Foucault's Hölderlin

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Summary

This article traces the dispersal of language, its significance for Foucault's idea of Literature in modernity, and the paradigmatic role of Hölderlin's writings within it. This path centrally involves outlining the interface, in the modern *episteme*, between language and Literature, the double withdrawal of the gods/God, the double division between reason and madness, and the "mad poet/philosopher/genius" within it. The article draws together Foucault's archaeological account of Literature, and his genealogy of madness and of genius, in order to elucidate the "truth", judged by the terms of a genealogical account, and the "falsity", judged by the terms of an archaeological account, of the proverbial epithet "the mad genius/poet/philosopher" associated with the name of Hölderlin.

Opsomming

Hierdie artikel ondersoek die verstrooiing van taal, die belangrikheid daarvan vir Foucault se idee van die letterkunde in die moderniteit en die paradigmatiese rol van Hölderlin se werke daarin. Die ondersoek skets primêr die koppelvlak in die moderne *episteme* tussen taal en letterkunde, die dubbele onttrekking van die gode/God, die dubbele skeiding tussen rede en waansin, en die "waansinnige digter/filosoof/genie" daarbinne. Die artikel trek Foucault se argeologiese verslag van die letterkunde en sy genealogie van waansin en van genialiteit saam ter verheldering van die "waarheid", beoordeel volgens die terme van 'n genealogiese verslag, en die "valsheid", beoordeel volgens die terme van 'n argeologiese verslag, van die spreekwoordelike epiteton "die waansinnige genie/digter/filosoof" wat met die naam Hölderlin geassosieer word.

Foucault's Threshold Texts

In positioning certain texts at epistemic thresholds, Foucault might have cited the words with which Hölderlin dedicated his epistolary novel *Hyperion* to the Princess of Homburg: "Most often poets have been formed at the very beginning or at the end of an epoch." ["Meist haben sich Dichter zu Anfang oder zu Ende einer Weltperiode gebildet." (Hölderlin quoted in Warminski 1987: 48)]

However, Hölderlin's idea of the "beginning" and the "end of an epoch", and Foucault's delimitation of an *episteme*, do not form a frame for particular kinds of writing governed by the rules of formation of discourses

specific to such epochs or *epistemes*. While a particular *episteme* may provide the conditions for the emergence of particular forms of writing, it does not determine them; writing is not the site of its typical expression. Out of the three groups of writers – Cervantes, Sade, and Hölderlin/Nerval/ Nietzsche/Artaud/Mallarmé – which feature in Foucault's account of the formation of orders of knowledge (in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [1966]1970), there are two that play an exemplary role – Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605 and 1615) and the Marquis de Sade's *Les 120 journées de Sodome* (written in 1785, published in 1909), *Justine* (1791) and *Histoire de Juliette* (1797).

But they do not simply "represent" or "express" the organising principles of "their" respective *epistemes*. They are exemplary in a complex way, through the contradictory or negative role in relation to the *epistemes* whose thresholds they inhabit. At the end of the Renaissance, Don Quixote reads the world in terms of analogies taken as signs and representations, and acts on that reading, breaking the Renaissance logic, which earns him his contemporaries' verdict of being mad. His logic is exposed by the reasoning of the *âge classique*, which relegates it to madness: "*Don Quixote* is a negative of the Renaissance world; writing has ceased to be the prose of the world; resemblances and signs have dissolved their former alliance; similitudes have become deceptive and verge upon the visionary or madness …." (Foucault [1966]1970: 47).[1]

Don Quixote comes to function as a boundary text at the cusp of an epistemic rupture between the similitude/resemblances/analogies of the Renaissance and the representation of the *âge classique*. At the same time, it figures the role of representation in the emerging *âge classique*, even foreshadowing modernity: Don Quixote has escaped from the book but has to live by the book, he has to present himself in the likeness of the signs of the book, become a character in his book, and fulfil the promise of the book (Foucault [1966]1970). He has become the reality that he owes to language alone. The world appears as a book, the book as the world. The idea of representation is taken to its most absurd and radical conclusion, which simultaneously marks the madness of the Don's constructions, hinging, as they do, not only on the coincidence of the word and the thing, but of the book and the world.

> Don Quixote must remain faithful to the book that he has now become in reality; … he must fill in all the details that have been left out; he must

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1. "Alienation in analogy" remained the very definition of madness right up to nineteenth-century psychiatry.

preserve its truth. But Don Quixote himself has not read this book, and does not have to read it, since he is the book in flesh and blood … he has now, despite himself and without his knowledge, become a book that contains his truth, that records exactly all that he has done and said and seen and thought …

(Foucault [1966]1970: 48)

Foucault suggests that there is an analogy between *Don Quixote* and de Sade's writings as texts situated on an epistemic threshold: the writings of de Sade "are in the same position on the threshold of modern culture as that occupied by *Don Quixote* between the Renaissance and classicism" (Foucault [1966]1970: 210; see also 211). *Don Quixote* had opened the *âge classique*, while de Sade's writings are closing it. In *Don Quixote*, resemblances become absurd and crazy when read as signs and representations; analogously, desire batters at the limits of representation in the writings of the Marquis de Sade (p. 211), breaking down the supremacy of representation.

Literature in the Modern *Episteme*

For Foucault, "this language that says nothing, is never silent, and is called 'literature'" (Foucault [1966]1970: 306) emerges when the articulation of language is delinked from representation (Foucault [1966]2000). It stands no longer as guarantor of the relationship between words and things (in representation), between thinking and speaking; it no longer provides the form of knowing; on the contrary, it becomes the object, as thought is brought back towards it (Foucault [1966]1970: 306). With language disappearing as organising principle or form of knowledge, and becoming an object of knowledge, the location of texts in relation to epistemic formations changes.

   Foucault's third group of texts, including those by Hölderlin, Nerval, Nietzsche, Artaud, and Mallarmé, can arise in the modern *episteme* only because of and with a change in the status of language. Sharing this condition with language, their exemplary status in relation to the *episteme* undergoes a further twist. Their status in relation to the *episteme* is no longer even negatively or contradictorily exemplary, as the texts associated with these writers lack a reference to an outside by which they could be cast in relation to "representation" or "discourse"; instead, they gesture toward a

certain kind of ontology of language.[2] From the break with representation in modernity arises a distinct role for Literature – distinct *for* the modern *episteme*, but also distinct *from* art (Foucault [1966]2000). Literature arises at the site of the most radical and irrecoverable break: that of language with itself, between its role as anchor of representation and as object of knowledge.[3]

Archaeology of Literature and Genealogy of Madness/Genius

In this article, I would like to trace the dispersal of language, its significance for Foucault's idea of Literature in modernity, and the paradigmatic role of Hölderlin's writings within it. This path centrally involves outlining the interface, in the modern *episteme*, between language and Literature, the double withdrawal of the gods/God, the double division between reason and madness, and the "mad poet/philosopher/genius" within it.

In itself symptomatic, as it were, Foucault's Hölderlin falls between the dispersed functions of language that, in their distinctness, allow for an interarticulation. Hölderlin's claim on Literature appears largely in Foucault's "Archaeology of the Human Sciences" (*The Order of Things*, [1966]1970), while the elaborations on Hölderlin's madness largely fall within a genealogy of madness in *Madness and Civilization* ([1961]1965),

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2. To illustrate this, Foucault construes an indirect dialogue between Nietzsche and Mallarmé:

   To the Nietzschean question: "Who is speaking?", Mallarmé replies … by saying that what is speaking is, in its solitude, in its fragile vibration, in its nothingness, the word itself – not the meaning of the word, but its enigmatic and precarious being.

   (Foucault [1966]1970: 305)

3. In outlining the tectonic shifts in the order of knowledge, Foucault distinguishes this unique event pertaining to language from that pertaining to natural history and in the analysis of wealth:

   When the table of natural history was dissociated, the living beings within it were not dispersed, but, on the contrary, regrouped around the central enigma of life; when the analysis of wealth had disappeared, all economic processes were regrouped around the central fact of production and all that rendered it possible; on the other hand, when the unity of general grammar – discourse – was broken up, language appeared in a multiplicity of modes of being, whose unity was probably irrecoverable.

   (Foucault [1966]1970: 304)

and within a genealogy of genius in "The Father's No" ([1962]1977). It is my aim, in this paper, to draw together Foucault's archaeological account of Literature, and his genealogy of madness, in order to elucidate the "truth", judged by the terms of a genealogical account, and the "falsity", judged by the terms of an archaeological account, of the proverbial "mad genius/poet/philosopher" associated with the name of Hölderlin. More generally, I hope to be able to offer a partial answer to Foucault's question, "[H]ow can language apply a *single and identical* discourse to poetry and madness?" (Foucault [1962]1977: 79).

Hölderlin within a Modern Aesthetic

In Foucault's archaeological account of the orders of knowledge in *The Order of Things* ([1966] 1970), the modern *episteme* arises with the decline of representation and the emancipation of language. However, Foucault does not contemplate the consequences of the tectonic shift in the role of language, for a positioning of Literature in modernity distinct from that of the other arts. The distinct place of Literature within a modern aesthetic clearly emerges in the third group of texts that Foucault cites to demonstrate the return of language in modernity. The poetics carved out by Hölderlin's writings, for instance, testifies to the distinct status of language and Literature. In his first letter to his friend Casimir Ulrich Böhlendorff (4 December 1801), Hölderlin never mentions "art". The aesthetic for him is explicitly and decidedly textual, and formal at that, heralding a formal ontology of language: the task of the poet is that of calculation (see Hölderlin 1969b: 730-731). Hölderlin's texts drive the technical rules governing poetic composition towards the counter-rhythmical (see "Anmerkungen zum Oedipus" – Hölderlin 1969b: 729-736; "Anmerkungen zur Antigonä" – Hölderlin 1969b: 783-790; also Warminski 1987: 35). Hölderlin poses and pursues this task all the more vigorously, as it is onerous, responding, as it does, to the failure of sacred names.

If (Nietzsche's) God is conjured up with the belief in grammar, then the failure of grammar entails the demise of God. The gods wandering off through a rift in language (Foucault [1966]2000: 150) give rise to the poem, and more specifically, the poem that breaks with metrical form. Enter intransitive writing, twinned with the possibility of "the mad poet/philosopher" (see Foucault [1963]1977: 44). The location of Literature in modernity holds these three conditions – the evanescence of the gods, intransitive writing, and madness – as a matter of the split in the function of language in relation to the epistemic order.

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The distinctive role of Literature for the modern *episteme* positions Foucault's third group of texts, including those by Hölderlin, Nerval, Nietzsche, Artaud, and Mallarmé, differently from the role assigned to Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and the Marquis de Sade's writings. The third group of texts does not work towards illuminating, anticipating, or challenging the knowledge structures of the *âge classique*; nor is their "madness" comparable to that of Don Quixote. Released from its tie to representation, language acquires its own being. But it is not a matter of pitting two orders of knowledge against each other in such a way that the superseding knowledge formation exposes the "irrationality" of the superseded one, or conversely, that the superseded knowledge formation exposes the "irrationality" of the anticipated one. Rather, Foucault's third group of texts instantiates a dialogue between reason and madness. How does the dialogue of reason with unreason become audible across epistemic ruptures that once and for all divide reason from unreason, and further down the line, further dividing this divide, in the dispersion that marks Foucault's (post)modernity?

Dialogue between Reason and Madness

Facilitating this dialogue would require following an ethical directive outlined by Foucault *ex negativo* in the Preface to *Folie et dérasion: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (1961), translated into English under the title *Madness and Civilization* (London: Tavistock, 1965): to trace the lines of this division, in a non-positivist way, not relying on the sciences that have instituted the division, and that have become operative in subjugating unreason to the language of reason (see [1961]1965: xii).

This would seem an impossible task, as there is no common language that could put together the pieces of this "broken dialogue" (Foucault [1961] 1965: xii). The difficulty is compounded by the fact that there is no methodological/theoretical blueprint: "neither the history of knowledge, nor history itself", "neither the teleology of truth nor the rational sequence of causes" (Foucault [1961]1965: xiii) offer themselves; and least of all does psychology have a method of addressing itself to its constitutive outside. For the role assumed by psychology has been to dissociate madness from its truth, masking the experience of unreason; detaching madness from its truth marks the emergence of psychology (Foucault [1961]1965: 198).

Re-establishing an exchange between madness and reason is a possibility opened up by psychoanalysis as counter-psychology,[4] and by the poetry of Hölderlin. Foucault wrote his essay on Hölderlin ("The Father's No", 1962) shortly after the publication of Jean Laplanche's book *Hölderlin et la question du père* (1961) (which Foucault cites extensively), in which Laplanche critiques the interpretation of Hölderlin's writings in correspondence with "a certain conceptualisation of psychosis", postulating, instead, the possibility of "making audible the poetic dictum of madness" (Laplanche [1961]1975: 24). This postulate has become groundbreaking for Foucault's work *Madness and Civilization*, also published, in its initial version, in the same period (1961), and subsequent statements on this project.

The Great Divide and the Mad Genius

In order to situate Hölderlin's texts, we would need to take a closer look at the "great divide", which Foucault outlines in *Madness and Civilization*. The division of reason from unreason, for Foucault, is one of the hallmarks of the *âge classique*. Reason was thought to be threatened by a derangement of the imagination that turned into unreason by the intensity of passion (Foucault [1961]1965: 93). Still, unreason was endowed with a unity and with its own truth. Within this framework, the distinction between art and madness was rigorously drawn: madness was not art, and art was not madness. Yet they were integrally related, and their dividing lines were closely watched, as it is evident from the attempts to pinpoint the exact day when the poet went mad. For "the madness of the writer was, for other men, the chance to see being born, over and over again, in the discouragement of repetition and disease, the truth of the work of art" (Foucault [1961]1965: 286).

It is in this mould, centred on "the great divide", that Hölderlin had traditionally been cast. "The great divide" is the reference point for the proverbial "mental benightedness" ("geistige Umnachtung") that has

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4. For Foucault, Freud as founder of discourse "restored, in medical thought, the possibility of a dialogue with unreason" – as opposed to psychology which fulfils its constitutive task of masking the experience of unreason (Foucault [1961]1965: 198). But Foucault is ambivalent in his attributions to psycho-analysis: Freud is also variously named in the context of the psy-industries (pp. 277-278), as a judge who made madness cling to itself, and as transferring to the figure of the doctor the structures of confinement (pp. 277-278). In this mould, Foucault considers psychoanalysis as incapable of deciphering the signs of unreason (p. 278).

become associated with the name of Hölderlin. I will quote the terms of this casting in some detail, as they become the object of Foucault's analysis of "the mad genius".

Dilthey, writing on Hölderlin in 1867, highlights a simple division between art and madness. According to Dilthey, "not having produced a single idea, his imaginative and emotional life, after unbelievable tension, broke off its ties with the world" (Dilthey 1993: 352); consequently, "his thoughts broke off". This "dispersion of the spirit" is considered "totally incurable". Hölderlin is placed in a line of artists-gone-mad, from Torquato Tasso to Robert Schumann. All the more does this profound state of "enervation" emboss the laurels bestowed on him posthumously by the likes of Dilthey: this is the making of true "genius".

Broaching the subject 70 years later, Pierre Berteaux remarks that the sole references for the trope of "Hölderlin's madness" were sought and found in his poetry. We owe the principal lines of the story of Hölderlin's madness, Berteaux points out, to a young poet at the time, Wilhelm Waiblinger, who attempted to stake his own claim to fame by informing on Hölderlin's madness. At the age of 18, after having visited Hölderlin for the first time, he is reported to have noted in his diary on 8 August 1822: "I would like only to portray a madman – I cannot live if I do not portray a madman – Hölderlin! Hölderlin!" The ambitions of this young aspiring man of letters (who was impecuniary at the time) were intensified by his resolve, noted down in his diary two days later: "The hero of my novel is a Hölderlin; a man who became mad from the drunkennesss of God, from love, and from striving for the divine" (Waiblinger quoted in Berteaux [1978]1993: 355). "Hölderlin is completely my man", he was rejoicing, convinced of being able to make the story of the "mad artist" sell. The vicarious glory had inspired Waiblinger to write the first biography of Hölderlin, as well as a novel entitled *Phaeton*, likewise centred on the figure of Hölderlin, for which he utilised excerpts from Hölderlin's poetry (see Berteaux [1978] 1993: 355).

The story of the mad poet Hölderlin stuck. Nineteenth-century industrial society regarded "Hölderlin, precisely in so far as he was a poet [and a German Jacobin to boot, denounced as co-conspirator of Issac von Sinclair's suspected plan to assassinate Kurfürst Karl Eugen of Württemberg], as being mentally ill – and mentally ill inasmuch as he was a poet" (Berteaux [1978]1993: 356). In his psycho(patho)graphy of Hölderlin published in 1909, Lange associates Hölderlin's supposedly failing relation to poetic form – his "free rhythms" – with psychopathological regression (Lange 1909: 104).

As I will show in what follows, this story of Hölderlin, the "mad genius", is itself part of an epistemic configuration that Foucault's genealogical analysis will unravel and Hölderlin's writings will transcend.

What this story of Hölderlin as "the mad genius" does not take account of, is a second division within "the great divide": the division of unreason, divided from reason, from its truth as madness. In modernity, under the impact of the psy-industries, madness, having been divided from reason, becomes divided from the very possibility of its own intelligibility, its own truth.

Hölderlin in the Divide of the Great Divide

The writings of Hölderlin, Nerval, Nietzsche, and Artaud are located in the division of the great divide. Perpetuating a line taken from the experience of unreason in the *âge classique*, they turn against the placement of madness in the new epistemic order that "seek[s] to situate it ever more precisely within the development of nature and history" (Foucault [1961]1965: 212). Their writings work to install the psychoanalytically defined symptom at the heart of writing itself. The symptom, revealed in the dialogue with madness that psychoanalysis has opened up, is regressive and repetitive, and involves the return of the repressed. It is resistant to narrative: it cannot enter the story of the subject's life. Neither unambiguously present or past, it is tenseless. It is outside of time and history. Aesthetic modernism mimics these aspects of the symptom. In line with the split in the function of language in the modern *episteme*, disappearing in the division between language as organising principle of knowledge and language as object of knowledge, writing in modernity emulates the psychoanalytic symptom, in inserting itself between things and representations, interrupting their relationship from within.

Modernity's writers in madness resist both the moral impulse of imprisonment, and the liberation of the insane. Their life of unreason is "irreducible to those alienations that can be cured" (Foucault [1961]1965: 278). In asserting and crossing over "the great divide", madness and art become closely associated. This leads Foucault to the conclusion that "one must imitate madness or actually become mad in order to establish new fields in literature" ([1970]2000: 341; see also [1970]2000: 340). This is not only a matter of the isomorphism between the psychoanalytic symptom and the work of art. As Foucault explains,

> Any discourse which seeks to attain the fundamental dimensions of a work must, at least implicitly, examine its relationship with madness: not only because of the resemblance between the themes of lyricism and psychosis, or

because the structures of experience are occasionally isomorphous, but more fundamentally, because the work poses and transgresses the limit which creates, threatens, and completes it.

(Foucault [1962]1977: 80)

The life of unreason becomes a source for counter-knowledge.

The A*phanisis* of the gods/God

Closely related to the division installed within the "Great Divide", and corresponding to it in form, is a double *aphanisis* of the gods/God – the recession of the God who had imposed an interdiction on the gods.

In classicism, the Greek gods seem enchanted. Traces of this enchantment are still evident in the writings of Friedrich Schiller, whom Hölderlin greatly admired. Schiller's poem, "Die Götter Griechenlands", for instance, invokes the untroubled jociosity of the Greek gods, which does, however, only leave a denuded word as its legacy. Schiller speculates about the relationship between Christian monotheism and reason of modernity. Christian monotheism has made God recede into interiority, a move from which the world emerges impoverished. But for Schiller, mythical enchantment returns in poetry.

Not so for Hölderlin, who turns away from classicism: The condition of the divine is its withdrawal, its passing. The first instantiation of this passing is the empty place of the Greeks in modernity. There is no way of imitating classical Greek art; doing so would be "dangerous" (Hölderlin 1969b: 941). Warminski explains this warning sounded by Hölderlin: "The invention of the Greeks as the aesthetic moment of Western history is part of the same system that has to 'aestheticize' poetry, reconstitute it on the basis of a model that is not linguistic but (dialectically) representational ..." (Warminski 1987: 35). Hölderlin's writing demythologises this aspect of Western appropriations of Hellenism by showing the internal division of Greek aesthetics that displaces any analogy with modern aesthetic theory. We moderns cannot recognise ourselves in the Greeks, and what divides us against ourselves cannot be construed in an analogy to what divided them from themselves. For Hölderlin, the Greek gods are irretrievably lost, and lost finally with the recession of God, of the Father, and of the figure of Schiller.[5] For Hölderlin, the visibility and proximity of the Greek gods

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5. Schiller is construed – from a close study of Hölderlin's letters – as the unrequited love object, and at the same time as father figure, to whom Hölderlin self-deprecatingly looked for mentorship and paternal guidance. Schiller, in turn, being placed in that position, assumes the role of Hölderlin's

disappear with them. Christ is the last of the ancient gods, interdicting the Greek gods in their visibility and proximity, and he himself is receding (see "Der Einzige").

Two poems in particular bear the vanishing traces of the *deus absconditus* – "Patmos" and "Brod und Wein". The poem "Patmos" contains these lines:

> Nah ist
> Und schwer zu fassen der Gott.
> ….
>
> [Der Sohn des Höchsten] zerbrach
> Den geradestrahlenden,
> Den Zepter, göttlichleidend, von selbst,
> Denn wiederkommen sollt es
> Zu rechter Zeit. ...

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rival. Apprehensive of his role in relation to Hölderlin, Schiller attempts to rein in Hölderlin's flights by giving him assignments – e.g. to translate Ovid's *Phaeton* into German – a task that Hölderlin, renouncing the bait that might allow for a resolution of the Oedipus complex that Schiller throws him, fails to complete to both his and Schiller's satisfaction (Laplanche [1961]1975).

Consequently, Schiller keeps an unmoved distance from his admirer, as if intent to protect himself from the "danger" that he perceived in Hölderlin's condition. His incomprehending but well-meant advice to Hölderlin is that he return to the safety and sobriety of classical harmony:

> Nehmen Sie sich, ich bitte Sie, Ihre ganze Kraft und Ihre ganze Wachsamkeit zusammen, wählen sie einen glücklichen poetischen Stoff, tragen ihn liebend und sorgfältig im Herzen und lassen ihn, in den schönsten Momenten des Daseins, ruhig der Vollendung zureifen; fliehen Sie wo möglich die philosophischen Stoffe, sie sind die undankbarsten, und in fruchtlosem Ringen mit denselben verzehrt sich oft die beste Kraft; bleiben Sie der Sinnenwelt näher, so werden sie weniger in Gefahr sein, die Nüchternheit in der Begeisterung zu verlieren.
>
> (Brief, 24 November 1796) (quoted in Safranski 2004: 433)

More candidly, and apprised of the thin line that separates his own writing from that of Hölderlin's perilous writing-being, Schiller comments on Hölderlin's poems in a conversation with Goethe:

> Aufrichtig, ich fand in den Gedichten viel von meiner eigenen sonstigen Gestalt, und es ist nicht das erste Mal, dass mich der Verfasser an mich mahnte. Er hat eine heftige Subjektivität und verbindet damit einen gewissen philosophischen Geist und Tiefsinn. Sein Zustand ist gefährlich.
>
> (30 June 1797) (quoted in Safranski 2004: 434)

Doch furchtbar ist, wie da und dort
Unendlich hin zerstreut das Lebende Gott.
….

Wenn [Er] aber stirbt alsdenn,
….
… , und wenn, ein Rätsel ewig füreinander,
Sie sich nicht fassen können
Einander, die zusammenlebten
Im Gedächtnis, und nicht den Sand nur oder
Die Weiden es hinwegnimmt und die Tempel
Ergreift, wenn die Ehre
Des Halbgotts und der Seinen
Verweht und selber sein Angesicht
Der Höchste wendet
Darob, dass nirgend ein
Unsterbliches mehr am Himmel zu sehn ist oder
Auf grüner Erde, was ist dies?
….

… der Wille
Des ewigen Vaters viel
Dir gilt. Still ist sein Zeichen
Am donnernden Himmel.

(Hölderlin 1969a: 176-183)

In the poem "Brod und Wein", Dionysos, god of inebriation and wine, and the blood of Christ in Holy Communion, founding the Christian community, are concatenated. Yet the founding presence is absent, and substituted with signs of remembrance, enjoining the celebration of an absent presence. While in classical and some romantic writing, the presence of the absence is still rendered visible "in the distance" or "on the horizon", Hölderlin's poem invokes these tropes, but dissolves them (Nägele 1985: 22, 41).

In Hölderlin's "Hyperion", likewise, the gods are present and absent, visible and invisible. The work of art takes part in positing the gods and tracing their withdrawal (Foucault [1962]1977: 78, 79).

Language, Poetry, and the Symptom

As language becomes the object of knowledge, the gods/God visualised in a region beyond knowledge disappear, and serve the finitude operative prior to and limiting positive knowledge, upon which language hits as its inner law and possibility of transgression: "the experience of the philosopher who

finds, not outside his language … but at the inner core of its possibilities, the transgression of his philosophical being" (Foucault [1963]1977: 44) is that of the "mad philosopher/poet". For Foucault, this positionality becomes the basis for the communication between reason and unreason in Hölderlin's writing: The question for Foucault is how this becomes possible: "[H]ow can language apply a single and identical discourse to poetry and madness? Which syntax functions at the same time on the level of declared meaning and on that of interpreted signification" (Foucault [1962]1977: 72)? In addressing this question, I would like to diverge somewhat from Foucault's path, in order to link up with it again afterwards. Crucially, in Hölderlin's writing, this question is referred to the role of language. As representation becomes subject to the dispersed sites of language, the communication between reason and unreason becomes possible, primarily in the field of Literature. In Hölderlin's poems, there is no content that supports form and expression. Isomorphic syntactical elements are paratactically juxtaposed, and Pindaric syntax is superimposed on the German syntax, displacing the latter. In the poem "Patmos", the possibility of speaking in tongues, the gift of Pentecost, is subverted. It elicits the failure of the sign, resulting in utter incommunicability (see Warminski 1987: 92).

For Hölderlin, the task of the poet lies in the art of calculation (see Hölderlin 1969b: 730-731; also 1969b: 783). He emphasises the *mechanē* of poetics. To the *mechanē* he wants to subordinate apperception and reasoning arising from regulated successions. The craft of calculation has to be wrested from the gods – it is only the gods who are "at all times expert in measure", whereas the poet is not. Only very rarely does such expertise enter into a poem: when poetic measure can name the problem of poetic technique in general (see Fenves 1993: 372, 373). Thus the "measure of the gods" cannot be transposed to the "measure of man"; a philosophical anthropology cannot be grounded in the "measure of man". The only ripples it can draw are in the measure of poetry, where it hits the limits of language. In Foucault's terms, Hölderlin's poetry, and his insistence on calculation and measure, posits language – syntax, metre, diction, and verse presentation – as the instantiation of the analytic of finitude. As language exercises its determination as positive knowledge, it posits a negative relation to both infinity and metaphysics, exposing its limits as its internal conditions. Foucault explains the analytic of finitude in the modern *episteme* in terms of a double system of reference: "[I]f man's knowledge is finite, it is because he is trapped, without possibility of liberation, within the positive contents of language, labour, and life; and inversely, if life, labour, and language may be posited in their positivity, it is because knowledge has finite forms" (Foucault [1966]1970: 316).

Tragedy and the Thought of the Outside

The analytic of finitude articulated in relation to language finds a close correspondence to that articulated in relation to the unconscious and unthought, and nowhere more so than in Hölderlin's struggle with tragedy. In the "General Basis [for Empedocles]" ("Allgemeiner Grund [zum Empedokles]"), Hölderlin provides the outline for a new definition of the tragic:

> [Empedokles ist] unterscheidender, denkender, vergleichender, bildender, organisierender und organisierter … wenn er weniger bei sich selber ist, und in so fern er sich weniger bewusst ist, dass bei ihm und für ihn das Sprachlose Sprache und bei ihm und für ihn das Allgemeine, das Unbewusstere, die Form des Bewusstseins und der Besonderheit gewinnt … [Jene beiden Gegensätze werden also] bei ihm zu einem … weil sie in ihm ihre unterscheidende Form umkehren …
>
> (Hölderlin 1969b: 576).

In his struggle with tragedy, Hölderlin articulates the co-ordinates of a modern aesthetic most explicitly and clearly. Hölderlin's *Empedocles* involves an interminable death, the impossibility of self-sacrifice, and the impossibility of writing tragedy. This does not apply only to the figure of Empedocles; the thought of the outside becomes *the* figure of thought for Hölderlin. It requires the writer of the tragic to abnegate his subjectivity and his object, to transpose it into a different objectivity (Hölderlin 1969b: 573).[6]

The figure of Empedocles is permeated with the paralogisms of self-consciousness, which Hölderlin outlines in a fragment "Urteil und Sein" in 1795:

> How can I say: I! without self-consciousness? But how is self-consciousness possible? Through this, that I oppose myself to myself, separate myself in that which has been opposed as the same. But to what extent as the same? I can, I must ask in this way; for in another respect it is opposed to itself.
>
> (Hölderlin quoted in Warminski 1987: 4)

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6. In the German original:
   > Eben darum verleugnet der tragische Dichter, weil er die tiefste Innigkeit ausdrückt, seine Person, seine Subjektivität ganz, so auch das ihm gegenwärtige Objekt, er trägt sie in fremde Personalität, in fremde Objektivität über …
   >
   > (Hölderlin 1969b: 573-574)

[Wie kann ich sagen: Ich! ohne Selbstbewusstsein? Wie ist aber Selbstbewusstsein möglich? Dadurch, dass ich mich mir selbst entgegensetze, mich von mir selbst trenne, aber ungeachtet dieser Trennung mich im entgegensetzen als dasselbe erkenne. Aber inwieferne als dasselbe? Ich kann, ich muss so fragen; denn in einer andern Rücksicht ist es sich entgegengesetzt.]

(Hölderlin 1969b: 592)

Empedocles enacts this "Ur-Teilung" by transposing self-consciousness into a divided scene of representation. He becomes the actor and spectator of his own inner life, positioning himself as the author, presenter, imitator, and audience of his own play.

In an extended sense, Empedocles enacts the complex relationship between interiority and exteriority that Hölderlin elaborates in his "General Basis [for Empedocles]" ("Allgemeiner Grund" [zum Empedokles]). To intone the deepest interiority, the writer of the tragic has to abnegate his subjectivity and his object, and transpose them into a different, alien world, different characters, different events, a foreign personality and an alien objectivity. But a connection with interiority has to be retained if the tragedy is to remain explicable. The more intimate the apperception is, the more alien, unfamiliar, and distant it should be presented (Hölderlin 1969b: 572-573). Hölderlin's poetic language severs the thread that ties it to the subject, which can no longer reveal itself in language (see Adorno 1974: 490-491).

Empedocles turns upon himself several times over. The nodes of these turns are marked by *caesurae*. Where rapidly proceeding rhythmic series are interrupted by counter-rhythmic moves, Hölderlin the poetic technician states, dramatic representation itself appears ("Anmerkungen zu Oedipus" – Hölderlin 1969b: 730; see also "Anmerkungen zu Antigonä" – Hölderlin 1969b: 783). Perception, intention, and imagination find their possibility in the rules of poetic language.

In that sense, Hölderlin's writings provide important signposts for theorising the location of Literature in a modern aesthetic. Literature states nothing but itself, and has the capacity of drawing everything to and into itself. But it is, at the same time, radically exterior in relation to discourse, representation, the speaking subject, and, indeed, itself (Foucault[1966] 2000: 148-149).

Thought of the Outside Repatriated

Having outlined the archaeological and genealogical conditions for the emergence of, and the co-ordinates for, the location of Literature in modernity, Foucault highlights the precariousness of its critical role:

> It is extremely difficult to find a language faithful to [the thought of the outside]. Any purely reflective discourse runs the risk of leading the experience of the outside back to the dimension of interiority; reflection tends irresistibly to repatriate it to the side of consciousness and to develop it into a description of living that depicts the "outside" as the experience of the body, space, the limits of the will, and the ineffaceable presence of the other. The vocabulary of fiction is equally perilous: … it risks setting down readymade meanings that stitch the old fabric of interiority back together in the form of an imagined outside.
>
> (Foucault [1966]2000: 154)

An appeal to the category of "the author's intention" – which still reveals the heterodiagetic impulse of writing – is made to guide literary critics to "the mad genius" at the same time as this is recognised as an impossibility. The celebration of this impossibility in "the mad genius" implicitly acknowledges that the category of "intention" does not govern the text from the Olympic heights of a transcendental consciousness. Too timid to take on board this impossibility, critics tend to cultivate a *habitus* whereby they assume what the mad genius left unconsummated – namely to pronounce what he could not, and to make that the key to his work (Adorno 1974: 448). This has produced some dissociations further down the line. "The mad genius" appears in several variations on the theme – the distraught, alienated, misunderstood hero (Foucault [1962]1977: 74).

   Least among his modern-epistemic counterparts in *The Order of Things* has Hölderlin escaped these assimilations: the incommensurability of his texts has been reduced through a biographical reconstitution parading as *the* approach to the texts in question. The literary critics on Hölderlin's "case" have thus read and presented his writing in terms of self-consciousness, reflection, turning and returning – "toward or away from Greece, toward or away from Hesperia – in terms of "abendländische Wendung" or vaterländische Umkehr", pitching his biography between individual pathology, German patriotism, and the history of the West (Warminski 1987: 3).

   Much as one might reject the terms of this interpretation, the emergence of psycho(patho)biography has its own historical-genealogical truth. The very impulse toward psycho(patho)biography in the case of "the mad genius" forms part of a genealogy that Foucault outlines.

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Genealogy of Genius

In the Renaissance, the individuality of the hero was derived from the epic, combined with Greek and medieval remnants, within structures of enigma and discovery. The epic hero is one who perseveres and triumphs over trials and tribulations through valiant action. He embodies the exemplary – the unquestioned ideals and values of his culture and society. He is a model, an ideal type. The category of intention is absent. His "task", given by a source exterior to the epic, subsumes both the epic storyteller and his hero.

In the *âge classique*, Foucault explains in his essay on Hölderlin ("The Father's No", [1962]1977), the individuality of the artist emerges. It establishes itself with claims to novelty, individuality, and originality. Foucault finds the first psychobiography in this mould in a series of studies on artists' lives by George Vasari (entitled *The Lives of the Artists*, published in 1568). In the age of representation, the epic hero as ideal type passes into the one who is to represent him, the latter usurping the power of epic singers in order to move from their anonymity to his individuality (Foucault [1962]1977: 73).

This forms the template of the self-reflection of the artist – something that was impossible to the epic hero. The epic journey and the heroic deeds are extended to include the trials and tribulations of artistic creativity, the work of genius. The artist emerges as problematic hero – rather than an exemplary, idealised hero: the heroic mode passes into the relationship that the artist cultivates with himself in his own work (see Foucault [1962]1977: 74). He is individuated on the basis of the error, failure, problems, and precariousness of his achievements.

The transformation of epic is the necessary condition for the emergence of narrative and the case history, closely correlated in the psycho(patho)biography of "the mad genius" of the artist as an object of knowledge (see van Zyl 1991).

The Question of the Relationship between Biography and Art

Along the lines of Foucault's Hölderlin-essay, I have outlined a genealogy of genius and located the "mad genius" hypothesis within it. But this genealogical explanation does not entirely exhaust the question whether a link can be drawn between "an individual life to a life's work, events to word, and the mute forms of madness to the most essential aspects of a poem[?]" (Foucault [1962]1977: 71).

It is minimally the question itself, in its generic form, that can and has legitimately been posed. Freud poses this question in relation to the conditions of Leonardo da Vinci's creative activity. Reading fragments of documents on Leonardo's life in relation to his art, Freud is struck by "the profound transformations through which an impression in an artist's life has to pass before it is allowed to make its contribution to a work of art" ([1910] 1985: 199). Inferring Foucault's approach from his essay on Hölderlin, we might plausibly say that he conversely is struck by the profound transformations through which a figure and a genre have to pass before they end up in "the mad genius" encompassing both life and work.

To be able to allow for the possibility of such explorations, I would argue, Foucault is not content to tune into the chorus pronouncing the "Death of the Author" (which included Roland Barthes, for instance) around 1966 – at precisely the time when Foucault wrote most of his essays on the aesthetic. Foucault insists on the "author function" – not as a singular ideological effect that is to be eradicated, but as an event in an order of knowledge that must be analysed in its ambiguities, as an event that marks "a privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, and literature …" (Foucault [1969]1977: 115). This is not a question of a sociology or psychology of "the man and his work". On the contrary, the very definition of a "work" is in question. The relationship between author and text is of an epistemological and psychoanalytic nature (p. 118).

But it took Hölderlin's moves to establish that, and to open up the limit internal to the modern *episteme*, from where we can contemplate the psychopathology of poets. Thus, it is not the mad poet that makes us consider the work of a mad poet, but the converse: It is through the vistas opened up by Literature in modernity, that we can contemplate the psychopathology of poets (Foucault [1962]1977: 86).

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