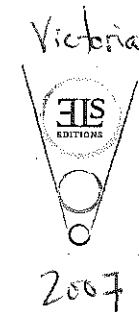


HÖLDERLIN
and the
QUESTION
of the
FATHER

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choanalytic practice. He did me the honor of entrusting me with this research in the psychobiography of the writer, in which I was preceded by the illustrious example of his work.

My teacher in philosophy, Jean Hyppolite, and my teacher in psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan, know that this work would simply not have seen the light of day without their work and their instruction. May they accept the evidence of all that I owe to their friendship.

I would also like to express my gratitude to those who instructed me in philosophy, in medicine, and psychiatry.

Finally, I would like Daniel Lagache to know how touched I am by the kindness with which he allowed this essay to be included in the "Bibliothèque de Psychanalyse."

Introduction

THE PROBLEMS POSED for psychiatry by the life and work of Hölderlin cannot help but raise the more general question of the relationship between artistic creation and mental illness – a topic that, by virtue of having been discussed over and over not only in a specious but also an incompetent way, has become tiresome. We are familiar with the banal generalities that we have inherited from the nineteenth century, which tend to assimilate "genius" with "madness" without any hesitation whatsoever. A scientific position like that of Cesare Lombroso aligns itself – to the letter – with the romantic extravagance that the surrealists, at least in theory, pushed to the extreme.

Nevertheless, having risen to the status of science, psychology and psychopathology had to ask the question anew. Following Freud, the bulk of research was limited to the psychology of the neuroses, while the psychoses remained – in fact if not by right – the *terra incognita* of dynamic psychology. In the field of the neuroses, Jean Delay's work provides an important corrective by precisely identifying the entry point and function of literary creation in the individual's conflict: he shows how neurotic conflict acts as a "thorn in the side," a source of dissatisfaction that drives the subject to reorganize its world and system of values to the point of finding a new equilibrium and, according to Gide's example, a "harmony that does not exclude dissonance."¹ More than an expression, the work is a "solution" that does not let its author go without modifying him or her; it constitutes what amounts to a self-psychotherapeutic success in contrast with the ever-renewed failures of the neurotic:

What is to be admired is that they knew how to make good use of the illness and found a solution to the inner difficulties that would have brought someone else to the point of failure. The

same neurotic organizations that we usually see in pathology ending up in a state of collapse can, in effect, end up with literary creation in the case of people sufficiently gifted to transform their original necessities into original purposes and to convert their weaknesses into strengths. ("Névrose et création" 97)

This thesis is convincingly demonstrated in Delay's *La jeunesse d'André Gide*, in which Gide is seen as transforming himself by taking a distance from each of the "novelistic doubles" in which he hypertrophies each of his "possible selves":

An *oeuvre* such as Gide's, precisely because it is made exclusively out of the personal difficulties of its author, achieves a veritable catharsis. In and by his characters he achieved an objectification of all of his tendencies, underwent a series of discoveries (*prises de conscience*), and brought about transferences (positive or negative) with his doubles, in order finally to achieve what amounts to a self-psychoanalysis. (646)

We can see how Jean Delay's work converges with what is most fruitful in the psychoanalytic movement: the dynamic study of the individual creator in his singularity and not the tedious listing of unconscious themes in a work, indeed throughout literature universally. Thus, in the field of the neuroses, psychiatry distances itself from all attempts to reduce the work to a pathology conceived as a lack-of-being (*moindre-être*). As for the objection that the psycho-biographical point of view neglects the intrinsic problem of the value of the work of art, it would be worth considering if someone could show how to approach literature in a way that did not proceed right from the start with such a bracketing. The study of the dynamic relations between creation and neurosis has, even at this level, the advantage of showing how the work, by the intermediary of neurosis, is connected to a more general problematic of human relationships. But just as most neurotics do not succeed in surmounting their difficulties by the catharsis of a work, so the majority of neurotics who "write" are not Gides or Dostoyevskys, but authors of mediocre diaries. Here we encounter the limits of what we know, and also the limits of our reverence.

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Moving to the psychotic side of mental pathology, we soon see that the same theory is no longer valid. This can be demonstrated simply by considering the general but fundamental criterion that distinguishes psychosis: the absence of "an awareness of the morbid state." If the literary work of the neurotic can be approached with psychoanalytic procedures,

it is precisely to the extent that it presents itself as the elaboration of and the attempt to resolve a problem to which the subject already has access. The conflict is already open, even if in a veiled and deformed fashion: the subject knows that it suffers from the "dissonance" that it bears within itself.

This is not to say that the psychotic does not suffer, but it is rare that this suffering opens onto a question that implicates the subject – that puts the subject into question: instead of an opening, the psychotic presents us with closure, the impenetrability of delirious certitude, as if psychosis brought a definitive solution to an inaccessible problematic – inaccessible to the point that we only have the choice between situating it in the domain of the organic or that of "foreclosure."² Better than the term solution, Freud calls delirium "an attempt at restitution." One should perhaps understand by this that it is not a matter of responding – as does any response worthy of the name – by leaving another opening to the question, but of returning at all costs, using any patch that is available, to the most perfect closure possible. The feedback that each solution exerts on the problem that motivates it here becomes radical: the creator, the neurotic artist, rearranges the basic elements in creating a new "substance" by the "form" of his response; psychosis succeeds in exploding the basic elements, of which we can find only shapeless fragments. To pursue this comparison between the neurotic's creation and the proliferation of delirium, we notice for example that the delirious subject tends to abolish the premise of any possible question: intersubjectivity. Even when neurotic, one writes always for the other, but it is for oneself that one is delirious.

Nonetheless, certain psychotics also paint or write. How are we to situate these efforts in relation to the artistic creation of those who are "normal" or who are neurotic as well as in relation to the simple "production" of delirium? Are they, like the work of a great neurotic, integrated into a cathartic process, or are they only a more successfully elaborated part of the monstrous castle by which the delirious subject masks the entrance to his dungeon?

My intention in this study is not to resolve this problem at a general level; there is no evidence that it poses itself in the same way for all psychotics. But if we examine these artistic productions we get the impression that a number of them add nothing to the delirium. Whether a cry or something more articulately worked out, it is nonetheless only the expression of an already fixed world of delirium. The psychotic artist reproduces a preexisting inner universe, and it is for good reason that the surrealists occasionally referred to it as an ideal: the psychotic is a realist artist. Like almost everything that appears in the course of an established schizophrenia, what the psychotic creates is no longer part of

an evolution and lacks all possible efficacy – positive or negative – on the course of the ailment.

It is in this sense that we can understand the theory of Henri Ey. The mad person, he says, is not an artist but a work of art; he does not create the marvelous, “he is the marvelous.” We can take this to mean that the psychotic being, as the bursting and exploding of unconscious phantasms, is a reality as charged with aesthetic emotion as – and even more so charged than – a landscape. The differences to be observed between these artists can therefore be reduced to the fact that not all are equally rich in phantasms: there are more and less beautiful landscapes. As for the expression of this inner world, one might say it is almost photographic.³

Henri Ey’s position also has the merit of not evading the question of the aesthetic. It wants to account at once for both the work and its value: the latter would come directly from the object, the common store of human phantasms, the abyss from which the insane person emerges, his arms filled with shells of marvelous concretions.

It would be necessary here to question the foundations of Ey’s own aesthetic, which is so objectivist as to assimilate the “beauty” of the schizophrenic to that of a sunset. On the other hand, if we do not want to take this comparison of two “natures” completely literally, it would only be by insisting on the emotional contents common to humanity that affect us in the psychotic work of art – a purely subjectivist, and no less questionable, aesthetic.

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When I took on the task of interrogating his life and work, it quickly became apparent that Hölderlin fundamentally eludes such a way of posing the problem. As an enigmatic exergue to this study, these few verses must accompany us:

A sign we are, without meaning
Without pain we are and have nearly
Lost our language in foreign lands...
 (“Mnemosyne,” *Hymns* 117)

One can no doubt find in this the expression of a certain world of the poet, of a certain being-in-the-world, in particular the mode of numbed feeling. “A sign we are, without meaning”: Is this not, it will be said, what we find in the work of schizophrenia, in the delirium of every schizophrenic: the bare sign, offered, delivered to *our* interpretation and to all possible interpretations, as this nature that some call psychological “depths” and others call “surreality”?

And yet there is still more to this: the expectation of an interpretation, the vague recollection of a meaning formerly accessible. The “obscure

disaster”⁴ of madness is more manifest here than it is in the prehistoric or organic cataclysm where one wants it – where *it wants* – forever to be crystallized. “[W]e...have nearly / Lost our language in foreign lands”: each word needs to be looked at carefully – “foreign,” the key dimension for Hölderlin, the “nearly” that introduces measure into the loss of language: almost lost, but enough remains for the poet.

Take the question of language in its simplest sense. Henri Ey, paraphrasing André Breton, states that the schizophrenic “makes love to words” (“Schizophrénies” 7). Let us say that this means that he gives himself over to an orgy of phantasms, and that this language is so impregnated with magic, adheres so tightly to the imaginary that it is no longer anything more than merely another aspect of it. How reserved then would the embrace of someone like Hölderlin be; Blanchot rightly insists on the destitution, even the indigence of his language. And, on the other hand, how conscious and deliberate, how painstaking, Hölderlin’s effort to go back to and endlessly revise his work. Who, while being so little of an aesthete and still so much the artist, could be as distant as he is from non-stop poetry and automatic writing?⁵ With what meticulousness he uses this *nearly* nothing of language that remains to him!

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The two obvious facts that I have tried to keep steadily in view in the course of this study are that Hölderlin was not “a work of art” but a genuine poet and that he spent the last forty years of his life in the most undeniable madness. But is it not possible both to be mad and to be a poet, or be a poet and become mad, or be a poet and be mad on occasion, or a poet liberated by madness...? These various responses seem more interested in doing away with the enigma rather than confronting it adequately. It is too often the case that the most general questions are asked about Hölderlin, that our knowledge of schizophrenia is applied to him without, for example, any interest in finding out if he might not clarify the problem of madness with a new light, a poetic light.

It is encouraging that the extreme limits of such a scotomization had been achieved very early in Hölderlin studies, so that one can only from now on progress in the direction of a more comprehensive vision. It is not immaterial that this position was first held by Lange’s *Pathography*, which comes supplied with all the assurances and all the information available in 1909. Lange solidly establishes the diagnosis of “dementia praecox of a catatonic form” that no author after him sought to contest.⁶ His biography tends to distinguish as clearly as possible between what emerges from Hölderlin as the result of a psychopathic character, and what emerges as a result of mental illness. We owe to him the meticulous inventory of Hölderlin’s character traits before his madness, a portrait of the total “subjectivity” in which Lange sees the sign of a pathological

constitution also to be found in the case of a number of the Romantics. Lange tries to demonstrate how this "psychopathy" expresses itself in the works prior to the madness: the novel *Hyperion* – "chaotic" in its form and marked in its substance by "Wertherian weakness" (67); a part of "Empedocles"; a certain number of poems. He indicates how in terms of his emotional life Hölderlin undergoes a series of depressions that ought not to be characterized as psychotic. The only exception to what can be called these reactive depressions is the one that culminated, in June 1795, in a sudden departure from Jena; it alone would be pathological in the strict sense (41).

Lange however does not explicitly identify this depression as a forerunner of psychosis: he locates the beginning of psychosis and its progression at the turn of the century. Mental illness begins to appear as of 1800, but it is still too difficult to find evidence of it in the work, where there are only presentiments of psychosis in the melancholic sadness of the tone. As of 1801, it all becomes more clear: the poems of this period are "for the most part already pathological whether in their affective content or by an obvious intellectual weakness" (98).

Mental illness becomes manifest in 1802, after Hölderlin returns from Bordeaux. Hölderlin is in a state of excitation during which he is given to impulsive and aggressive acts. When he returns to relative calm and is able to devote himself to writing poetry, these are, according to Lange, marked by a number of pathological traits: the transition to free verse, which might seem to some to be a sign of progress, is in reality a loosening of formal control; disjointedness, trivialities, and filler betray the lowering of the intellectual level. The content is fluid to the point of incomprehensibility, the images painfully *recherchées*, with mannerism everywhere apparent (104ff.).

With Lange we can follow the rapid aggravation of psychosis, which he describes judiciously. He notes the striking variability of the illness, between 1802 and 1805, which gave Sinclair the impression that his friend, like Hamlet, was in all lucidity pretending to be mad (119). In 1805, moments of indifference begin to appear in alternation with an anxious excitement. In 1806, a particularly violent state of agitation requires a year-long internment. From 1807 to his death, Hölderlin lives in foster care with a carpenter named Zimmer and his family, in Tübingen; his fits of violent excitation disappear in 1814, the date at which Lange figures he reaches "terminal catatonia" (144).

It is beyond my intention here to describe Hölderlin the madman, of whom Waiblinger, who elected to become friends with Hölderlin during the period of his distress, has left us a portrait as penetrating as it is moving. Nor will I follow Lange on the etiological terrain, on which

I might add he remains very cautious, juxtaposing hypotheses without concluding anything.⁷

On the relationship of the work to mental illness, Lange's conclusion is decisive: the "psychopathy" of Hölderlin had a double effect on his work: negative in that it marked his work with disorder and incompleteness; positive in that it gives to the prepsychotic work its accent of reverie, of idealism, its elegiac sensibility. As for the psychosis, all it did was devastate the creative faculties of the poet. In this way Lange is made to place the greater part of the poetic *grand-oeuvre* under the rubric of psychotic productions without any value. He adopts absolutely as his own the categorical assessment of Möbius: "Hölderlin's poetry, like Lenau's, belongs to the 'poetry of the asylum' and the endless jeremiads [on its behalf] become unbearable after a while" (cited in Lange 169). The poems so beloved by Hölderlin's fervent admirers are dismantled into symptoms or into moving remainders of a lost mastery by an analysis that claims to be not only psychiatric but also aesthetic. It is particularly instructive to compare the chronology of the work that Lange, following Litzmann and Böhm, assumes, with the dates that the recent critical edition of Hölderlin tries to establish: most of the poems are post-dated by Lange so that it is easy to treat the obscurities and singularities they harbor with contempt. With a more accurate chronology, the problem is more apparent, since certain of the most obscure works must be dated from 1800.⁸

Of course we cannot blame Lange for the state of literary criticism in his time; but his hastiness in drawing conclusions on the basis of internal criteria, or even on the basis of a purely subjective assessment, contrasts with the usual caution of his procedure. Once this radical rejection is leveled at the major part of Hölderlin's *oeuvre*, the problem is eliminated, or shifted onto the terrain of the psychology of the normal or of the pathological... the terrain of the public: snobbism and a fascination with madness are here the keys to a shoddy lock.

However radical Lange's conclusions are, they are the culmination of an approach that aims to distinguish what in the poet's *oeuvre* is conditioned by psychosis and what is comprehensible only in terms of the poet's personality. Other studies, for example the work of Bertaux, are characterized by the same preoccupation with making distinctions. But Bertaux's point of view is purely literary, and he is motivated by a clear-sighted sympathy, a will to take comprehension as far as possible. As opposed to the pathographer trying to uncover the stigma of madness everywhere, Bertaux emphasizes the signs of wisdom, of *sang-froid*, of sensitivity, that allow one to recognize the captivating figure of Hölderlin even in the later work. In this inquiry, madness is a kind of irreducible

residue that only appears when the spirit of understanding has exhausted all of its resources: Bertaux wins back the greater part of the great hymns from madness; in the last hymns, "the overexcitement... does not impede clear thinking, [but] only disrupts its expression" (381–82); only the latest poems can "in all conscience" be called "poems of madness." With this impulse to understand, Bertaux obviously runs into problems of dating: even if he pushes madness up to the return from Bordeaux, he is forced to assume a very long period of "invasion," which makes it difficult to explain how the work was able completely to escape any pathological influence (11–12). To account for this period, he has to invoke a sort of psychological evolution that in certain ways resembles madness while being entirely different from it: "Hölderlin will from now on live in this darkness into which he will sink more and more profoundly. I do not mean by this to allude to his madness, but to the spiritual isolation that existed prior to his madness and that was to be his lot" (309).

Because of his effort to take understanding as far as it will go and at the same time to discover its limits, and because of his tendency to consider madness a sort of foreign body in psychological development – like an organically determined process against which the subject struggles before being beaten by it – Bertaux's work can be taken up by a psychiatry inspired by Karl Jaspers. Jaspers' study of Hölderlin, however, goes beyond a simple delineation of development and process in Hölderlin's work.⁹ Adopting the chronology used by Lange, Jaspers places the beginning of mental illness around 1801:

There are two stages to Hölderlin's poetry. The first dates to about 1801, the second to around 1805–1806. The first one marks the passage from sanity to illness, the second one occurs during and is contained within the process. The time between the two points is filled with the forces of the process, disintegrating, exciting, changing certain functions, embattled with a disciplining will which, with utmost energy, seeks coherence, order, totality. (Strindberg 146, trans. mod.)

In this way Hölderlin's *grand-oeuvre*, which only appears during this interval, is not to be explained by the concept of process alone. In another chapter in the same collection, Jaspers is more explicit: the experience of schizophrenic shattering provokes a sort of tearing by means of which the "demonic" emerges. The "demonic" or "demoniacal reality" – which exists, although repressed, in everyone – is an "immediate proximity of the absolute," something "beyond the contrast of sane or insane; but the pathological process occasions and favors the eruption of these forces, even if only momentarily" (129). This perspective only differs

from a neo-Jacksonian theory in the sign given to what triggers the process of the illness: what for Jaspers is the experience of the absolute is nothing other than what Henri Ey calls "the lyric core immanent to human nature."

In his preface to the French edition of Jaspers' study, Maurice Blanchot only spends a little time on the path taken by Jaspers, whose ideas he at first attempts to take to their point of maximum clarity. But he quickly frees himself from them in order to offer a quite different interpretation of Hölderlin's development. The divergence emerges right away in a specific objection: literary critics will not discover in Hölderlin's *oeuvre* the so-called rupture of 1801, which for Jaspers corresponds to the moment at which the psychotic process appeared. The years 1800–1801, when Hölderlin writes the major hymns, are part of "a continuous development, a supreme fidelity to his goals, which he approaches little by little through patient investigation and a control ever greater and better suited to the truth of what he seeks and what he sees" (*Reader* 118).

On the basis of this indisputable assessment, Blanchot describes Hölderlin's entire evolution since "Empedocles" as a continuous destiny, as the ever-clearer elaboration of the problem posed to Hölderlin on the level both of the quotidian and of the poetic: "How can anything finite and determined bear a true relation with the undetermined?" (119). Hölderlin's existence is thus particularly exemplary of poetic destiny, which Blanchot connects to the very essence of speech as the "relation to absence": "The work requires of the writer that he lose everything he might construe as his own 'nature,' that he lose all character and that, ceasing to be linked to others and to himself by the decision which makes him an 'I,' he becomes the empty place where the impersonal affirmation emerges" (*Space* 55). Without denying the existence of a psychotic process, Blanchot argues that it has nothing to do with this evolution, which started before it; between poetic and schizophrenic destiny there is a kind of relay, a kind of correspondence in the Baudelairean sense of the term:

schizophrenia seems to be just the projection of that life [of poetic opposition and tension] at a certain moment and on a certain plane, the point of the trajectory where the truth of existence in its entirety, having become sheer poetic affirmation, sacrifices the normal conditions of possibility, and continues to reverberate from the deep of the impossible as pure language, the nearest to the undetermined and yet the most elevated – language unfounded, founded on the abyss – which is announced also by this fact: that the world is destroyed. (*Reader* 120)

Pushing his idealist interpretation even further, Blanchot goes so far as to reverse the perspective completely and to make of Hölderlin only a moment of this "dialectic of derangement" (123) by which the Logos happens: "it is the realization of the true which, at a certain point and in spite of him, demands of his personal reason that it become pure impersonal transparency whence there is no return" (121); "Hölderlin knows this: he himself must become a mute sign, the silence which the truth of language demands in order to attest that what speaks nevertheless does not speak but remains the truth of silence" (124).

Blanchot is not the first to have argued for this resolutely anti-"scientific" and anti-"psychological" unitary thesis. Hellingrath had already maintained, with more mysticism and less dialectical vigor, the idea that the poet's madness needs to be understood as the final manifestation of his spiritual development. It is both the logical culmination and the mysterious seal of a destiny that made Hölderlin "entirely and solely the harbinger and the receptacle of the gods" ("La démence" 219). Taking literally the idea of the poet's divine mission, Hellingrath asks the reader to imagine "the best possible continuation of this life." Death would subject the entirety of his message "to the risk of being transformed into dream." It is necessary, to be sure, "that the transfigured man disappear," but "the only way left is to make him vanish while he is still alive." "The receptacle of the revelation" must "move mutely among people, reminding them of this revelation...the living voice must be extinguished in a light murmur" (236-37).

I do not at all mean to reject these two "metaphysical" points of view without examining them. Thus, when Hellingrath describes the flood of courtesies with which the mad Hölderlin overwhelmed his visitors as a perfectly deliberate form of behavior, it would be pointless to refer back to him his comment on "the incompetent judgments of professionals on his madness" ("La démence" 220): to do so would be to forgo the opportunity to learn what an analysis of the intentionality of mannerism, irony, or black humor might teach us about schizophrenic being-in-the-world.

But it is Blanchot in particular who clearly argues the unitary thesis, and rather than oppose him with the argument from authority, I would simply ask him to explain his reasoning. Is it not giving up too much too early in the effort to take understanding as far as possible when you assume without discussion that madness is a kind of impenetrable entity, "the illness" that "seizes" the poet at the heart of the abyss where he has voluntarily gone? In other words, Blanchot shows that there is a certain exigency, a certain question of poetry, the risk of which Hölderlin is not moreover the only one to have undergone. Taken to its final consequences, this exigency leads to a certain mode of existence

(which is rather a mode of non-being). It is at this final point, a point where the subject is stabilized, even if it is "founded on the abyss," that the schizophrenic mode of existence manages, on another "plane," to take over from the poetic mode of existence. This is to say that there is no exigency, no question that is properly schizophrenic. Schizophrenia is taken to be what it appears to be, how it wants to be seen: a response without a question. Such is the trap set by the schizophrenic, by which Blanchot lets himself be taken, perhaps following Jaspers himself; his theory interprets Hölderlin's existence in a unitary way only at the cost of this opaque, epiphenomenal, abstraction excluded from any dialectic: "schizophrenia."

I have also stated the factual argument that leads Blanchot to refuse the idea that Hölderlin's *oeuvre* and his schizophrenia develop in an interwoven way: the only turning point in Hölderlin's poetry "is the moment when he becomes master of the hymn - of what is termed mythic lyricism. The tragedy of 'Empedocles' was its first expression. But that moment occurs before 1800," and therefore, as far as criticism is concerned, before the onset of madness (*Reader* 181). Blanchot questions Jaspers' point of view concerning the evolution of the *oeuvre*, but he assumes without discussion (how could he do otherwise?) his chronology of the onset of psychosis, which is taken straight out of Lange's *Pathography*. Lange bases his history of the mental illness in the period between 1800 and 1801 first of all on criteria drawn from the *oeuvre*. Blanchot, who no longer believes in reading schizophrenia in the *oeuvre*, has retained Lange's conclusion while refusing its premises.

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This rapid review of the literature can be summarized in a broad antithesis. Most critics attempt to draw a dividing line throughout the *oeuvre* between what is determined by madness and that which eludes it. For some, this border is well established chronologically. For others, it is to be found in the very interior of the works considered one by one, whether in the opposition of debilitating symptoms and the creative power they leave intact, or in the distinction between the development of the illness and the poetic power it unleashes. However different their theories may be, these critics consider schizophrenia a factor that acts upon Hölderlin's spiritual development and poetic genius from the outside.

I do not intend to debate at this general a level a point of view so solidly sustained in the psychiatric tradition; but as I read through the hymnic works, it seemed to me that to bring such distinctions to bear on them right from the beginning is to refuse to face this enigma: in the period when he is writing the *grand-oeuvre* that earns him - from more than one person with good judgment - the title of poet *par excellence*, Hölderlin already shows evident signs of schizophrenia.

In opposition to the tendency discussed above, critics occasionally try to discover an absolute continuity between the life and work. Insufficiently armed to deal with the problem of madness, their unitary theory comes to ruin on it: with complete disregard for current psychiatric experience, Hellingrath defends the idea of schizophrenia as a mask and as the seal of the divine; Blanchot oscillates between a similar theory and accepting a new irreducible duality between spiritual development and "the illness" that intersects with it.

It seemed to me that because of its exceptional character the case of Hölderlin the mad poet called for new attempts to understand his work and his evolution towards and in madness as one single movement, even if it is scanned as a dialectic and a multilinear counterpoint. My objective in this study could not have been to complete the whole of such a project, but the objection raised by Blanchot's conception pointed to a more limited task: if it is true that Hölderlin's *oeuvre*, as a number of critics think, underwent a new reorientation in the Homburg years (1798–1800), should we not explore this period anew in order to look for the possible development of a psychotic problematic? In this way we would raise one of the chronological questions that hinders the examination of the relationship of Hölderlin's *grand-oeuvre* to the dynamic of his schizophrenia, while at the same time assembling the first signs of the substance of the question.

The notion of an episode with a pathological look to it during the Jena period (1794–1795) led me to extend my work to the entire period between 1794–1800, as the area likely to harbor the prodromes or the first manifestations of psychosis.

This project should be seen as both a preface and an introduction to investigations that would aim not at interpreting the *oeuvre* according to a certain conception of psychosis, but at listening to and making more explicit the poetic utterance of madness.

Chapter One

Depression in Jena

THE EPILOGUE OF the Waltershausen-Jena period (Christmas 1793 to June 1795) is known as the "Jena depression." Coming out of that depression, Hölderlin, with that remarkable awareness of the pathological elements of his personality and of his biography that only starts to get dim very late, writes to Hegel on November 20 1796: "It is a good thing the evil spirits I brought with me from Franconia and the ethereal spirits with metaphysical wings that accompanied me out of Jena have left me since I arrived in Frankfurt" (ltr. 128, 6: 239). While "spirits" might be referring to sub-delirious elements that may or may not have been emerging in this period, I think we have to take the term in a metaphorical sense. Franconia (Waltershausen) and Jena are places where Hölderlin forms interpersonal relations that shake him profoundly. Bringing "spirits" along with him means precisely to have effected the interiorization that transforms interpersonal relations into intrapersonal elements, a process that psychoanalysis has taught us to recognize.

Following such a psychological approach, I will closely attend not to character traits as much as to interpersonal constellations in order to find in them certain specific types of "object relations," to observe the play and transformation of figures in them, and to try to recover the psychotic structure and meaning that determines the connections among them.

In Christmas 1793, Hölderlin was in his twenty-third year. He had just finished his studies at the Tübingen seminary. The Royal Consistory of Stuttgart had entitled him to assume a pastoral pulpit: Upon his return home to Nürtigen, he immediately started to preach in the surrounding villages to practice his ministry.

Nonetheless, since September 1793 he had been actively looking for a position as a tutor. One of the most notable constants of Hölderlin's

they give no answer. Out of my own self, when I ask, there come mystic sayings, dreams without meaning.

Often it is well with my heart in this twilight. I do not know what is happening to me when I see her – unfathomable Nature; but they are holy blessed tears that I weep before the veiled beloved. My whole being falls silent and listens when the soft mysterious breath of evening fans me. Lost in the wide azure I gaze up to the ether and into the holy sea, and I feel then as if the gates of the invisible were opening to me and I were dissolving with everything around me, until a rustling in the bushes wakes me from the blessed dying and against my will calls me back to the spot from which I started.

It is well with my heart in this twilight. Is it our element, this twilight? Why can I not rest in it?

Then, one day recently, I saw a boy lying by the roadside. His mother, who was watching, had carefully spread a covering over him, so that he should sleep in soft shadow and not be dazzled by the sun. But the boy did not want to stay there and tore off the covering, and I saw how he tried to look at the friendly light and tried again and again, until his eyes smarted and, weeping, he turned his face to earth.

Poor boy, I thought, others fare no better; I myself had almost resolved to desist from this audacious curiosity. But I cannot, I must not!

It must out, the great secret that will give me life or death.

Notes

Introduction § 3-14

- 1 In his preface to *Hyperion*, Hölderlin writes that he set out to demonstrate “[t]he resolution of dissonances in a particular character” (Schwarz 1). But the last words of the novel leave it open, as if it is unfinished: *nächstens mehr*, “More soon” (133).
- 2 On the opposition of the neurotic as “posing a question” (for example, by the very fact of going to a psychoanalyst) and the psychotic as “no longer posing a real question...having already responded to the question that was posed to him or her by entering into psychosis,” see Leclair 108-09.
- 3 See especially Ey, “La psychiatrie devant le surréalisme.” This opposition between the work of the psychotic and that of the neurotic no doubt needs to be more nuanced. The neurotic also has a world from which he or she cannot completely escape, and if he or she does succeed in becoming free of it it is often by describing it to an extreme degree; and the mad artist does not purely and simply translate his or her delirium without on occasion enriching it.
- 4 [A reference to Mallarmé’s poem “Tomb of Edgar Poe”: “Calm block here fallen from obscure disaster” (Mallarmé 71). – trans.]
- 5 [Allusions to Paul Eluard’s *Poésie ininterrompue* and the surrealist practice of automatic writing. – trans.]
- 6 In his study, based on Ernst Kretschmer’s theory, Treitschler disputes neither the diagnosis of schizoidia nor Hölderlin’s schizophrenia, but he does qualify them with a cyclothymic component.
- 7 Lange provides a very detailed, but not very convincing, genealogy of Hölderlin.
- 8 “Ground for Empedocles,” which Lange considers the work of “a mind that has suffered much,” he claims was written “at the earliest in 1802” (116).
- 9 See page 145 n.2 below.

Chapter One: Depression in Jena § 15-52

- 1 Note that this second passage, already cited on page 18, appears in the midst of allusions to Hölderlin’s love life: memories of Lebrecht and observations that at Jena “the girls and women leave me cold as ice” (6: 166). Hölderlin turns to the recent past in direct contrast to his present situation: “At Waltershausen I had...a friend...” which perhaps clarifies the meaning of the word *Freundin*, which is almost as ambiguous as it is in its French translation, “amie.”
- 2 On April 2 1797 Ernst Schwendler writes from Frankfurt to the Privy Counsellor Heim in Meiningen: “I saw Hölderlin at a concert fourteen days ago (he rarely goes out). I spoke to him and talked for quite a while with him, but not about the Kirms woman. At any rate, I think that if he thought I knew anything about it, he would have wanted me to be ten miles from there. He is a charming man. I would like to know what his feelings are towards Kirms now, but I am completely unwilling to let him know that I know about it.” On August 5 1797, he writes: “I have not seen Mr. Hölderlin again. He does not visit many people, but keeps to himself, living for his studies and – some say – for the mother of his pupil, who must be a lovely woman. This made me not take advantage of his invitation, which was offered only out of politeness. He must think that I know of his former relations (*sonstige Verhältnisse*) and, for this reason, it seems I am not welcome in his company. I always hoped by Fritz’s letters to get to know him better, which is something I very much desire” (cited in Beck, “Die Gesellschafterin” 48).

NOTE: The “Thalia Fragment,” or “Hyperion Fragment,” was originally published in November 1794 by Schiller in his review *Neuer Thalia*. The translation here appended, by K.W. Maurer, originally omitted Hölderlin’s brief but important preface, which Eric Miller has translated for this volume.