

## THE POLITICAL PHILOLOGY OF THE ARTIFACT

### Hölderlin's Late Hymnic Fragments ›Luther‹ and ›Der Vatikan‹

By Anthony Curtis Adler (Seoul)

Far from being a mere accident of its reception, a philological tendency belongs essentially to Hölderlin's poetry. The following essay explores this tendency through a reading of two fragments, titled ›Luther‹ and ›Der Vatikan‹, from the Homburger Folioheft. By considering these fragments in light of the philological controversies surrounding them and the multiple editorial approaches taken, I argue that they grant powerful insight into the procedure of Hölderlin's late poetry, which, by means of a ruinous aspect inscribed into the text itself, seeks to address the peculiar condition of modernity – the prevalence of artifice over inspiration – and offer a vision for the reconciliation of Protestantism and Catholicism.

Anstatt nur zufällige Begleiterscheinung der Rezeption zu sein, gehört eine Tendenz hin zur Philologie wesentlich zur Dichtung Hölderlins. Im folgenden Aufsatz stelle ich diese Tendenz in einer Interpretation von zwei Fragmenten (›Luther‹ und ›Der Vatikan‹) aus dem Homburger Folioheft dar. Diese Fragmente werden in Hinsicht auf die philologischen Streitigkeiten und verschiedenen editorischen Herangehensweisen untersucht, die sie begleiten. Ich behaupte, dass sie grundlegende Einsichten in die Verfahren von Hölderlins später Dichtung erlauben, über einen Aspekt des Verfalls, der in ihre Texte eingeschrieben ist. Diese Texte thematisieren so eine spezifische Bedingung der Modernität – die Vorherrschaft des Künstlichen über die Inspiration – und bieten eine Vision, die Protestantismus und Katholizismus versöhnt.

Durchgraben wir nach allen Seiten, was Beißner aus ihr gemacht hat, so bleibt uns kaum anderes als das Bekenntnis, daß hier das Vermächtnis des Dichters uns endlich in seiner Gänze und Reinheit geschenkt wird und daß somit diese Ausgabe nicht nur einen willkommenen Anbau an das Hölderlin-Schrifttum bedeutet, sondern den Festsaal, in dem wir uns künftig um das Standbild des Genius versammeln, und die Werkhalle, in der uns alle erforderlichen Instrumente der wissenschaftlichen Beobachtung zugeschliffen und bereitgestellt sind.

HANS PYRITZ, Die Stuttgarter Hölderlin-Ausgabe, Iduna 1944, p. 277.

Zum Werk Hölderlins gehört aber untilgbar die Spur des Mißlingens, das Unbewältigte, der Sturz. Das macht seine Wahrhaftigkeit aus.

D. E. SATTLER, Friedrich Hölderlin. Frankfurter Ausgabe: Editionsprinzipien und Editionsmodell, Hölderlin-Jahrbuch 19/20 (1975–1977), p. 4.

## I.

The challenges Friedrich Hölderlin's oeuvre presents to his readers are not only hermeneutic but philological. They concern the curation, indeed the very constitution, of the text. This philological task, however, involves neither reconstructing the original text based on an analysis of the various extant manuscripts through which it has been transmitted, nor comparing different print editions of the works. Rather, it takes its departure from the very existence of that whose absence is presupposed by the method of classical philology: namely, the original manuscript, preserved intact and written in Hölderlin's own hand. The philological labor, in other words, begins not with the origin's absence but with its excessive presence: the fact that we so often find not only traces of the process of genesis, but the *origination* of the work, its coming into being, exposed in such a way that the very existence of the poetic work, of poetry as finished work, is often called into question. This is above all the case with the poems from the last three years before his forcible confinement in September 1806, including the hymns from the so-called ›Homburger Folioheft‹. Here we find a proliferation of multiple, fragmentary versions of the same poems; a mere title or part of a verse, sometimes nothing more than some grammatically disjoint key words or syntagma, stranded on a page; a dizzying whirl of marginal notes and editorial markings, with words crossed out, underlined, written above the line.

It is not surprising, then, that Hölderlin's rediscovery began with a philological event: the complete edition of Hölderlin's work initiated in the eve of the First World War by Norbert von Hellingrath. For the first time, readers could appreciate the richness and scope of Hölderlin's poetry, including the late work, much of which appeared for the first time in the fourth volume of his edition, which, he remarked, contained "Herz, Kern und Gipfel des Hölderlinschen Werkes, das eigentliche Vermächtnis."<sup>1</sup>) From the beginning, moreover, the philological struggles surrounding Hölderlin's writings have been invested with political significance, as seen from the two principal modern scholarly editions: Beißner's ›Grosse Stuttgarter Ausgabe‹, which, begun during the Nazi regime, took over from Hellingrath the task of rescuing the pure, inspiring word of Hölderlin's poetry from the chaos of the manuscripts, and D. E. Sattler's ›Frankfurter Ausgabe‹, published by the left-radical press ›Roter Stern‹. Whereas Beißner relegates the alternative readings and details of the manuscript to a scholarly apparatus that forms a separate volume, Sattler, mobilizing new editorial, typographic, and reproductive technologies, seeks

<sup>1</sup>) FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN/NORBERT VON HELINGRATH (eds.), *Sämtliche Werke: historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, München, Leipzig 1912–1923, IV: p. xi.

to preserve the palimpsest-like complexity of the original manuscripts of the hymns: in the first of the two volumes of the ›Gesänge‹, a photographic image of the manuscript appears facing-pages to a detailed transcription of all the written marks, with no attempt to “redact” them into the pure word of the poem. The second volume, which includes elaborate text-critical notes but no commentary in the traditional sense, goes even further in representing textual detail.<sup>2)</sup>

## 2.

While the philological complexities surrounding Hölderlin's writings, and the political significance attached to them, are familiar to anyone who has engaged seriously with his work, there is still a tendency to regard the philological provocation of his writings as exterior to, accidental in relation to, the work itself. Yet Hölderlin is not only a poet demanding to be read philologically, but a philological poet; a poet who produced a body of writings whose poetic intention is irreducibly bound up with the challenge that it bequeaths to the philological reader. We must reject the notion that Hölderlin sought to produce the “pure word” of a finished poem, and that the tortured manuscripts left to us are mere stages on the way to what would have been, were his creative life not tragically interrupted, his true work.<sup>3)</sup> Only by recognizing this, moreover, can we free the political intention of Hölderlin's writings from the appropriating narratives imposed by enthusiastic readers on both the right and the left.

A striking sign that Hölderlin understood his own vocation as at once poetic, philological, and political are the final lines of ›Patmos‹, written at the behest of the landgrave Friedrich Ludwig von Hessen-Homburg, who had solicited a poem from him (after Klopstock refused) defending biblical revelation against the prevailing theological rationalism.<sup>4)</sup>

<sup>2)</sup> To see the political motivations of both undertakings, one need only compare Beißner's 1944 essay ›Hölderlin und das Vaterland‹, published in the inaugural volume of ›Iduna‹ (later: ›Hölderlin-Jahrbuch‹), with the Marxist rhetoric of André Wohlleben's explanation of the motivations of the new edition in the first volume of ›Le Pauvre Holterling‹, the companion journal to the ›Frankfurter Ausgabe‹.

<sup>3)</sup> This attitude is perfectly captured in the opening words of Beißner's lecture on the philological challenges of Hölderlin's last hymns: “Es war Hölderlin nicht vergönnt, die Ernte seines dichterischen Schaffens in die Scheuer einer Ausgabe letzter Hand einzubringen. Auch hat er nicht, wie Schiller, eine saubere und klare Reinschrift hinterlassen, die seine Gedichte, sowohl nach dem Wortlaut der einzelnen Stücke wie nach Auswahl und Anordnung des Ganzen, in letztgültiger Gestalt enthielte.” (Hölderlin's Letzte Hymne, in: Hölderlin-Jahrbuch 3 (1948–1949), pp. 66–102, here: p. 66).

<sup>4)</sup> WOLFGANG BINDER, Hölderlin's Patmos-Hymne, in: Hölderlin-Jahrbuch 15 (1967–1968), pp. 92–127, here: p. 92.

[...] der Vater aber liebt,  
 Der über allen waltet,  
 Am meisten, daß gepfleget werde  
 Der veste Buchstab, und bestehendes gut  
 Gedeutet. Dem folgt deutscher Gesang.<sup>5)</sup>

The reference of the “Dem” is, to a degree, unclear: it could refer either to the “solid letter” itself, or the “bestehendes,” or to the subordinate clause introduced with the “daß,” or perhaps even to the father himself. Regardless how it is interpreted, however – and the ambiguity is itself instructive –, German song *follows*, and hence follows after, the “grammatical” tasks of *caring for the solid letter* and interpreting that which already exists. It follows after, this is to say, philology and hermeneutics. German song is a grammatical song: the sung, the spoken comes after, and is in a sense subordinate to, the written. Rather than representing a pure, spontaneous moment of divine inspiration – the pure creative originality of genius – it is beholden to what already exists.<sup>6)</sup> Yet we should not then suppose that Hölderlin wished to reduce poetry to a mere exercise in exegesis. For if German song follows philology and hermeneutics, nevertheless, by following them, it also comes after them, getting the last word. The grammatical becomes song, voice. The difference between ancient Greek and modern German poetry, indeed, is not that the one privileges the spoken over the written whereas the other privileges the written over the spoken. Rather, it has to do with how the phonetic and the grammatical, as the two constitutive dimensions of the poetic event, are brought into relation to one another. Moreover, just as each of these dimensions involves a mode of temporality, the relation between them is not logical but itself temporal.

### 3.

To bring this inversion into clearer view, we should consider the poem as *artifactual*; as a product fashioned through human artifice. This perspective might seem peculiar, since it is indeed a commonplace of Idealist and romantic aesthetics that true poetry is the product not of finite human craftsmanship but of genius. Hölderlin did not reject the notion of genial inspiration *per se*, yet he saw that the poetic work can only become a receptacle for spirit through the mediation of art, of *technē*, taken in the most banal, mechanical sense.

<sup>5)</sup> FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN/FRIEDRICH BEISSNER (eds.), *Sämtliche Werke*, Stuttgart 1946–1985, II.1: p. 172.

<sup>6)</sup> The turn to the “solid letter,” as WOLFGANG BINDER argues, follows from a rejection of an idealist ontology; being is no longer a *nisus*, “der Drang, zu sich selber zu kommen”, but *revelatio*, “das Sich-zeigende, das der Mensch zu vernehmen hat.” (Hölderlins Patmos-Hymne (cit. fn. 4), here: p. 122).

This insight, expressed throughout his prose writings, concerns not only the role of *technē* but of the *Gesetz* and *Satzung* as “strenge Mittelbarkeit,” and thus ultimately the political as well as the poetological.<sup>7)</sup> Rather than overcoming the technical, submitting it to the impulses of genial inspiration, one must gain a free mastery over it by recognizing its essential limits as well as possibilities.

Precisely this insight guides Hölderlin's remarks, in the letter to his friend Böhlendorff dated Dec. 4th, 1801, concerning the difference between antique and modern poetics:

Es klingt paradox. Aber ich behaupt' es noch einmal, und stelle es Deiner Prüfung und Deinem Gebrauche frei; das eigentliche nationale wird im Fortschritt der Bildung immer der geringere Vorzug werden. Deßwegen sind die Griechen des heiligen Pathos weniger Meister, weil es ihnen angeboren war, hingegen sind sie vorzüglich in Darstellungsgaabe, von Homer an, weil dieser außerordentliche Mensch seelenvoll genug war, um die abendländische Junonische Nüchternheit für sein Apollonsreich zu erbeuten, und so wahrhaft das fremde sich anzueignen.

Bei uns ists umgekehrt. Deßwegen ists auch so gefährlich sich die Kunstregeln einzig und allein von griechischer Vortrefflichkeit zu abstrahiren. Ich habe lange daran laborirt und weiß nun daß außer dem, was bei den Griechen und uns das höchste seyn muß, nemlich dem lebendigen Verhältniß und Geschick, wir nicht wohl etwas gleich mit ihnen haben dürfen. Aber das eigene muß so gut gelernt seyn, wie das Fremde. Deßwegen sind uns die Griechen unentbehrlich. Nur werden wir ihnen gerade in unserm Eigenen, Nationellen nicht nachkommen, weil, wie gesagt, der freie Gebrauch des Eigenen das schwerste ist.<sup>8)</sup>

The paradox consists in the claim that what is *innate*, the “eigentliche nationale,” not only becomes ever less of an accomplishment as a historical people progresses in its cultural development, but that it is also fundamentally harder to master than the foreign. The gift for representation that distinguished Greek art was not native but foreign to the Greek nature, implying, moreover, that the decline of Greek art was due to the failure to master its own native element: the sacred pathos, the ecstatic force of inspiration. For the modern Germans, by contrast, it is precisely the gift of representation that is innate, and hence hardest to master. This mastery, nevertheless, is not one-sided: if the “free use of the proper” is the hardest thing, it is precisely because it opens up the proper to the foreign, and thus achieves that which is highest for both Greek and German, ancient and modern: namely, the “lebendige[] Verhältniß und Geschick.”<sup>9)</sup>

<sup>7)</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, V: p. 285.

<sup>8)</sup> *Ibid.*, VI.1: p. 426.

<sup>9)</sup> As Peter Szondi demonstrates, this aspect of the Böhlendorff-letter has been completely misconstrued by readers such as Wilhelm Michels, Friedrich Beissner, Beda Allemann and Walter Hof, who have taken it to argue for a poetics of passion and inspiration over “Classical” technique and clarity. Szondi goes so far as to argue that *Geschick* should be understood as *technē*, *Geschicklichkeit*. (PETER SZONDI, *Überwindung des Klassizismus: Der Brief an Böhlendorff vom 4. Dezember 1801*, in: *Id.*, *Schriften*, Frankfurt/M.1978, I: pp. 345–366).

These remarks indicate the need for, and point the way toward a radical reappraisal of all the aesthetic categories and artistic rules that modernity, beginning with the Renaissance, abstracted from the ancients. We observe, to begin, that an asymmetry hides behind the chiasmic symmetry of which Hölderlin speaks. The asymmetry surfaces when he insists that the native and the foreign must both be learned. Learning is not an indifferent category; rather, learning means different things – is said in different ways – according to what is learned. Learning the *native* is very different from learning the *foreign*, as any student of Rousseau, and his pedagogical philosophy, would know. What is foreign is *captured* and *carried off* – *erbeutet*; violently appropriated by submitting it to an end that is itself foreign to it. What is native, by contrast, is learned only through a long and difficult process of self-mastery. Moreover, though, *heiliger Pathos* and *Darstellungsgabe* each have a different relation to learning. The *heiliger Pathos* is precisely what, as ecstatic inspiration, cannot, in the first instance, be learned; it is not a matter of *technē*, of a skill involving communicable public knowledge, but something else. The *Darstellungsgabe*, by contrast, may itself involve “native talent,” and yet, fundamentally, it falls within the realm of *poiēsis* as *technē*, *Kunst*: otherwise it would not have been possible for Aristotle to write a *poetics*, or for modern authors to all too blindly follow the rules he set down.

With the Greeks, these two asymmetries reinforce each other: what is native for them is doubly difficult to learn. It is unlearnable as inspiration, and resists being learned as what is native. For us, by contrast, the one asymmetry works against the other: since what is native is itself of essence technical, it is at once resistant to being learned (involving a difficult process of self-mastery rather than violent appropriation) but also amenable to being learned, insofar as *technē* is the learnable as such. And at the same time: what is foreign is also at once more learnable and less learnable; as inspiration, it resists learning, is even perhaps radically unlearnable, yet, as what is foreign, it can itself be rapidly appropriated. Hence Hölderlin’s remarks lead to a conclusion that is not immediately obvious: whereas the Greeks were destined, despite the brilliant successes of their youth, to fail at gaining the free use of the holy pathos that is their own proper element, we moderns, despite all our youthful failures and errors, have the potential to achieve what the Greeks, in art as in politics, could not: an enduring relation to what is highest.

The limit of Greek culture, moreover, was expressed in their theoretical understanding of the nature of *technē* and *poiēsis*, and indeed in the hylomorphic ontology of Plato and Aristotle – an understanding which continues to guide modern poetics ... and politics. Because inspiration was given to them through an overwhelming and originary ecstatic experience, they could remain content with understanding *technē* as mere handwork, craftsmanship; a form

imposed on a passive matter that was nothing more than a mere receptacle. Consequently, the locus of modern artistic theory and practice is an experience of matter and form as no longer merely abstractly related to one another but intimately intertwined. The artist's labor cultivates a relation to the spirit not by imposing an inspired form on a dead matter, but by allowing the formative powers of the material to come into play.

## 4.

Named after the Greek island where John received his apocalyptic vision and wrote the ›Book of Revelation‹, ›Patmos‹ is a key text for understanding the turn, or rather return, to explicitly Christian themes that takes place in Hölderlin's late hymns. Without ever renouncing his passion for the Greek gods, Hölderlin seems more troubled by his own tendency to *compare the incomparable* by speaking of Christ and the Greek half-gods in the same breath. As he writes in the first version of ›Der Einzige‹: „Es hindert aber eine Schaam | Mich dir zu vergleichen | Die weltlichen Männer.“<sup>10)</sup> The Christological turn, moreover, seems to coincide with a turn from his previous conception of his poetic vacation:

Viel hab' ich schönes gesehn,  
Und gesungen Gottes Bild,  
Hab' ich, das lebet unter  
Den Menschen, aber dennoch  
Ihr alten Götter und all  
Ihr tapfern Söhne der Götter  
Noch Einen such ich, den  
Ich liebe unter euch,  
Wo ihr den letzten eures Geschlechts  
Des Haußes Kleinod mir  
Dem fremden Gaste verberget.<sup>11)</sup>

It could seem as though the poetic principle expressed in the letter to Böhlen-dorff has been rendered inoperative, at least regarding his own work. Against this, I would suggest that the inversion of the relation between philology and song declared in the final lines of ›Patmos‹ is not only intimately bound up with the Christological turn, but that both tendencies of the late hymns – the philological and Christological – derive from a deepening of his understanding of the difference between ancient and modern song.

<sup>10)</sup> Ibid., II.1: p. 155.

<sup>11)</sup> Ibid., II.1: p. 153–154.

This deepening involves two separate, yet closely intertwined, aspects. On the one hand: judged from the Hellenizing perspective of German neo-Classicism, Judeo-Christian scripture lacks plastic representational concreteness and the beauty of classical form. Yet if holy pathos is now foreign to us, then it follows that precisely these aesthetic deficiencies will allow scripture to serve as a vehicle for the ecstatic encounter with the divine. For us, this is to say, revelation must assume a form that is estranged and estranging; revelation is not an experience that happens to us, not our own experience, but a moment of radical expropriation. Whereas the Greek artist took possession of the native experience of inspiration through acquired powers of representation, enabling an at least approximate repetition of the original experience among his audience – even Aristotle will speak of a *pathos* imparted through the work – we moderns are strangers, foreign guests, in relation to inspiration. It reaches us as something foreign, brought to us across the distance of time and space; handed down through a succession of texts as an experience that is not ours to repeat, that we cannot make our own.<sup>12)</sup> Hence, when Hölderlin, in the second verse of ›Patmos‹, describes what seems to be his own prophetic vision, repeating and reappropriating John's, he stresses that which is most strange and estranging.

So sprach ich, da entführte  
 Mich schneller, denn ich vermuthet  
 Und weit, wohin ich nimmer  
 Zu kommen gedacht, ein Genius mich  
 Vom eigenen Hauß.<sup>13)</sup>

Not only is the experience a kind of abduction, a ravishment, snatching him away from his “own house”, but it exceeds all his powers of anticipation; it happens quicker than he suspected (*vermuthet*), as if transcending the cognitive powers of the *Gemüth*. Nor is it *his genius*, his daemon that does this to him, but a *genius*. The ancient Greek link between character (*ethos*) and fate (*daimōn*) has been broken.

Subsequent versions of the poem leave these lines unchanged save one word: “schneller” becomes “unermeßlicher”, and then “künstlicher.”<sup>14)</sup> Thus Hölderlin shifts to a vocabulary more clearly bound up with his aesthetic reflections. But if “unermeßlicher” brings out a thought that is already latent in “schneller” – that

<sup>12)</sup> Cf. LADISLAUS MITTNER, *Motiv und Komposition: Versuch einer Entwicklungsgeschichte der Lyrik Hölderlins*, in: *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch 10* (1957), pp. 72–159, here: p. 132. In the “Christushymnen”, Mittner writes, “[d]er höchste, unerkennbare und unennbare Gott lebt und wirkt nur, insofern er sich in seinen Herolden kundtut, indem er sich in ihnen verwirklicht und durch sie seine Göttlichkeit fortschreitend vervollkommnet.”

<sup>13)</sup> *Ibid.*, II.1: p. 165.

<sup>14)</sup> *Ibid.*, II.1: pp. 173, 179, 184.



the rapturous abduction exceeds the poet's capacity to keep his balance, violating the measure that, in the words of "Reflexion," is proper to him – "künstlicher" introduces an entirely new dimension: the experience of inspiration is no longer natural but artificial, achieved not through the innate receptivity of the poet's mental faculties, his soul, but through artifice, and perhaps indeed through the very artifice of the poem in which it has been recorded.<sup>15)</sup> In the foreign element of a foreign revelation, one can no longer distinguish between the experience of revelation and the poeticization of this experience.

On the other hand: the philological inversion – the inversion of the relation of philology to song – answers the question of how the modern poet can achieve the "free use of the proper." To see this, one need only extend the analysis of the poem as artifact to the relation to philology. The ancient poems start out from *holy chaos*, the experience of inspiration native to the Greeks; the act of *poiēsis* then consists in gaining mastery of this experience through *technē* (*Kunst*), the power of representation. This culminates in the finished work: a form imposed on matter that somehow conveys a spirit beyond the mere letter. Philology would only come on the scene later. Philological and hermeneutic labors only become necessary when the poem has outlived the world in which it originated and wherein it found its inspired meaning; they aim to recover the form of the work from the vicissitudes of the matter, thus regaining access to the animating spirit. The philological therefore wouldn't belong properly to the work as artifact: while the poem has a philological afterlife, involving both the history of its transmission as manuscript and the subsequent attempts to recover the original work, this afterlife exists outside the proper life of the poem, which is already fully realized in the inspired moment of its birth. While philology addresses the ruinous potentiality of the ancient poem's materiality, it regards this ruinous material potentiality as something external and accidental to the work itself.

With modern poetry, we saw, inspiration is what is utterly foreign: a revelation that is never the experience of the poet but only passed down. And even at its origin it remained something foreign. Yet, paradoxically, precisely because inspiration is so radically foreign, it can be learned and appropriated more deeply than was possible for the Greeks. Indeed, it can be enduringly *institutionalized*. This appropriation is possible through philology, yet only insofar as the traditional relation of philology to the work is reversed. Rather than philology following the song, the song must follow philology. The ruinous material afterlife of the poem now becomes the more proper life, the true event, of the poem.

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<sup>15)</sup> Ibid., IV.1: p. 233.

What makes the philological inversion possible by forcing into view the problematic relation between manuscripts (and the philological labors attending them) and the original work is a technological innovation whose transformative effect on European history is well known: the movable-type printing press invented by Johannes Gutenberg around the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Because the printing press ushers into existence a fundamentally new kind of textual artifact, it not only brings to a close the history of transmission involving the painstaking manual reproduction of textual traces, but turns the entire extant body of manuscripts into something entirely new: into a body of evidence from which the philologist can reconstruct the true, original work. While the history of philology goes back to the Hellenistic age, nevertheless the modern discipline of philology only emerges with the printed book.

Yet modern philology, in this sense, does not yet imply the inversion of the relation of poetry and philology. Rather, as the curatorship of “critical editions”, it continues to reinforce the privilege of the original work over the vicissitudes of its reception. Nevertheless, the philological inversion can only take place when the manuscript has been reduced to a mere transient stage in the production of the book; only then would it be possible, as Hölderlin has done, to produce a manuscript without producing a book, turning the ruinous vicissitudes that afflict the work into its very essence.

We might go even further in relating the philological inversion to the free use of the proper. If *technē* has become the native element, it is not the result of some mere arbitrary, schematic transformation, but is due to the fact that, if simply because we see ourselves as *epigonal* – as coming after those who have come before – we are compelled to regard our own existence as fundamentally historical, while at the same time regarding nature itself as a process of self-formation, and both nature and history as vehicles of divine revelation. Productivity is not just what we *do* but what we *are*, so far as we are bound up, at the very root of our existence, with nature, history, divinity – or indeed insofar as we *are* nature, history, divinity. But if it is still possible to appropriate what we already are, gaining free mastery over it, it is because, however much the concept of artifice has been extended, it remains our point of contact with the world, and hence the locus of mastery. We master the world by manipulating it, by working on it. Hence, to “achieve the free use of the proper” is a matter of producing (poeticizing) in such a way that the work we produce does not collapse into the finitude of this contact, but becomes open to the infinite productivity of nature and history. For Hölderlin, moreover, this is a matter neither of creating a *beautiful work* that, inspired by the ideal, allows for a sensual apprehension of the suprasensual, nor of the infinite reflection of Romantic irony. Rather: the artwork becomes ruinous, inscribing within itself the destitution of

its material element – its philological afterlife. For it is only by way of *ruination* that the artwork can become open to the origination of the origin, and through this, to what is highest.<sup>16)</sup>

## 5.

Among Hölderlin's late hymns and hymnic fragments, few are as *recondite* as the textual fragments appearing in pages 83–89 of the ›Hamburger Folioheft‹. The manuscript pages in question, which are photographically reproduced and transcribed in the ›Frankfurter Ausgabe‹, are as follows.<sup>17)</sup>

83: „Luther“ at the top of the page, underlined twice.

84: „meinst du“...“Das Kloster etwas genüzet“ (20 lines)

85: Blank.

86: Blank.

87 „Denn gute Dinge sind drei“... „an unser End“ (16 lines)

88: „auf dem Gotthard, gezäunt, nachlässig, unter Gletschern“...

„Und glänzenden“ (26 lines)

89: „der Vatikan“...“über Tyrol, Loretto, wo des Pilgrams Heimath“ (22 lines)

Confronted with such uncertain textual evidence, the tendencies as well as the limitations of various philological approaches appear in an especially clear light. The ›Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe‹, on the one hand, regards the title ›Luther‹ as the starting point for one poem, listing it separately in the section devoted to “Pläne und Bruchstücke”, while considering the verses beginning on the next page as the body of another poem, “... Meinst Du es solle gehen...” The lines from page 87, moreover, are listed as yet another of the “Pläne und Bruchstücke.” Pages 88 and 89 are compiled into a single poem, titled “... Der Vatikan...”, with the order of material in the two pages reversed.<sup>18)</sup>

In attempting to render the manuscript into at least approximately “finished” poems, Beißner performs a triage, dividing the material of the ›Hamburger Folioheft‹ into “Die Vaterländischen Gesänge”, “Hymnische Entwürfe”, and “Pläne und Bruchstücke”. The ›Frankfurter Ausgabe‹, by contrast, allows the manuscript pages to stand as they are, without even trying to parse them into discrete works. Perhaps the most useful representation

<sup>16)</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, IV.1: p. 282.

<sup>17)</sup> FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN/D. E. SATTLER (eds.), *Sämtliche Werke*, Frankfurt/M. 1975ff., VII: pp. 366–379.

<sup>18)</sup> FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN/FRIEDRICH BEISSNER (eds.), *Sämtliche Werke* (cit. fn. 5), II.1: pp. 228; 252f.; 326.

of the material, however, is found in Dietrich Uffhausen's critical edition of the late hymns, which takes a middle path between Beißner's reconstructive violence and Sattler's total transparency. Reconstructing the poems based on the presupposition that Hölderlin, anticipating the overall structure of the poems, left spaces blank in the ›Homburger Folioheft‹ that he meant to fill out later, Uffhausen presents the manuscript as fragments from two separate poems, titled respectively ›Luther‹ and ›Der Vatikan‹, each 12 verses in length. In the case of the first of these: page 84 comprises part of Verse 3 and all of Verse 4, whereas 87 comprises Verse 12. In the case of the second: page 89 comprises Verse 2 through the beginning of Verse 4; page 88 the rest of verse 4 through verse 6.<sup>19)</sup>

The considerations that recommend Uffhausen's approach, however, are not narrowly philological but hermeneutic. Or, rather, they come into view only when one recognizes not only the impossibility of separating narrowly philological from hermeneutic considerations, but that, in the specific case of Hölderlin, the meaning of his poems has everything to do with their philological provocation. More concretely: when we follow Uffhausen in discovering in the manuscript two hymnic fragments, titled ›Luther‹ and ›Der Vatikan‹, it becomes clear not only that these two are thematically related, as already evident from the title, but that they address – explicitly if opaquely – nothing else than the philological inversion. The clearest sign of this is that, as Friedrich Beißner observes, both the first lines of ›Luther‹ (for Uffhausen, verse 3 and the top of verse 4) and the final lines of ›Der Vatikan‹ (for Uffhausen, verse 6) invoke the letter to Böhlendorff from Dec. 4th 1801.

To bring this thematic nexus into view, let us compare these two passages, which, following Uffhausen, read as follows.

A)

Meinest du  
 Es solle gehen,  
 Wie damals? Nemlich sie wollten stiften  
 Ein Reich der Kunst. Dabei ward aber  
 Das Vaterländische von ihnen  
 Versäümet und erbärmlich gieng  
 Das Griechenland, das schönste, zu Grunde.

Wohl hat es andere  
 Bewandtniß jezt.

<sup>19)</sup> FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN/DIETRICH UFFHAUSEN (eds.), ›Bevestigter Gesang‹: Die neu zu entdeckende hymnische Spätdichtung bis 1806, Stuttgart 1989, pp. 153–155.

B)

Dann kommt das Brautlied des Himmels.  
 Vollendruhe. Goldroth. Und die Rippe tönet  
 Des sandigen Erdballs in Gottes Werk  
 Ausdrücklicher Bauart, grüner Nacht.  
 Und Geist, der Säulenordnung, wirklich  
 Ganzem Verhältniß, samt der Mitte,  
 Und glänzenden

## 6.

The connection of the first passage with the Böhlendorff letter is brought into sharpest relief when, with Beißner, we take “Kunst” in the sense of the ode “Natur und Kunst oder Saturn und Jupiter” – namely as the “höchstentwickelte Bildung eines Volkes.” Precisely insofar as they sought to institute a realm of art, mastering what was originally foreign to them, the Greeks neglected the “*Vaterländische*,” “das eigentliche nationale.” As a result, Greece itself fell into a wretched decline.

By drawing out an equivalence between “Darstellungsgabe,” “Kunst,” and “Bildung” – each of which refers to the formative power from a slightly different perspective – this verse calls attention to the fundamental asymmetry that, as noted, underlies the apparent chiasmic symmetry. Whereas Ancient Greece’s historical development was driven by art and artifice, modern history is of essence more natural – the power of formation, of *Bildung*, has become innate, immanent to nature. The first two lines of the following verse (“Wohl hat es andere | Bewandtniß jetzt”) likewise refer directly to the Böhlendorff letter, but suggest, yet more clearly, the asymmetry: the *Bewandtnis*, which like the Latin *ratio* can mean both an “account” and a “relation,” is not simply reversed, but otherwise.

If one looks at the first line of the pocket edition edited by Michael Knaupp, which follows the ›Frankfurter Edition‹ in presenting the ›Homburger Folioheft‹ as a single continuous text, one may be surprised to find that it reads:

meinst du            zum Dämon  
 Es solle gehen,  
 Wie damals?<sup>20)</sup>

<sup>20)</sup> FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN/MICHAEL KNAUPP (eds.), *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, München 1992, I: p. 430.

Here the demon, like the devil and like God, is in the details. For indeed: “zum Dämon” is written on the page, and yet begins to the right of the subsequent 8 lines of the text. It is thus most likely not a part of the poem itself, but as Uffhausen remarks, a “mäeutische Notiz”, indicating the one to whom the question is addressed. And we may further suppose that for Hölderlin, an avid reader of Plato, the demon was first and foremost a Socratic *daimōn*: a guiding inner voice, the unique gift of the gods, that, with few exceptions, only ever told him what *not* to do.

But whose *daimōn*? If we suppose that it is not, or at least not just Hölderlin’s *daimōn* but also Luther’s, this suggests an intriguing possibility: that Luther’s theological life-work, and indeed the decisive role he would play in changing the direction of modern European and German history, could be understood in terms of Hölderlin’s understanding of the relation of the ancient and the modern. Or, in other words: that Luther’s theological return to the purity of scripture and faith is a response to the fundamental condition of modernity: the fact that *art* rather than *inspiration* is our native element. This would make it yet more clear that for Hölderlin the very nature of modernity demands a purely scriptural, purely textual – purely philological, as it were – concept of the “holy pathos”, of inspiration.<sup>21)</sup>

Yet there is also something more going on here: the admonition seems to warn of the danger of seeking to *found* a realm of art; to institutionalize the divine among men – to bring it “down to earth” through the mediation of temples, rites, art. The Greeks, of course, succeeded to a degree, but in the end failed due to their success, since, in their success, they neglected the “patriotic”. Yet as Hölderlin explains in the letter to Böhlendorff, we moderns can only emulate the Greeks if we do not imitate them; if we do not seek to derive our own artistic rules from them. This, in turn, would cast light on the fundamental error of Catholicism as well as the Renaissance revival of pagan antiquity, errors that converge in the Counterreformation. Both seek to repeat the Greek “realm of art”, yet such a repetition can never repeat even its transient success, let alone avoid its ultimate failure.

Here, however, we must attend carefully to the words that answer to the demonic admonition: “Wohl hat es andere | Bewandtniß jez.” If everything

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<sup>21)</sup> For a subtle account of Hölderlin’s complex relation to Luther, see WOLFGANG BINDER, Hölderlin: Theologie und Kunstwerk, in: Hölderlin-Jahrbuch 17 (1971–1972), pp. 1–29. Binder (p. 20) writes: “Hölderlins Theologie ist keine Theologie des Wortes oder des Glaubens, sondern eine heilsgeschichtliche Theologie, die aus der Parusie gedacht ist und im Aufsuchen der Spuren, Zeichen und Winke Gottes in Natur und Geschichte sich ihres Kommens zu vergewissern sucht.” While I agree that the traces, signs, and hints of nature and history take precedence over scripture itself, I would nevertheless argue, contra Binder, that, in the late hymns, scriptural revelation offers the model for all revelation.



poet – though of songs that “follow” the “solid letter,” the philological letter of a scripture alien to the spirit of revelation from which it originated.

This brings us to the second, more obscure fragment, ›Der Vatikan‹. Regardless whether it is a proper title, as Uffhausen proposes, or a mere keyword, the title alone draws attention to the relation of the Catholic and Protestant. Yet on just this point, subtle yet ultimately catastrophic misinterpretations abound. These concern in particular the first verse of the poem, which, following Uffhausen, reads:

Hier sind wir                    in der Einsamkeit  
 Und drunten gehet der Bruder, allbejahend  
 Ein Esel auch dem braunen Schleier nach  
 Von wegen des Spotts.  
 Wenn aber der Tag  
 Schicksaale machet, denn aus Zorn der Natur-  
 Göttin, wie ein Ritter, gesagt von Rom, in derlei  
 Pallästen gehet izt viel Irrsaal,  
 Und Julius Geist um derweil, welcher Calender  
 Gemachtet, und dort drüben, in Westphalen,  
 Schlüssel des Geheimnisses wissend  
 Fragt böß Gewissen

Renate Böschstein, in one of the first significant studies of the fragment, argues that the first-person singular voice of the poem may be understood not only as Hölderlin’s own “poetic I” but as Luther’s, who, in the years 1510/11, travelled to Rome on official business of his monastery.<sup>24)</sup> She goes on to remark that „Der Gegensatz zwischen der korrupten Pracht der Paläste und einer dem christlichen Geist gemäßen einfachen asketischen Lebensform bildet die Grundlinie des Fragments.“<sup>25)</sup> By contrast, Anke Bennholdt-Thomsen and Alfredo Guzzoni, in a study that is itself in many ways a true philological *tour-de-force*, ignore Luther altogether, focusing instead on Hölderlin’s relation to Heinse as well as even more obscure contemporary sources, such as Wilhelm David Fuhrmann’s biography of Vanini. Hence they claim that the first half of the poem is set during the late Renaissance, or, more precisely, the Counter-reformation.<sup>26)</sup>

<sup>24)</sup> RENATE BÖSCHSTEIN, *Mythische Vorstellungsformen im Hymnenfragment ›Der Vatikan‹* (Bericht über die Arbeitsgruppe), in: *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* 27 (1990–1991), pp. 329–332, here: pp. 330f.

<sup>25)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 331

<sup>26)</sup> ANKE BENNHOLDT-THOMSEN, ALFREDO GUZZONI, *Analecta Hölderliana*, Würzburg 1999, p. 138.



This interpretation, while altogether ignoring the connection to the ›Luther-fragment, nevertheless points us in a fruitful direction: the “Irrsaal” is not simply the theological abuses of the papacy, but a specifically artistic, indeed architectural errancy. Not only is it the “Irrsaal” of the palaces, but “Irrsaal” is itself an unusual, elevated and poetic word, with a more “ontological” meaning than *Irrniss* or *Irrthum*. Moreover, spelled by Hölderlin with two As and thus connoting the “Saal”, itself a prominent word in Hölderlin’s poetry, *Irrsaal* would seem to identify the “Saal”, the interior hall built by human hands as a microcosmos, enclosing the heavens within a representational architecture, as a kind of errancy. Here we might recall “Die göttlichgebauten Palläste” of ›Patmos‹, as well as the following lines of ›Brot und Wein‹, itself dedicated to Heine:

Festlicher Saal! der Boden ist Meer! und Tische die Berge,  
Wahrlich zu einzigem Brauche vor Alters gebaut!  
Aber die Thronen, wo? die Tempel, und wo die Gefäße,  
Wo mit Nectar gefüllt, Göttern zu Lust der Gesang?<sup>27)</sup>

Or we might even recall the original errant palace, the labyrinth at Crete, built by the greatest of Athenian artisans, Daedalus. The errancy of the “Irrsaal”, even in Rome, is not simply the moral or intellectual error of the one who, in his actions or his reasoning, has missed the mark. Rather, it involves a formative power, the power of *Kunst/Bildung*, which, moreover, is at once natural and historical; immanent to nature and constitutive of history. Even if conceived merely as a human power, artifice involves a kind of errancy, since it brings forth what is not pure and absolute but limited and partial, relating to the absolute only through mediation. With the formative power immanent to nature and history, however, *errancy* is of the formative power’s very essence, since it can no longer be understood as a specifically human act of *poiēsis* imposing form on matter but as a power of self-organization rooted in what, in the “Grund zum Empedokles», he refers to as the “aorgische”.<sup>28)</sup>

Bennholdt-Thomsen and Guzzoni nevertheless insist that, precisely with regard to papal errancy, Hölderlin shared the typical sentiments of his milieu:

Das Irrsal, das Hölderlin ‘derlei | Pallästen’ attestiert, dürfte jedenfalls dem allgemeinen Bild der Protestanten von der römischen Kurie entsprechen, deren Fanatismus, Machtbesessenheit, Reichtum, Gewinnsucht, Unwahrhaftigkeit immer wieder kritisiert wurden.

Without supposing Hölderlin had magically transcended all the prejudices of his times, it would nevertheless seem odd if, regarding such a critical point – it

<sup>27)</sup> FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN/FRIEDRICH BEISSNER (eds.), *Sämtliche Werke* (cit. fn. 5), II.1: p. 92.

<sup>28)</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.1: pp. 149–162.

bears on the very nature of the task of the modern poet – he would succumb to a platitude. Moreover: if Hölderlin was not immune to the typical Protestant contempt for “popery”, he was far more deeply affected by a cultural current of the age that moved in an opposite direction: the obsession with the Southern, and above all with Italy, its artistic masterpieces and its imperial ruins. In his commentary of ›Der Vatikan‹, Beißner notes: „Hier sind offenbar Eindrücke der Ardinghello-Lektüre traumhaft erinnert wie auch mündliche Erzählungen Heinse.“<sup>29)</sup> Heinse’s scandalously erotic ›Ardinghello‹ indeed contributed much to the Romantic image of Renaissance Italy as a place of healthy integral sensuality.<sup>30)</sup> If Rome is the site of Catholic indulgences, literal and figurative, it is also the site of Catholic sensuality and beauty.

Bennholdt-Thomsen and Guzzoni, reading the fragment in terms of Spinozistic pantheism, go on to nuance their account of Hölderlin’s anti-Catholicism. Whereas the scorn of nature is directed toward its demotion (through Catholic, and not merely Catholic orthodoxy) to the mere creation of a transcendent God, „Das viele Irrsal, das sich diesem Zorn verdankt, sind die Mißstände, Ungerechtigkeiten, Gewaltanwendungen ... der römischen Kirche, deren Brandmarkung Hölderlin, hierin guter Protestant, mit seinem Glaubensgenossen teilt.“<sup>31)</sup>

All too readily attributing to Hölderlin the typical contradictions of the bigot, this interpretation obscures the complex historico-poetic thought of the two hymn-fragments. It fails to see that, from the perspective of a Protestantism that, far from merely conventional, involves the recognition of the radically *philological* nature of our relation to revelation, Hölderlin would be compelled to regard the quasi-Spinozistic nature-religion as itself manifesting a distinctly Catholic tendency. Both pantheism and Catholicism regard the mundane sphere, the site of *Kunst/Bildung*, as capable of being inhabited, and filled out, by the divine and thereby entering into an expressive relation to it. While Hölderlin attaches himself, in the name of Luther, to a certain radical Protestantism, he also follows Luther in a moderation vis-à-vis those aspects of Catholicism that seek to institute an earthly dwelling for spirit. These two countervailing tendencies are registered in the lines of the next verse:

<sup>29)</sup> Ibid. II.2: p. 890.

<sup>30)</sup> For a detailed biographical account of the role of Heinse in Hölderlin’s relationship to Susette Gontard, see ERICH HOCH, Wilhelm Heinse’s Urteil über Hölderlin, in: Hölderlin-Jahrbuch 4 (1950), pp. 108–119. For a more theoretical and speculative account of the significance of Heinse for ›Hyperion‹, see ULRICH GAIER, ‘Mein ehrlich Meister’: Hölderlin im Gespräch mit Heinse, in: Das Maß des Bacchanten: Wilhelm Heines Über-Lebenskunst, ed. by GERT THEILE, München 1999, pp. 25–54.

<sup>31)</sup> BENNHOLDT-THOMSEN, GUZZONI, *Analecta* (cit. fn. 26), p. 143.

Mein ehrlich Meister  
 Gott rein und mit Unterscheidung  
 Bewahren, das ist uns vertrauet,<sup>32)</sup>

“Bewahren” means not merely to protect, preserve and conserve, but to keep in the truth; to hold on to the divine truth, remain in the truth. Neither merely ontological (of Being and beings) or epistemological (of propositions), truth is instituted by bringing human beings into an enduring relation to what is highest. “Was bleibet aber, stiften die Dichter.”<sup>33)</sup> Or from the first version of ›Mnemosyne‹: „Lang ist | Die Zeit, es ereignet sich aber | Das Wahre.”<sup>34)</sup>

What is at stake, however, is a double *Bewahrung*, a double event of the truth: “rein und mit Unterscheidung.” “Mit Unterscheidung” does not gloss “rein,” but introduces a different manner in which God is to be preserved. Or indeed: not only different, but at once rigorously opposed and necessary. The *Unterscheidung* introduces a relation of comparison, and where there is comparison, there is never simple purity. And yet simple purity can itself only exist by opposition to what is impure. Nevertheless, if the artistic, representational tendency of Catholicism, as the native, national characteristic of the modern age, is to be freely mastered, then it must be transformed. This transformation, I propose, is the subject of ›Der Vatikan‹.

## 8.

The transformation in question, however, has already taken place. It involves the errancy at work in the formative powers of history. The free use of the proper is possible not by overcoming the errancy of Rome, a city that preserves many traces of the ruinous chaos of its history, or of the late Renaissance and counterreformation, but by errantly mastering the errant formative power that itself belongs immanently – but precisely as a power of self-expropriation, self-estrangement – to nature and history. This errant mastery of errancy – a mastery of errancy through errancy – is possible in a poetic idiom that has thoroughly abandoned the figural expressiveness of the “beautiful symbol” and embraced an empty, almost thoroughly meaningless, mode of signification. In the words of ›Mnemosyne‹: „Ein Zeichen sind wir, deutungslos | Schmerzlos sind wir und haben fast | Die Sprache in der Fremde verloren.”<sup>35)</sup> This, more-

<sup>32)</sup> HÖLDERLIN/UFFHAUSEN (eds.), ‘Bevestigter Gesang’ (cit. fn. 19), p. 154.

<sup>33)</sup> FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN/FRIEDRICH BEISSNER (eds.), *Sämtliche Werke* (cit. fn. 5), II.1: p. 189.

<sup>34)</sup> *Ibid.*, II.1: p. 193.

<sup>35)</sup> *Ibid.*, II.1: p. 195.

over, explains how the thematic dimension of the late hymns coincides with the manner of their poetic language. In the phase of his poetry represented by the late hymns and hymnic fragments, Renate Böschenstein, drawing on the distinction between symbol and allegory, argues that „Hölderlin löst sich von einer zuvor – etwa im ‘Hyperion’ – von ihm geleisteten Form des mythischen Sprechens, die auf Inkarnation des Göttlichen im Bild zielt, und sucht nach einer Art der Darstellung, welche die Fremdheit des Zeichens gegenüber der Idee und dem Phänomen erkennen läßt.“<sup>36)</sup>

Böschenstein correctly draws attention to how, with the late hymns, Hölderlin thoroughly abandons the positive, spirit-incarnating image that is still sometimes to be found in earlier poems, and especially in the odes written prior to 1800. As he writes in ›Der Einzige‹, speaking in the past tense of his previous poetic vocation, „Viel hab’ ich schönes gesehn, | Und gesungen Gottes Bild | Hab’ ich, das lebet unter | Den Menschen.“<sup>37)</sup> Nevertheless, Hölderlin is not rejecting the image as such – he is no iconoclast – but the positivity of the image. What takes its place, as means and locus of artistic mastery, is the errant, vain, empty image already at work in the ruinous baroque splendors proliferating with the Counterreformation. This brings us to the following lines, which, following Uffhausen, read:

Der Kranich hält die Gestalt aufrecht.  
Die Majestätische, keusche, drüben

In Patmos, Morea, in der Pestluft.  
Türkisch. und die Eule, wohlbekannt der Schriften  
Spricht, heischern Frau gleich, in zerstörten Städten. Aber  
Die erhalten den Sinn. Oft aber wie ein Brand  
Entstehet Sprachverwirrung. Aber wie ein Schiff,  
Das lieget im Hafen, des Abends, wenn die Gloke läutet  
Des Kirchturms, und es nachhallt unten  
Im Eingewaid des Tempels und der Mönch  
Und Schäfer Abschied nehmet, vom Spaziergang  
Und Apollon, ebenfalls  
Aus Roma, derlei Pallästen, sagt  
Ade! unreinlich bitter, darum!

Regarding the ›Kranich‹, one of the poem’s many fowl, Bennholdt-Thomsen and Guzzoni remark that cranes (and also owls) appear frequently in Richard Chandler’s ›Reisen in Klein Asien‹, one of the chief sources for the novel ›Hyperion‹. Their seriousness and upright posture, moreover, suggests that they

<sup>36)</sup> BÖSCHENSTEIN, *Mythische Vorstellungsformen* (cit. fn. 24), pp. 329–330.

<sup>37)</sup> FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN/FRIEDRICH BEISSNER (eds.), *Sämtliche Werke* (cit. fn. 5), II. 1: pp. 153f.

are “Majestätische” – a word that plays a significant role in both Chandler and ›Hyperion‹.<sup>38</sup>) While this remark is illuminating, it also ignores the obvious fact that, while cranes do stand majestically upright, their necks are gracefully curved: their uprightness and righteousness is itself oblique, errant. Moreover, the manuscript suggests that the “a” in “Gestalt” was changed into an “e”. Whereas Sattler leaves it at this, Uffhausen conjectures that Hölderlin had first meant to write “Gang” rather than “Gestalt.” Tenuous as this might be, it is worth asking how we might bring together these two images: the crane’s gait and its shape.

We might go further, then, in pursuing the web of associations. It is worth noting that the Athenian youths used to dance a labyrinthine figure to commemorate their rescue from the Minoan labyrinth, which has been preserved into modern times in the Delian dance known as the “crane”.<sup>39</sup>) Hölderlin obliquely draws a connection with the crane-dance in ›Hyperions Jugend‹, describing a happy group of people who “pries und freute sich hoch, daß keiner sich verirrt hätte in den Labyrinthen des Ronnecatanzes.”<sup>40</sup>) The “Ronnecatanz”, Beißner notes, is a corruption, introduced through Reichard’s translation of the Count of Choiseul-Gouffier’s ›Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce‹, of the Roméca, which, as Choiseul-Gouffier explains, is not only the most common dance among the modern Greeks, but shows a striking connection with the dance of their ancestors, with some claiming to “recognize the image of the Cretan labyrinth in the manifold curves and turns of the dancers.” Choiseul-Gouffier goes on to reflect that the Greek’s taste in dancing remained unchanged: “Misfortune and slavery had no power over their natural tendency to pleasure, and a moment of festivity made them forget all their misery. Such a people, as frivolous [*leichtsinnig*] as it is lovable, often believes itself to be sufficiently avenged for a new imposition [*Auflage*] through a little song.”<sup>41</sup>) Dance preserves an archaic political memory; a memory of past gestures of freedom – and precisely insofar as it errantly repeats the errancy of the palace; or we might even say, the errant gestures of worldly, “majestic” power. In this way, moreover, the dance is what preserves the “sense” of scripture even when, as in the modern Greece of ›Hyperion‹, the cities are in ruins, and ›Sprachverwirrung‹ has spread like wildfire: or in other words, when language has been reduced to empty, meaningless signs.

<sup>38</sup>) BENNHOLDT-THOMSEN, GUZZONI, *Analecta* (cit. fn. 26), p. 154–155.

<sup>39</sup>) SIMON HORNBLOWER, ANTHONY SPAWFORTH (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford 1996, p. 1061.

<sup>40</sup>) FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN/FRIEDRICH BEISSNER (eds.), *Sämtliche Werke* (cit. fn. 5), III: p. 216.

<sup>41</sup>) *Ibid.*, III: pp. 511f.

This sets up the second half of the verse. The “Schiff”, read in the context of the late hymns, is not merely a banal signifier of human culture and order, but signifies the poem itself as the empty vessel through which the philological poet gains mastery over historical time by understanding how the “highest” is transmitted across historical epochs. This is expressed with great clarity in the first lines of ›Patmos‹:

Nah ist  
 Und schwer zu fassen der Gott.  
 Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst  
 Das Rettende auch.  
 Im Finstern wohnen  
 Die Adler und furchtlos gehn  
 Die Söhne der Alpen über den Abgrund weg  
 Auf leichtgebaueten Brücken.  
 Drum, da gehäuft sind rings  
 Die Gipfel der Zeit, und die Liebsten  
 Nah wohnen, ermattend auf  
 Getrenntesten Bergen,  
 So gieb unschuldig Wasser,  
 O Fittige gieb uns, treuesten Sinns  
 Hinüberzugehn und wiederzukehren.<sup>42)</sup>

The ship, nevertheless, is only mentioned in passing; more important is the *Glocke*. The vessel has now become mere sound, which resonates and echoes across the archipelagic mountains and their dwellings.<sup>43)</sup> This resonant sound initiates the departure of Apollo – “unreinlich bitter” since it was forced on him – from the palaces of Rome, his last holdout in modern times. The sound does not destroy the palaces, but transforms them: they are no longer the seat of the “Apollonreich” – the realm of beautiful art and architecture – but of another mode of representation, de-constructive rather than simply constructive; one which, like the graceful turns and curves of the Delian crane dance, holds onto its sense, and keeps majestically upright, by errantly unworking errancy.

## 9.

This brings us to the final verse of ›Der Vatikan‹. Reading the fragment through an eschatological lens, Detlev Lüders regards the „Sprachverwirrung“ as „ein Kennzeichen der Nachtzeit, in der die Einheit von Himmel und Erde von

<sup>42)</sup> Ibid., II.1: p. 165.

<sup>43)</sup> As Bennholdt-Thomsen und Guzzoni observe, Chandler speaks of “Eingeweiden” with reference to the volcanic origin of Asia Minor (Analecta (cit. fn. 26), p. 157).

Menschen nicht gesehen und ausgesprochen wird.<sup>44)</sup> The image of the ship, returned to port and at rest, he then claims, anticipates the “Vollendruhe” of the final verse. A more subtle account of this eschatological dimension is given by Eva Kocziszky in an article dedicated to the last verse of ›Der Vatikan‹. Seeking middle-ground between Böschenstein's mythologizing and Bennholdt-Thomsen and Guzzoni's naturalizing interpretations, Kocziszky argues that the fragment puts into play a complex intertwining of the natural and historical.<sup>45)</sup> Most remarkable is her analysis of „Rippe“:

Die ‚Rippe‘ ist in unserem Kontext die ‚des sandigen Erdballs‘, worin nicht nur die Perspektive einer kosmischen Aufnahme (um anachronistisch zu reden: eines Fotos) angegeben ist, die die kugelförmige, braune Erde von oben gesehen abbildet, sondern es klingt sogar die naturwissenschaftliche Fachsprache mit. Solche sprachliche Heteronomie ist zwar dem späten Hölderlin im Allgemeinen nicht fremd. Den nüchternen, sachlichen Charakter eines kosmischen Fotos betont auch die Bezeichnung des sandigen Erdballs. Durch die metonymische Gleichsetzung des Erdballs mit Sand und Staub wird die sichtbare Erscheinung der Erdkugel auf ihre Blöße reduziert. Die Erde zeigt ihr ausgesprochenes Wüsten- bzw. Totengesicht, sie ist öde, leer.<sup>46)</sup>

Understanding Hölderlin's late work as a “new mythology” that liberates mythical language from its authoritarian ties, Kocziszky conceives of the ›Brautlied‹ in terms of the reunion of the “Rippe” – read biblically as a designation for the “bride” – with the father-Heaven.<sup>47)</sup> I propose a somewhat different reading. The poem certainly has an eschatological dimension. Yet the very fact that a boat at harbor is never simply at rest but always awaiting another trip – that the end of one voyage is already the beginning of another – suggests that the “Vollendruhe” in question in the final verse is not merely the accomplishment of a static final stage of history, but itself is a movement-at-rest. It is in this that the “Verhältnis” – the “highest” according to the letter to Böhlendorff – consists. Yet whereas the Apollonian “Verhältnis” involved the beauty of a work of art that, like Pygmalion's statue, comes alive by grace of Aphrodite, the new “Verhältnis” is altogether different. It is no longer a matter of a spirit animating flesh already endowed with a beautiful, human form. Instead, the mere “ribs” of the sandy earth, dead and desiccated, begin to resonate: a macabre, skeletal dance. The “Verhältnis” is no longer living, as in the letter to Böhlendorff, yet it is “wirklich | Ganzem Verhältnis, samt der Mitte, | Und glänzenden.”

<sup>44)</sup> FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN/DETLEV LÜDERS (eds.), *Sämtliche Gedichte*, Wiesbaden 1989, II: p. 394.

<sup>45)</sup> EVA KOCZISKY, *Das ganze Verhältnis im Vatikan-Fragment Hölderlins*, in: *Euphorien* 103 (2009), p. 131–144.

<sup>46)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>47)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

It is significant that, of all the words in the fragment, “Rippe” has given rise to the greatest philological quandaries. Whereas Kocziszky regards it as a synecdoche for the bride – and, we might add, the *original* synecdoche; the figure for an act of creation and meaning that begins with an improper part, a trace of the other – Beißner, invoking the ambiguous French *côte*, claims that Hölderlin actually means “coast”.<sup>48</sup>) But it could also be taken in an architectural or nautical sense, referring to the transverse and diagonal ribs of a Gothic vault – quite far from the Classical “Säulenordnung” – or the curved beams shaping a ship’s hull. With this odd little word, utterly prosaic and utterly strange, “Sprachverwirrung”, breaking out like wildfire, spreads to the innermost structure of the poem. Or indeed: the *Rippe* and *Gerippe* of the poem is nothing else than words that remain left over when language, inflamed by spirit into an errant multitude of meanings, has burnt itself out. The “Rippe des sandigen Erdballs” is thus the site of a poetic language that has become purely philological; that has philologized itself into philology itself. Revelation is, for this language, what is utterly foreign. And yet revelation, the advent of the truth, nevertheless follows – as song, as tone. Even the most desiccated, dry, pedantic language begins to dance when, as Hölderlin writes in the fourth verse, “der Adler den Accent rufet, vor Gott.”

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<sup>48</sup>) FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN/FRIEDRICH BEISSNER (eds.), *Sämtliche Werke* (cit. fn. 5), II.2: p. 891.