identities. The poem is thus caught between the confident placing of its regular form (which it describes in the simile of the carpet or tapestry) and its disruptive syntax, a further opposition whose poles belong together in the aesthetic whole of the poem. Semantically, timidity is *both* one pole of the programmatic ambiguity between timidity and aptness *and* the response to their conflict; it is the proper stance of a poet confining himself to the narrow limits of his culture, in which the problems of human finitude are held open.

"Blödigkeit" thus enacts (crucially, it does not simply state) the difficulty of attaining any world orientation that incorporates the finitude of the human subject and of separate particulars or kinds (*Arten*) within the kind of cohesion Hölderlin strives for in his theoretical texts; here, this cohesion is sought by the linking of oppositions within the dynamic temporality of poetic form and syntax. Hölderlin's use of form and syntax to challenge and balance each other, and his portrayal of specific figures whose relations of equality and specificity offer an unattained yet yearned-for image of belonging, together address the problems of finitude he grapples with across his career, using resources specific to poetry.[23] In the tensions between its form and its syntax and in its paradoxical call for equality according to kinds the poem stakes its own wholeness on such cohesion without advance assurances that it can be attained—indeed, the program of the *Nachtgesänge* and the poems themselves imply that the separateness of orders in fact may not be overcome. The poem thus demonstrates that the only possible grounding for continuity is the attempting of its creation—that is, the writing of poetry that takes as its task the creation of continuity between separate and opposed orders across the temporal space of a poem. The separation of different orders or kinds is not elided; instead, precisely that separation and the attempt at cohesion across poetic form serve as a preliminary call for union.

"Das Nächste Beste" (Whatever Is Nearest)

"Das Nächste Beste" reverses the approach to subjective finitude and the ensuing problems of world orientation taken by "Blödigkeit" and the *Nachtgesänge* in

23. Of course, poetry does not, as it were, do *everything*: the very shift to particularity and formal shaping deprives the poem of the assured universality and theoretical certainty desired in Hölderlin's theoretical texts and in systematic philosophy more generally; but then, this is precisely the anxious drive toward totality that produces the paradox of Hölderlin's theoretical texts and converts metaphysical finitude to an intellectual lack; that is to say, the drive toward assurances that by his own lights Hölderlin's poetry must do without.

general even as it continues to investigate those problems in formal and thematic treatments of unification/continuity, opposition, and dynamic temporality. Here, these problems appear in terms of the problems of the relation between part (or particular) and whole (or absolute). This relation is one instance of the opposition between unified cohesion and differentiated particularity that Hölderlin takes up in "When once the poet . . ." as the struggle for dynamic wholeness shared by subjectivity and poetry.[24] The poem's approach to this problem is stated explicitly in a marginal note on the third page of the draft: "Die *apriorität* des Individuellen über das Ganze" (The apriority of the individual over the whole). Like the title (in English, "The Nearest the Best"), the note seems to attribute primacy to the individual, particular or near, even suggesting that such wholeness or continuity between the particular and the absolute (between the nearest and the best) is possible only through an intensity of attention to the particular. This problem, task, or program is both thematic and formal, and unfolds within precisely the kind of dynamic temporality I read out of Hölderlin's theoretical texts. There Hölderlin explains that the varieties of active opposition I have been tracking throughout his work arise not only between each moment and its successor and predecessor but also between the identity of each individual moment and the flux of moments on the way to a whole. "Das Nächste Beste" presents at least one successful figure of how achievement of orientation to the near, next, or nearest contributes to and even creates a continuous goal or destination, one that is linked explicitly to poetic production.

But while the poem's themes and images seem to suggest a necessary relation between orientation to the particular and achievement of totality or integration, the poem's form calls this possibility into question. The problem of wholeness turns out to be symptomatic for the draft, given that it remained a disparate collection of notes, images, and longer stretches of text (in free rhythms). These fragments occupy four pages (73–76) in the so-called Homburg Folio, a notebook of finished or nearly finished poems, edited versions of earlier poems, and draft sketches.[25] The draft can be broken into two main sections,[26] but the continuation of thematic material between sections suggests that the second is not an entirely new fragment but rather a new treatment of the same or intimately related topics.[27] Because of the state of the draft, it is neither possible nor productive to incorporate every element of it into a single interpretation. Instead, I contrast the opening scene of chaos and discontinuity with Hölderlin's main figures of continuity and then follow the poem

24. See the section "Hölderlin's Theoretical Oeuvre" in chapter 2.

25. See Dieter Burdorf, *Hölderlins späte Gedichtfragmente: "Unendlicher Deutung voll"* (Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 1993), 52.

26. Sometimes separated under editorial titles as "Das Nächste Beste" (Whatever Is Nearest") and "Vom Abgrund nemlich" (From the Abyss of Course), respectively.

27. Dieter Burdorf, "Der Text als Landschaft: Eine topographische Lektüre der Seiten 73–76 des Homburger Folioheftes," in *Neue Wege zu Hölderlin*, ed. Uwe Beyer (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1994), 139.

into its images of remarkable sensory and particular intensity that nonetheless remain punctual, fulfilling the project of the apriority of the individual at the cost of aesthetic wholeness.

The poem's opening characterizes the historical moment of its writing vividly, as it describes and then criticizes the chaos (both atmospheric and linguistic) of its era into which a new event seems to erupt:

> offen die Fenster des Himmels
> Und freigelassen der Nachtgeist
>
> (1–2)

The "night spirit" (*Nachtgeist*) recalls the cultural separation and disorganization of the *Nachtgesänge*, suggesting its role as a figure of disruption or discontinuity. In a grammatical underscoring of the scene's chaos, the ambiguity of the genitive makes it unclear whether the windows are open *to* the heavens—so also vulnerable to the night spirit—or the windows *of* the heavens might be open, releasing the night spirit. In this ambiguity, the poem anticipates the physical and dynamic continuity between heaven and earth that will motivate aesthetic production later in the poem, but here dynamism and energy appear threatening: the connection between heaven and earth releases an elemental force that storms the earth. The next clause further emphasizes the disorder of the opening scene:

> Der himmelstürmende, der hat unser Land
> Beschwäzet, mit Sprachen viel, unbändigen, und
> Den Schutt gewälzet
>
> (3–5)

It portrays Babel-like confusion: a multiplicity of languages blurs into befuddling palaver. Hölderlin lists several adjectives over *unbändigen* (unruly), including *unfriedlichen* (unpeaceful), *unendlichen* (unending), and *undichtrischen* (unpoetic). The adjectives, though not equivalent, collectively condemn chaotic multiplicity as opposed to boundedness, peace, and poetry, thus conveying a multifaceted rejection of unorganized numerousness. (And Hölderlin seems to have been more decided on the stress/meter of the adjective than its content: all are stressed on the middle syllable, and he alters *undichterischen* to *undichtrischen* so that it remains four rather than five syllables.) Here, Hölderlin's critique of unbound language is illuminated by the draft situation; the draft's chaos and confusion mirror the linguistic multiplicity and perplexity it portrays as symptomatic of its era.

The subsequent clause reiterates the condemnation and highlights the arrival of a turning point or new event, with potentially political consequences: the *Nachtgeist* has stirred aimlessly through rubble until the present time. In his placement of the

break between the fifth and sixth lines, Hölderlin reiterates the breaking in of the event that began the poem on a formal level:

> Den Schutt gewälzet
> Bis diese Stunde.
>
> (5–6)

Moreover, this event has national, political, and/or geographical implications, indicated by "our land." Hölderlin depicts the consequences of a nonpoetic era for the multiple particulars that drive his program: without the binding effects of poetic speech, countries are divided, things are rubble, and language is babble. Any merging or linking of orders that would place disparate objects, words, and verses into sense-making continuity with each other (rather than heaped-up multiplicity) requires the interruption of history.

After the opening scene of chaos and discontinuity, Hölderlin introduces what will be a central figure in the poem and its primary vehicle for the portrayal of connectedness or continuity: starlings. They become an effective poetic subject for his thematizations of connections between the orders of gods, animals, and humans. The starlings in particular are introduced in the ninth and tenth lines:

> Drum wie die Staaren
> Mit Freudengeschrei
>
> (9–10)

As birds, the starlings function as figures that blur the boundaries between animals, humans, and gods: they are animals, but move within the ethereal realm of the gods in a physical topos of continuity. Their physical movement also creates a geographical continuity via their migratory route, as they trace the southwestern to northeastern European axis present in many of Hölderlin's late works. They take flight, goaded by traces of their home, just as the landscape seems to be its most hospitable:

> Sie spüren nemlich die Heimath,
> Wenn grad aus falbem Stein,
> Die Wasser silbern rieseln
> Und heilig Grün sich zeigt
> Auf feuchter Wiese der Charente
>
> (24–28)

Air and wind give the final impetus for the starlings' departure, underscoring their belonging to the ethereal world as well as the animal world:

wenn aber
Die Luft sich bahnt,
Und ihnen machet waker
Scharfwehend die Augen der Nordost, fliegen sie auf

(29–32)

Wind—itself a fluid but physical connection between geographically disparate locations—blowing from the migratory destination perhaps recalls the starlings to their aerial element and seems to initiate their sudden taking flight.

The peculiar nature of the starlings' flight justifies their role as figures of continuity that can create a harmonious community; moreover, Hölderlin uses a poetic description of that flight to introduce the theme of *Gesang*, aesthetic production enabled by the felt and enacted relation between the near/particular and the divine/absolute. Appropriately, his depiction of the starlings' flight reintroduces the title's theme of "das Nächste":

Und Ek um Eke
Das Liebere gewahrend
Denn *immer halten die sich genau an das Nächste*

(33–35; my emphasis)

The line's description of the starlings' orientation to the particular (*das Nächste*) is, as it happens, accurate, and the ornithological background helps explain the role of the starlings in the poem: starlings, unlike most other migratory birds, fly oriented to each other and to the alterations of the landscape beneath them rather than only toward the migratory goal.[28] This orientation to the particular motivates the poem's appeal to flight as a figure of poetic cohesion: unwavering focus on the nearest landscape simultaneously leads toward a distant goal or a whole journey (or, I would want to say, poem). Moreover, their orientation toward particular features that nonetheless leads toward a goal does *not* produce chaotic individuals moving randomly in multiple directions.[29] This program for aesthetic production presents, here in poetic form, Hölderlin's remarks that while subjective orientation to the absolute can produce consciousness of duty, it cannot ground harmony either within the subject or between subjects.[30] For that, an aesthetic community grounded in particularity—here represented by the starlings—is required.

28. Burdorf, *Hölderlins späte Gedichtfragmente*, 124. Whether or not Hölderlin knew that ornithology confirmed this behavior, he had ample opportunity to observe starlings as he walked the first section of their migratory route—the route described in the poem—from Bordeaux to Nürtingen in the summer of 1801. The starlings' flocking behavior (called murmuration) is visually striking, enough so that it is still occasionally reported on—with photographs—in contemporary media.

29. Burdorf, *Hölderlins späte Gedichtfragmente*, 124.

30. See letter to Carl Gock, 1 January 1799, in Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 123.

And indeed, the starlings offer a vision of orientation to the particular that enables an overarching trajectory and a cohesive community. Furthermore, it is this community based on the particular from which poetry or *Gesang* (song) emerges.[31] Here, *Nächste* as neighbor (in German, *der Nächste*) is hinted at beneath the grammatical meaning; the term *Nächste* seems initially to refer to the neighboring bird. While the article *das* denies this reading, the suggestion of the importance of the relations between individuals in a poetic space remains. Furthermore, the poem follows the prescription it derives from the starlings in its attention to the particular landscape of the South of France through which Hölderlin walked returning from Bordeaux to Nürtingen in 1802: it describes sun, rivers, trees, and inhabitants of the landscape (11–23), basing its orientation to particulars on individual perception and personal memory.

Just as Hölderlin's perceptions and memories make up the poem's images, the poem itself thematizes poetic production based on the starlings' orientation to the particular:

> Sehn sie die heiligen Wälder und die Flamme, blühendduftend
> Des Wachstums und die Wolken des Gesangs fern und athmen Othem
> Der Gesänge.
>
> (36–38)

In a masterful progression from the flight of the starlings, by way of what (initially) seem to be merely the objects they see, Hölderlin raises the gaze of the starlings and the attention of the reader from the forest floor to the leaves to the rising perfume of flowers called forth by the sun to the clouds.[32] The starlings breathe clouds that do not contain but are, themselves, song (the description never ceases to make imagistic sense: birds do fly through clouds, and would breathe them). This song emerges out of the rapid and yet full connectedness of the earthly to the heavenly as enacted in the poem in the flight of the starlings.

At this point, then, the era of chaos and multiplicity depicted in the opening sentence seems to have been overcome, as particulars are organized into a pattern

31. Gerhard Kurz points out that the word *Freudengeschrei* (shouts of joy) links the draft to Hölderlin's description of the *Frohlokken vaterländischer Gesang* (Adler and Louth translate—unjustifiably—"the high and pure rejoicing of poems on our times"; Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 217. There is no indication that Hölderlin thinks he or anyone in his era has successfully written such poetry. A better translation would be "rejoicing of patriotic or fatherlandic song.") The term *Frohlokken* (rejoicing) in the Luther Bible translation refers to explicitly vocally expressed joy. Conversely, the shrieking of the starlings seems to render them unfit for the melodiousness implied by *Gesang*; perhaps precisely the fact that they seem less effortless and beautiful in their singing makes them an appropriate figure for modern poetic production.

32. I have made "flame" far too benign in glossing it as plumes of rising scents; throughout the draft there is a sense of sunlight being threatening or too intense. Hölderlin may have derived the image from watching the starlings: in flight, a swarm of starlings looks like clouds or plumes of smoke, indicating the (imagined) presence of "flames" beneath them.

of flight or song. Having used his depiction of the starlings' migration to show that they have privileged access to *Gesang* by virtue of their form of life, Hölderlin links their perceptions in flight to human perception or recognition: "Menschlich ist / Das Erkenntniß" (38–39; "It's human / To have perceptions"). Although the translation interprets the line as a general remark about having perceptions in the plural, Hölderlin uses the singular, thus suggesting the additional possibility that *this* perception, that is, of the starlings' flight, is observed by humans. Moreover, Hölderlin places the human specifically between gods (the heavenly) and birds as he qualifies the human location of this recognition:

> Aber die Himmlischen
> Auch haben solches mit sich
>
> (39–40)

Not only does the song through which the starlings move serve as an aesthetic mediation between gods, animals, and men; the gods also seem to share attributes of human perception. Gods, animals, and humans are placed in their proper relation by way of the poetic portrayal of the migration of individuals (starlings) focused on the particular (in the landscape) who nevertheless form a community and take part in an overarching trajectory.

This depiction seems more hierarchical than that in "Blödigkeit," for example—first animals, then humans in the middle, and then gods in heaven—but precisely the physical form of connectivity Hölderlin derives from the starlings' flight undermines these clear distinctions: seen by humans, starlings are animals that move in the sphere of the heavenly. Hölderlin's depiction of an animal's physical process—the migration of birds—allows him to move fluidly between the life forms he presents in his derivations of the poetic project of song in a nonabstracted version of continuity (*Zusammenhang*).[33] Like "Blödigkeit," "Das Nächste Beste" thematizes and struggles with the unification of opposed orders or groups, but whereas the former posits the absence of connection between gods, animals, and humans as a preliminary call for union, "Das Nächste Beste" uses depictions of physical movement to effect poetic jointure of orders, if only for the moment of the poem.

While the starlings seem to offer the possibility of at least a tenuous version of this continuity between opposed groups and orders, unified within aesthetic production, the comparison of human nations to a divided earth that immediately follows the description of their flight makes clear that such merging cannot guarantee universal wholeness or cohesion, and the subsequent images of the poem undergo

33. Again, poetry's ability to fill in the abstract idea of connection (*Zusammenhang*) with specific content whose attributes change or deepen the notion of continuity is Hölderlin's reason for turning to poetry rather than to the abstractions of theory or philosophy.

the chaotic fracturing the poem's opening portrays.[34] In what appears to be an effort to secure the poem's connection between its particular descriptions and a divine or absolute, Hölderlin shifts abruptly at the bottom of the poem's second page (page 74 in the notebook) from (particular) landscape description to a link between human work and an eternal father:

> Das Tagwerk aber bleibt,
> Der Erde Vergessenheit,
> Wahrheit schenkt aber dazu
> Den Athmenden
> Der ewige Vater.
>
> (68–72)

Several factors, however, render this connection ambivalent or uncertain. "The eternal father" is nominative, and as such the source of the gift to *Den Athmenden* (literally, "the breathing ones"; here presumably, "mortals") The gift, *Wahrheit* (truth), locates the iterative *Tagwerk* (daily work) in relation to the eternal father, setting it between the material being of the earth and the heavenly father. But the precipitousness with which the connection is made departs radically from the specificity and particularity of the earlier images (for example, the description of the starlings' flight occupies thirty lines; the connection to the heavenly father only five). Likewise, the physical tropes of connectedness (represented earlier by depictions of migration and by dynamic verbs and adjectives) disappear. The particularity demanded by the poem's title and internal program drops out as the draft merely asserts a relation to "the eternal father." Hölderlin's uncertainty about that relation emerges as he tries out the words three times, in three different places, in the draft (see fig. 1). This leap to the divine, then, interrupts and undermines the particularized continuity appearing in the earlier moments of the draft. Hölderlin seems to attempt to assure poetic success by imposing a posited end point distinct from the previous images and strategies of the poem.

The uncertainty of this attempt appears to motivate the abandonment of the first version of the draft's material and to prompt a shift in strategy on the next page (page 75 in the notebook). And indeed, the page opens with the remark I cited at the outset of my reading: "Die *apriorität* des Individuellen über das Ganze" (The apriority of the individual over the whole). Appropriately, it exhibits a remarkable

34. The lines seem to imply that before, in some other time, merely the image of the starlings would have been enough, whereas now something additional is required: "Sonst in Zeiten / Des Geheimnisses hätt ich, als von Natur, gesagt, / Sie kommen, in Deutschland. Jezt aber, weil, wie die See / Die Erd ist und die Länder, Männern gleich, die nicht / Vorüber gehen können, einander, untereinander / Sich schelten fast, so sag ich." (42–47; "But at those times / [Of mystery I should, as though from nature, have said,] 'They are coming in Germany.' / 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.")

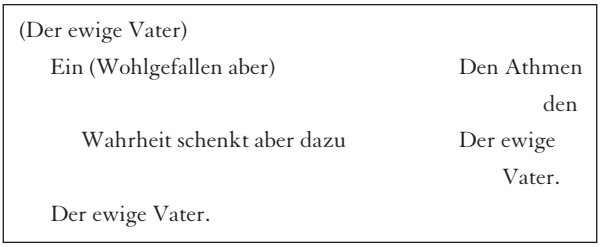
(Der ewige Vater)
Ein (Wohlgefallen aber) Den Athmen
den
Wahrheit schenkt aber dazu Der ewige
Vater.
Der ewige Vater.

Figure 1. Der ewige Vater/The eternal father. From FHA Suppl. III Beil., 100.

intensity of sensory description as the themes of continuity, dynamic vertical movement, revolution, landscapes, and geographic particularity recur in more stubbornly terrestrial form. The poem's second beginning, like its first, depicts a moment of decision and departure:

> Vom Abgrund nemlich haben
> Wir angefangen und gegangen
>
> (4–5)

Here, however, those departing are a poetic "we," not the unspecified and ethereal figure of the night spirit. And in contrast to the first version's figure of poetry, the starlings, the second attempt presents an entirely earthly animal:

> Bald aber wird, wie ein Hund, umgehn
> In der Hizze meine Stimme auf den Gassen der Gärten
> In denen wohnen Menschen
> In Frankreich
>
> (12–15)

The locus of the comparison between a subjective (potentially poetic voice) and a dog is somewhat opaque; if the dog is understood not as a watchdog or domesticated but as feral or semidomesticated, it might function as a figure of betweenness, standing for animality and the wild or uncultivated in the middle of culture.[35] A figure of liminality, then, replaces the figure of ethereal mediation; the aesthetic notion of song (*Gesang*) does not appear at this stage in the draft; moreover, the potential for community in the starlings' flight and the mediation between orders that followed on the mention of song are absent here. Instead, Hölderlin compares a (first-person possessive) poetic voice to an (animal) figure both within and outside

35. Hornbacher, "Wie ein Hund," 230–31.

culture whose reception within that culture is uncertain and whose connection to the divine has disappeared.

Hölderlin further underscores the terrestrial sphere of the second part of the draft by introducing specific (and *written*) geographical names that replace the aerial trajectory completed by the starlings:

> In denen wohnen Menschen
> In Frankreich.
>
> Frankfurt aber
>
> (15–17)

The text moves along the same axis as before, from southwest to northeast, but here the aerial tracing of the trajectory in the birds' flight is replaced by a material/lexical jointure. Instead of a flight pattern, the written names of the two locations instantiate the geographical shift along purely lexical lines, from Frank*reich* (France) to Frank*furt*. The connective work performed earlier by an avian figure suspended between terrestrial and ethereal moves inside the text of the poem itself. The connection between the two locations is created only by way of what Hölderlin calls solid letters that both bind the two places together and differentiate them.[36] Hölderlin's device foregrounds the necessarily double character of language as both referential and material, but the shift feels abrupt and oddly specific.[37]

This specificity gives rise to several sets of extraordinarily vivid imagery, whose precision fails to coalesce into any series, group, or process (physical or narrative); the draft's attempts to fulfill the program of the primacy of the individual over

36. Hölderlin's command to attend to *die veste Buchstabe* (the solid letter; "Patmos," first version, line 225; MA 1:453) is well known; less so a letter in which he dwells on the pleasing solidity (*Veste*) of the raw printing of his Sophocles translations: "I almost preferred the raw print, probably because in this typography the traits which mark the solid aspect of the letters [*welche an den Buchstaben das Veste anzeigen*] hold their own so well in relation to the modifying traits, and this was even more noticeable in the raw print than in the filed or polished version" (Hölderlin to Friedrich Wilmans, 2 April 1804, in Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 219; MA 2:929).

37. Frankfurt also appears in one of the more mystifying metaphors in the poem. The metaphor combines classical Greek imagery with landscape figures and potentially biographical or political significances: "Frankfurt aber, neues zu sagen, nach der Gestalt, die / Abdruk ist der Natur / Des Menschen nemlich, ist der Nabel / Dieser Erde." (18–21; "Frankfurt, rather, for to speak of nature / Is to take its shape, human nature, I mean / [Navel] of this earth.") Hölderlin interweaves human and natural forms to the extent that they become extremely difficult to unravel. He concretizes the layering of landscapes and bodies in a single point, Frankfurt as the earth's navel—a metaphor usually applied to the oracle at Delphi. Given that Frankfurt is where Hölderlin met and fell in love with Susette Gontard, and where she died, this is perhaps the reason for an otherwise unremarkable European city's affiliation with the holy site of Apollo. It has also been argued that the metaphor derived from contemporary visual culture: Bennholdt-Thomsen and Guzzoni have uncovered maps of Europe in which the continent was a woman with Germany as stomach, although they could not determine that there was such a map in any library Hölderlin used. See Anke Bennholdt-Thomsen and Alfredo Guzzoni, *Analecta Hölderliana I: Zur Hermetik des Spätwerks* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1999).

the whole founders on the sheer vividness and multiplicity of sensory particulars. After the abrupt shift from Frank*reich* to Frank*furt* the poem juxtaposes the image of berries on branches over a spring with an evocation of the South of France.[38] In the lines

> Bis zu Schmerzen aber der Nase steigt
> Citronengeruch auf und von dem Oel aus der Provence
>
> (34–35)

the sensory (olfactory) presence of southern France seems to erupt into southwestern Germany, perhaps an eruption of the speaker's memory into his present. The juxtaposed images are not mediated or explained by any statement of memory, however, or by any connective figure; instead, the draft shuttles back and forth between France ("the region of Gascony," 34) and Germany once more as images of grapes and meat (perhaps the material version of Hölderlin's earlier feasts or festivals as figures of community), God and *Schicksal* (fate, destiny), and light refracted through a crystal heart are scattered across the page (see fig. 2). At the end of the draft, then, the vivid sensory particularity of the images—themselves in keeping with Hölderlin's demand for the "apriority of the individual"—precludes the production of a poetic whole. The poem's images are juxtaposed against one another without mediation; the poem's form does not hold together the disparate moments or images to create an aesthetic whole—indeed, as the image shows, the poem's form is overrun by single images on unconnected lines.

But the struggle to attain continuity or cohesion in "Das Nächste Beste" is not exclusively a problem of linking singular and potentially opposing moments, nor is it merely a matter of abstract oppositions subsumed in theoretical syntheses. Concerns about or portrayals of continuity, unification, cohesion, or connectedness also occur on imagistic, thematic, and structural levels. These movements represent the kind of *Zusammenhang* (cohesion or continuity) I read out of Hölderlin's theoretical texts, imbued with particular or individual content enabled by poetic rather than theoretical language. As is evident in the depictions of starlings, landscapes, and cultures, Hölderlin dwells on images of particular landscapes, and animals along with their activities of opening, flowing, dancing,

38. "Ein wilder Hügel aber stehet über dem Abhang / Meiner Gärten. Kirschenbäume. Scharfer Othem aber wehet / 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." (23–29; "An overgrown hill hangs above / My gardens. Cherry trees. But a sharp breath / 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.") The spring is linked, as it will be in "Andenken," to an intense coalescence of potentiality in the line "Allda bin ich / Alles miteinander" (25–26; "And there I am / All things at once").

Längst auferziehen (und) der Mond und
Und Natürlichkeit Dankbarkeit **Schiksaal**
Und Gott, [(i)eu]ch aber,
Dankbarkeit mir die Gasgognischen Lande **gebraten Fleisch**
Gezähmet und genährt
Gegeben,(,) (erzogen) aber, noch zu sehen, ha(ben)t mich **der T[afel] und**
(Die)? Rappierlust (und des Festtags) (braune)? Trauben, **braune**
(und) (mich) leset o x
Untrügbarer
Ihr Blüthen (von Deutschland)?, o mein Herz wird d
Krystal[l] an dem
Das Licht sich prüfet weñ [So] v[o]n D[eu]tschland

Figure 2. Image scattering. From FHA Suppl. III Beil., 100.

going, flying, bending, and so on. As a theme, continuity between or unification of oppositions occurs in portrayals of, for example, the unification of differences, traversal of geographical or cultural spaces, and liminal or boundary sites such as thresholds or coastlines. As a structure, this connectedness appears in Hölderlin's blending of the poem's different themes into one another as opposed or disparate orders merge throughout the poem. Gods, humans, and animals are mentioned in rapid succession; generalized descriptions of sweeping geographical scope blend with precise descriptions of single landscapes as distant locations collapse into each other; landscapes merge with anatomy; beginning and ending combine as the time of the poem's writing takes up the dynamic temporality that shapes it on a thematic level.

These structural, thematic, and imagistic versions of cohesion exemplify Hölderlin's experiments with lyric poetry as a mode of world orientation that does not elide individual particularity in the search for an absolute and permanent orientation, but rather struggles to use poetic language to link finite elements into a cohesive whole. The draft explicitly casts the tension between atomized opposition and continuity as a problem of part/whole relations; in doing so, it reveals the ways in which continuity emerges not merely as a thematic concept but as a formal principle striven for but not achieved in a draft of the magnitude of "Das Nächste Beste." And the draft is in some sense a performance of the worries the *Nachtgesänge* in general and "Blödigkeit" in particular express: the grounding of continuity and community on poetic activity that has nothing but itself to assure cohesion may always fail.

"Andenken" (Remembrance)

Like "Blödigkeit" and "Das Nächste Beste," "Andenken" poses several problems for interpretation. In particular, it seems to integrate personal memories from Hölderlin's time as a house tutor in Bordeaux with universalizing and normative statements about poetry's tasks without any explanation of their relation. The poem thus forces the question of how individualized and subjective experience might or might not fit with statements about what is "good" and "not good" (in the third strophe) and apparent maxims for poetic production such as the final line of the poem: "Was bleibet aber, stiften die Dichter" (59; "But what is lasting the poets provide"). Interpretations of these seemingly universal statements, however, remain curiously bifurcated. One line of interpretation reads the poem as a successful coalescence of personal memory into timeless poetic maxim.[39] The other, conversely, interprets it as a lament for the failure of language and expressivity, marked throughout by death and absence.[40] This bifurcation is the second problem posed for interpreters standing at the end of a long tradition of twentieth-century scholarship: what, in the poem itself, has led readers to disagree in this way? And finally, perhaps because of the interrelation between personal memory and universal maxim, the poem has almost invariably been read as programmatic, thematizing the role of the poet and poetry in relation to other forms of life. In particular, the poem is often read as presenting the task of poets in contrast to an intersubjective vision of love and a heroic or active depiction of seafaring.

At least some of these perplexities are accounted for by understanding "Andenken" as taking a third approach to the holding open of the problems of finitude, with which Hölderlin is engaged from early in his career. Within the poem, precisely the kinds of oppositional structures in which finite particulars balance one another are held together within a strictly symmetrical form. The integration of personal memory and seemingly universal maxim bespeaks the desire to transcend individual finitude without abandoning the particular and is itself an overarching opposition subsumed within the dynamic temporality of the poem's form. And the bifurcation of interpretations may derive from the oppositional nature of the images, as readers attend either to the images of cohesion and unity or to those of finitude and absence that are woven together across the poem. Finally, understanding the oppositional structures that characterize Hölderlin's work as themselves always

39. Its proponents include, for all their differences, Martin Heidegger (*Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* [Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1951]), Dieter Henrich (*The Course of Remembrance and Other Essays on Hölderlin* [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997]), and Hans-Georg Gadamer ("Anmerkung zu Hölderlins 'Andenken,'" in Beyer, *Neue Wege zu Hölderlin*, 143–52).

40. Advanced most directly by Reuss, *Hölderlins "Andenken" und "Mnemosyne"*; and Cyrus Hamlin, "Die Poetik des Gedächtnisses: Aus einem Gespräch über Hölderlins 'Andenken,'" *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 24 (1984/85): 119–38; and in line with Adorno's reading of Hölderlin's oeuvre as a whole; see Theodor Adorno, "Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins," in *Gesammelte Schriften in 20 Bänden* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2003), 11:447–94.

already seeking unification enables a reading of the poem's task that does not suggest that poets supersede love and seafaring in producing lasting works, but rather requests and waits for responsiveness or *Gespräch* (conversation) with others, even when none may be forthcoming.

Even at the level of thematic summary the poem's form emerges as an instantiation of the cohesion of oppositions within a dynamic temporality. An overarching opposition between the first two and the last two strophes creates thematic and formal symmetry around the midpoint of the third strophe. The first two strophes depict an idyllic landscape (in which natural and cultural features merge in tropes like gardens and woods) as the place of social ritual (*Feiertage*, "holidays"); that ritual is, moreover, loosely gendered feminine: *braunen Frauen* (brown women, 18) are the human figures located in the landscape. The final two strophes, in contrast, begin with an acknowledgment of absence in the question "Wo aber sind die Freunde?" (37; "But where are the friends?") and describe a (male-gendered) life of seafaring, war, and deprivation. This overarching opposition is complicated, however, by the introduction of smaller-scale oppositions between strophes 1 and 2, 4 and 5, and within individual verses and even lines. So, for example, the second strophe differentiates itself from the first in that it portrays its own speech as memory, suggesting that the plenitude of the strophe's images is past, not (as it appears in the first strophe) present; conversely, the fifth strophe's thematization of departure returns to the description of the Bordelaise landscape and figures of mariners that opened the poem, thus differentiating itself from the fourth strophe even as it links itself to the first.

Within its place in the oppositional structures of the entire poem, the first strophe unfolds thematic oppositions and figures of continuity (see fig. 3). It introduces four main figurations of opposition, many of which will recur throughout the poem: between the speaker and the mariners (3–4), between the sea and the land (8), between the river and the brook (9, 10), and between oaks and poplars (12). Its first image, however, presents a physical instantiation of connection or continuity: the northeast wind draws a physical (atmospheric) connection between disparate geographical locations and between the poetic voice and a separate group, "mariners," who are introduced in the fourth line. Hölderlin makes use of the inherently double nature of wind designations: the wind blows *from* the northeast and *to* the south and west, in this case creating a trajectory that extends from Germany to Bordeaux to the New World and joining the significant locations of the poem in a single continuity.[41] In doing so, it introduces the marine theme that will appear throughout and, in its granting of

41. Hölderlin revises "India" to "Indians" in the last verse, making the line dual-directional, but Bordeaux was primarily a port for transatlantic trade. See Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, "Auch die Stege sind Holzwege," *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 26 (1988/89): 202–23. Nonetheless, the potential eastward directionality remains: the northeast wind was called the Grego or Greek wind in Bordeaux, and *Indiern* could refer to the inhabitants of eastern as well as western India.

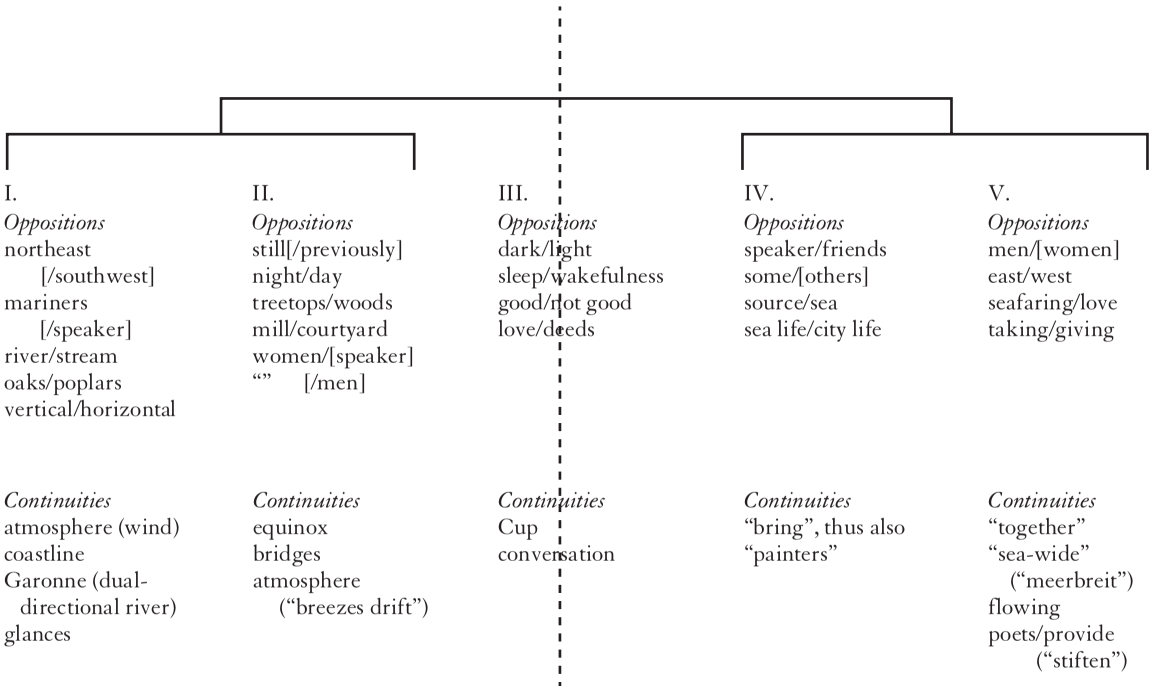

Figure 3. Map of oppositions in “Andenken.”

feurigen Geist
Und gute Fahrt

(3–4)

to the mariners, functionalizes the poetic topos of inspiration to a geographical (or better, meteorological) movement and a connection—by way of the communicative greeting—between the poet and the mariners.[42]

The first strophe is likewise characterized by extensive use of the modal particle *aber* in figures of both opposition and continuity, particularly in images that balance stasis against vertical and horizontal movement, themselves opposed to structural forms of connectedness or continuity. The northeast wind also links the speaker to the surrounding landscape in the command

Geh aber nun und grüße
Die schöne Garonne

(5–6)

The command uses *aber* (but, though) to direct the link between each of the poem's components, introducing the idyllic description of Bordeaux that closes the strophe. This description involves repeated figures of horizontal and vertical movement and stasis (again using *aber* in a context of mediated opposition rather than direct contradiction). Thus the opposition between sea and land is blurred by the city's location on the coastline, itself a figure of betweenness. The gardens, too, reflect the city's status as a cultural site intimately bound to its natural landscape in a portrayal of continuity via semantic content.[43] And the spatially opposed trees and bodies of water are both held apart and linked by repeated horizontal and vertical motion and stasis: the brook falls (vertical, moving) into the flowing river (horizontal, moving); the steep banks (vertical, static) are crossed by the bridges (horizontal, static),[44] over which stretch the glances (horizontal, moving in the verb hin*schauen*, "to look *out*") of trees (vertical, static).

In counterpoint to the first strophe, the second begins by characterizing its speech as memory, "Noch denket das mir wohl" (13; "Still well I remember this"). In doing so, the line differentiates the first two strophes; it also underscores the importance of individual memory in poetic practice. Furthermore, the second strophe extends the first strophe's figures of opposition and continuity (thus linking as

42. See Thomas Poiss, *Momente der Einheit: Interpretationen zu Pindars Epinikion und Hölderlins "Andenken"* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1993), 200.

43. Henrich cites several contemporaneous descriptions of the city as a cultural site blessed by nature (Henrich, *Course of Remembrance*, 172–77).

44. For *Steg* as "bridge," and not *Steig* (path) or even *Bürgersteig* (pavement/sidewalk) as per Henrich, see Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, "Abschied von Andenken: Erörtern heißt hier verortern," *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 35 (2006/7): 227–51.

well as opposing the two strophes). The verbs and adjectives of the second line of the second strophe take up the first strophe's vertical and horizontal instantiations of physical continuity in the stretching and bending (underscored by the repeated *ei* sounds in *breite* [broad] and *neiget* [bends]) of the (natural) elm tree inclining to the (cultural) mill and courtyard, enclosing a (natural) fig tree (that repeats the *ei* sound) and is, furthermore, both linked with and opposed to the elm by the particle *aber*. While the strophe references the opposed times of night and day, it immediately undoes that opposition as the equinox joins them:

> Zur Märzenzeit,
> Wenn gleich ist Nacht und Tag
>
> (20–21)

In the equinox, the trajectory of the sun seems to be suspended in equivalence by the word *gleich*. The double-directional wind in the first line, too, is suspended by the end of the second strophe as *einwiegende Lüfte* (lulling breezes, 24) flow over *langsamen Stegen* (slow footpaths or bridges, 22), themselves a figure of connectedness between the two sides of streams or rivers. And finally, the women introduced in line 18 stand in contrast to the speaker (the designation *braun* seems to mark them as ethnically other as well) and to the mariners of the first and fifth strophes. The structure of balanced, suspended, and merging oppositions I traced on the level of thematic summary, then, also enters into the individual images and lines of the poem.

The second group of two strophes (the fourth and fifth) stands in contrast to the first two strophes even as it continues the presentations of internal and overarching oppositions that characterized the first two-strophe grouping. In particular, distinctions or oppositions emerge between social groups and individuals, with letters presented as a potential figure of continuity or connection as communication. The fourth strophe begins with the awareness of absence:

> Wo aber sind die Freunde? Bellarmin
> Mit dem Gefährten?
>
> (37–38)

The question reveals the speaker's isolation and opposes him to the group *Freunde*. But the figure of Bellarmin introduces the possibility of attenuated communicative exchange: in Hölderlin's novel *Hyperion*, Bellarmin is the recipient of Hyperion's letters. Letters mediate between presence and absence: their arrival is supposed to elide the distance between reader and writer, but their being written insists on the need for a material vessel for communicative exchange. They might thus serve as a medial figuration of the kind of continuity that I have been reading throughout; the poem, however, does not insist on this connection, as it makes no explicit

reference to letters or writing. Instead, a new group, or perhaps subset of the previous groups, emerges in the designation *Mancher* (some, 38). The group is vague enough that it could encompass mariners, who fear to go to the source where poets do not, or vice versa; some poets and some mariners could be opposed to others, who do or do not shy away from the source, and so on. In every case, the group's *Scheue* (shyness, 39) problematizes its relation to a source or spring (line 39); the spring itself seems to stand in an oppositional relation to the sea (line 41; perhaps also to the rivers in strophes 1 and 5).

The scene at the end of the fourth strophe stands in sharp contrast to the end of the second, supporting the poem's thematic symmetry of oppositions: the earlier visions of communal celebration oppose the fourth stanza's absence of holiday ritual, even as those rituals are present to and as memory; tropes of movement, this time not horizontal or vertical but dual-directional, also contribute to the final strophe's oppositional themes and structures. The memory of these rituals (down to the repetition of *Feiertage*, "holidays," 47) in their absence initiates the poem's transition to the beginning of the fifth strophe, which seems to answer the questions posed earlier (lines 37 and 38). Even the apparent answer to the question "But where are the friends?" (37) contains the oppositions that have characterized virtually every image and structure of the poem. Hölderlin altered

> Nun aber sind zu Indiern
> Die Männer gegangen
>
> (49–50)

from *zu Indien* (to India) in the draft manuscript, thus changing the line's direction from unequivocally eastern (to India) to eastern or western and enclosing the opposition between east and west in a single word: *Indiern* can refer to the inhabitants of the East or West Indies.[45]

Tropes of movement combine with the themes of landscape descriptions and of bodies of water that appeared in all of the previous strophes, completing the weaving together of oppositions within this theme. The western movement extends the motion of the poem's opening; its movement toward the sinking sun and out past the *Abendland* (land of the evening/the West) connotes the ending that the poem attributes to the rivers that flow into the sea. The adjective *meerbreit* (wide as the sea, 55) collapses the river/sea distinction derived from the structural parallel between the first and fourth strophes; further, *ausgehet* (sweeps out, 56) can refer both

45. Columbus, a mariner who sailed west to go east, also occupied Hölderlin's attention; see the late draft "Kolomb." The consequences of Columbus's journey and the history of colonialism almost unavoidably contaminate this image, but Hölderlin emphasizes the potential for cultural renewal by contact with the foreign or strange over the prospect of foreign wealth or national (economic) enrichment.

to end and to origin.[46] Between the Indies and the flowing of the river into the sea Hölderlin places topographical details of the Bordelaise landscape that repeat the vertical and horizontal dynamism of the previous strophes. Vertical movement, in the elevation of the *luftigen Spitz* (airy peak, 51),[47] in the height of the vineyards,[48] and especially by way of the strong downward motion of *herab* (down, 52), broadens into the horizontal movement of the joined rivers flowing into the sea. In the figure of joined rivers merging with the sea (lines 52–56), the poem creates a dynamic horizontal and vertical flow from which Hölderlin can then develop the most directly stated double movement of the poem:

> Es nehmet aber
> Und giebt Gedächtniß die See
>
> (56–57)

The image makes intuitive visual sense: the tides of the sea take and give; seafarers depart and return. But the memory that it takes and gives both continues and complicates the metaphysical connotations of bodies of water that inhere around source and sea in the fourth strophe. The distinction between source and sea, beginning and ending, dissolves completely in the linking of love, seafaring, and memory.

Most readings postulate love and the sea as alike in being portrayed as inconstant in relation to memory;[49] poets supersede love and seafaring because poets are able to create work that persists beyond the particulars it subsumes.[50] Contra this reading, I contend that the mediated oppositions within the poem insist on a more complicated relation between love, seafaring, and poetry, as opposed to but dependent upon each other. Both love and seafaring are finite; they invoke both presence and absence or loss; both involve encounters with and waiting for responsiveness from others. I have been arguing throughout that Hölderlin's understanding of poetry that unfolds within but yearns beyond human finitude takes up such stances of waiting and responsiveness. Moreover, Hölderlin's weaving together of opposing and ending yet continuous moments across the temporality of a poem precludes the subsumption of

46. Poiss, *Momente der Einheit*, 210.

47. The *luftigen Spitz* recalls the wind of the first strophe and the *breiten Gipfel* (broad peaks) of the second.

48. The vineyards link the fifth strophe to the cup of wine in the third.

49. See, e.g., Poiss, *Momente der Einheit*, 211–12; and Henrich, *Course of Remembrance*, 208–9.

50. Several readers further identify the three terms ("sea," "love," and "poets") with the three tones of "When once the poet . . ." as heroic/tragic, naive/epic, and ideal/lyric, respectively; they contend that the poem's ending reveals the lyric tone as paramount. See, e.g., Poiss, *Momente der Einheit*; Jochen Schmidt, *Hölderlins letzte Hymnen: "Andenken" und "Mnemosyne"* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1970); and Michael Franz, "Hölderlins Gedicht 'Andenken,'" in *Friedrich Hölderlin*, special issue, *Text + Kritik*, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Andreas Döhler (Munich: e:t+k, 1996), 195–212. As I argued in chapter 2, this reading is inconsistent with the insistence on continuity and change, merging and difference, in Hölderlin's poetology.

two elements by the third, as does his use of *und* (and) as well as the complicated role played by the modal particle *aber* (but, though) throughout the poem. The unique import of his poetics derives from its presentation of the self-transgressive nature of every individual moment (in each tone) that joins into a whole only across the progress of a poetic work. "Andenken" is exemplary in its creation of particular oppositions not subsumed but sustained and held together by the poem's continuous form.

The third strophe, at the poem's midpoint, offers the highest concentration of balanced oppositions and thus at once the greatest challenge to continuity or cohesion and the most appropriate place for its instantiation. In the first image of the strophe, the oppositional structure coalesces into a single, oxymoronic phrase:

> Es reiche aber,
> Des dunkeln Lichtes voll
> Mir einer den duftenden Becher
>
> (25–27)

Dark light echoes the suspended time of the equinox (described in line 21 as the equality between night and day) and expands into a multiplicity of significances. It refers to Bordeaux wine;[51] wine links the cup to the Eucharist (a ritual that anticipated loss and was repeated to transubstantiate absence to presence); dark light is a Neoplatonic formula for God; the divinity in the image might also be pre-Christian, as it recalls Hölderlin's doubly constituted Dionysian tropes. These structural, imagistic, and allegorical levels flow into the liquid of the wine itself, which links each of them to the semantics of fluidity whose oppositions (brook/river/sea/source) shape the poem. Finally, the effects of wine as both intoxicating and soporific create a further internal opposition and begin the contrast between the idyllic tropes of the first strophes and representations of absence and death in the last two.[52]

The third strophe's abrupt contrasts further begin to unfold a notion of the kind of poetic activity proposed by the final line, one that requires communication with the finitude of subjective lives as expressed in both love and seafaring. The paradoxical image of "dark light" introduces the most striking opposition in the poem, between *gut* and *nicht gut* ("good" and "not good"), as well as an anticipation of the final triad of love, seafaring, and poetry. Slumber *unter Schatten* can describe sleep in the shade, but shades refer also to the souls of the dead, and the proliferation of *s* and *g* sounds (*Schatten, Schlummer, gut, sterblichen Gedanken, gut, Gespräch* [shadows, slumber, good, mortal thoughts, good, conversation]) hints at the loss of Hölderlin's steadfastly preserved love, Susette Gontard.[53] The opposition between

51. Henrich, *Course of Remembrance*, 158.

52. See Poiss, *Momente der Einheit*, 204.

53. For a brief treatment of Hölderlin's biography, see the section "Hölderlin's Context and His Cultural Critique" in chapter 2.

Nicht ist es gut and *Doch gut / Ist* ("It is not good," 30; and "But good / Is," 32–33) contrasts the poem's rejection of mortal thoughts—thoughts of death, but also the thoughts of mortals, that is, finite, human thought—with an anticipation of the final triad (sea, love, poets). Love appears directly, and the *Thaten, welche geschehen* (And deeds that have occurred, 36) recall (and anticipate) the active seeking of the mariners; the communicative exchange of *Gespräch* (conversation, "converse") hints at the weaving of experience into poetic activity. Hölderlin uses *doch* rather than *aber* to create a strong opposition between mortal thoughts—with the potentially infinite expansions of love, poetry, and seafaring. With the use of the additive conjunction *und*, the relation between the three emerges: without love and without deeds, there can *be* no *Gespräch*.

The poets' activity (*stiften*) in the final line thus requires the vivid attention to the particulars of lived life that Hölderlin explicates as a poetological principle in "When once the poet . . ." and works out in unfinished and inverse versions in "Das Nächste Beste" and "Blödigkeit." In "Andenken," he achieves a fully integrated, continuous, and cohesive presentation of finite particulars that does not fall into an *Atomenreihe* (series of atoms) of images. This achievement, understood in the terms of Hölderlin's poetology that I read as accepting the task of keeping the arguments of human finitude open, takes place within the dynamic unfolding the poem's form: oppositions stretch from images within lines to contrasting lines to balanced verses around the center of fluid imagery that holds together not only those oppositions but their resonances within itself. The image of dark light does not elide the opposing forces of the poem any more than acknowledgment of finitude overcomes the delimitedness of the human subject. Just as the placing of human subjectivity between nature and freedom is a continuing, ungrounded process, the "missing" final line of the poem (the final strophe has only eleven lines, in contrast to the other strophes' twelve) prompts the reader to return to the beginning, filling in the space with the *Andenken* that is the poem itself.

These three poems, then, offer three different but related modes of world orientation that acknowledge both the striving of the human subject for unities that would take it beyond isolated individuality and also the impossibility of certainty in attaining such unification. "Blödigkeit" unfolds a poetic program of tentative confidence, in which the poet's task of weaving together the opposing and disparate orders of gods, humans, and animals in order to reach past the finitude of individual subjects is vouchsafed by nothing other than the undertaking of that task. Hölderlin portrays both the possibility and the difficulty of this poetic program in its blending of formal regularity with paradoxical semantics and paratactic syntax. The lack of insistence or certainty in poetic work underscores that the instantiation of poetic cohesion or community must be risked anew each time in poetic labor in an era in which previous modes of ensuring that community no longer fit

or work (that is, the era of the *Nachtgesänge*). In this era, loss and absence, as part of portrayals of cultural separation and limitation, form the grounds of a preliminary call for union.

"Das Nächste Beste" opens with a portrayal of this discontinuous epoch, characterized by disorganization and linguistic confusion, against and within which the poem struggles to create continuity between particular and extraordinarily vivid images and objects on thematic and formal levels. Hölderlin gives an extended depiction of starlings as a figure of orientation to the particular that enables a harmonious continuity between the orders of gods, animals, and human beings; this continuity is the basis of a *Gesang* (song; perhaps a figure for aesthetic production more generally) that is constantly under threat both from the chaos of the opening scene and from the poem's own program of the priority of the individual over the whole. This program ultimately yields an intensity of sensory description that precludes the attainment of a poetic whole, as the poem remains a draft fragment, thus reinforcing that there can be no advance assurances (of the kind Hölderlin's theoretical texts so anxiously seek) in poetic attempts to form communities that acknowledge both subjective separation and the desire to reach beyond it.

Finally, "Andenken" balances, mediates, and weaves together an exceptional number of oppositions within poetic form, creating a thoroughly textured poetic space with strict thematic and formal symmetry. These oppositions, ranging from the temporal (between present speech and memory) to social (between men and women, between communal groups, and between countries) and geographical (between sea and source, between rivers and the sea, and between east and west), are connected not only in the poem's form but in its syntax (via the extensive use of the modal particle *aber*) and in its semantics, via tropes of movement, and in two figures of communication, namely, letters and conversation or *Gespräch*. Each of these figures offers tenuous connections, unfolded within poetic activity, for the complicated relation between the poem's final components: love, seafaring, and poetry. These images of poetry in dialogue with the finite elements of lived life (those who journey in the world and those who love in it, being human, necessarily come to an end) emphasize once again the element of waiting for responsiveness that Hölderlin calls for in poetic production. Poetry, unlike philosophy, poetology, or poetic theory (at least as Hölderlin conceives each), cannot and must not seek to spell out every element of the unifications it calls for in advance. This active waiting for what is outside certainty, whether in the world or in the other, is what I describe as acknowledgment, in which the only slight hope for community within our isolation comes from the capacity to seek and wait for something that answers us.

I have traced these poetic orientations using the themes and structures of continuity, opposition, and dynamic temporality not as a schema into which Hölderlin's poetry must fit, but rather to show, using Hölderlin's own terms, how the vivid, particular, and occasionally extremely difficult language of his late poetry participates in the formation of world orientations that undertake the unification he calls for

but cannot achieve in his poetological texts. Doing so shows how these unifications not only participate in a post-Kantian search for the grounds of self-consciousness but also undertake a larger project of seeking world orientation in language. That is, understanding Hölderlin as engaged with the difficulties of acknowledging and inhabiting human finitude links Hölderlin's poetry to a conception of language use in which language has the power to reach between subject and world, as we "learn language and the world together." Conversely, Hölderlin's particular and poetic treatments of the struggles of finitude provide images of community, yearning, and communication despite isolation or separateness that I could only outline abstractly in the discussions of language and finitude I derived from Cavell. Over a century later, Rainer Maria Rilke works within a drastically different historical moment and poetological horizon. But he, too, turns to lyric poetry as taking up the interlocking problems of mind, language, and world, self and other, calling for the same kind of attention and responsiveness that I have traced in Hölderlin—that is, for acknowledgment.