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Hyperion, or the Hermit in Greece

FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN
TRANSLATED BY HOWARD GASKILL



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Afterword

On 3 August 1942, W. H. Auden wrote to Norman Holmes Pearson: 'My hostess [Caroline Newton] is translating Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, on which I hope one day to write an essay. It is the most perfect exposition of romanticism I have ever read.'¹ It seems unlikely that Newton's translation itself came to much, the only surviving evidence being a gathering of some twenty-four leaves in a box in Princeton University Library.² Nor does Auden's essay ever seem to have materialized. But the fact that he wanted to write it at all, together with his judgment of the novel, may be considered noteworthy, particularly given the relatively early date of the letter. For even in Germany it was not until the opening years of the twentieth century, and particularly with the publication of Hellingrath's edition on the eve of the First World War, that Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843) suddenly emerged from virtual obscurity as a poet of the first rank, at least amongst writers and intellectuals. But Auden's generation was not slow to pick up on the excitement of the discovery. It was the Orcadian Edwin Muir, himself a fine poet, who was really the first to mediate Hölderlin to the anglophone literary world in a series of brilliant essays in the 1920s and 1930s.³ Another significant figure who was reading the Swabian poet intensively in the late 1930s is Samuel Beckett, and indeed it is in *Hyperion* that most of the marginalia in his Hölderlin edition are to be found.⁴ However, it would

1 *The Complete Works of W.H. Auden: Prose: Volume II, 1939–1948*, ed. Edward Mendelson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 506.

2 My thanks to Stephen Ferguson, Curator of Rare Books, for this information.

3 See Gaskill, 'Edwin Muir as a Critic of Hölderlin', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 14 (1978), 345–64.

4 Dirk Van Hulle and Mark Dixon, *Samuel Beckett's Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 91–93.

generally be true to say that for most of those displaying an interest in Hölderlin — and he was rapidly becoming the poets' poet — it was the later 'hymns' and fragments, written in the years immediately preceding the collapse of his mind in 1806, and the fact of the madness itself, that proved to be the main source of fascination.⁵ The novel, which alone had just about kept Hölderlin's name alive in the nineteenth century, tended now to be relegated to the background. In the English-speaking world, the absence of a complete translation certainly did nothing to help.⁶

Even in specialist scholarship *Hyperion* was relatively late in receiving due critical attention. It would be fair to say that it was not until 1965, with the publication of Lawrence Ryan's monograph, that the modern reassessment of the status of the novel really began, and its significance within Hölderlin's oeuvre came to be properly recognized.⁷ Ryan's incisive examination of the narrative structure of *Hyperion* and the implications for interpretation proved to be an eye-opener for many, myself included. The voluminous secondary literature may since have variously modified, extensively revised, or even rejected his main argument, but, like it or not, we all remain in his debt.⁸ The distinction between *Hyperion* as narrator and *Hyperion* as a figure in his own narrative, between the hermit and the would-be hero/lover, cannot be ignored, whatever one chooses to make of it. Whether the development of the narrator, if such it is, may be seen to lead to any kind of resolution of the dissonances in his character, even a fragile or provisional one, is what now tends to split the critics.⁹ I freely admit that I belong to the

5 As instanced by Muir's own poem 'Hölderlin's Journey' (1937); also David Gascoyne's collection *Hölderlin's Madness* (London: Dent & Sons, 1938).

6 The first rendering of any part of *Hyperion* into English appears to have been made, possibly with help, by none other than Ralph Waldo Emerson. It is a translation of a substantial excerpt from the novel's penultimate letter (the scathing of the Germans) quoted in Theodor Mundt's *Geschichte der Literatur der Gegenwart* (1842), pp. 86–88 — see *The Dial: A Magazine for Literature, Philosophy, and Religion*, 4, 1843, 'A Letter', 262–70, pp. 265–66. For this discovery and (slightly puzzled) speculation as to Emerson's intentions, see Cyrus Hamlin, 'Transplanting German Idealism to American Culture', in *Translating Literatures Translating Cultures: New Vistas and Approaches in Literary Studies*, ed. by Kurt Mueller-Vollmer and Michael Irmscher (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1998), 107–24, pp. 108–11.

7 Lawrence Ryan, *Hölderlin's Hyperion: Exzentrische Bahn und Dichterberuf* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1965).

8 For an excellent history of critical reception, see Marco Castellari, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Hyperion nello specchio della critica* (Milan: C.U.E.M., 2002).

9 For an emphatic rejection of any notion of a successfully embodied telos, see Hansjörg Bay, *Ohne Rückkehr: Utopische Intention und poetischer Prozess in Hölderlins Hyperion* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2003).

'harmonizing' tendency. Seeing the novel primarily in terms of aporias and unreconciled contradictions goes against my aesthetic experience of the text as a thing of great brilliance and beauty. It is this experience that I am attempting to mediate. I would like to think that an anglophone readership might learn to love *Hyperion*.

A Novel in Letters¹⁰

Hyperion was published in two volumes, the first appearing in spring 1797, the second in autumn 1799. It is unlikely that Hölderlin, rather than Cotta, his publisher, was responsible for the two-and-a-half year gap. As may be seen from the conclusion of the Preface, the author seems none too happy that readers of the first volume will, for the time being at least, not be in any position to judge the novel's design. Similar misgivings were expressed to Schiller, who had mediated publication, in a letter of 20 June 1797. And it seems that they were justified, in that Cotta found difficulty in shifting copies of the second volume when it eventually did appear.

Hölderlin's one and only novel was a long time in gestation, the initial idea going back as far as 1792. The final version adopts the epistolary form, as does the only other version available to Hölderlin's contemporaries, the 'Fragment von Hyperion' which appeared in Schiller's *Thalia* in 1794.¹¹ In the intervening period Hölderlin experimented with a variety of forms, including verse, as can be seen from the surviving manuscripts. Common to all versions, however, is that they confront us with a first-person narrator (or alternatively an 'I' within the narrative), telling the story of his past life and commenting on it in the process. This indicates that the retrospective review was regarded as the most important element by Hölderlin, and that it must therefore have been instrumental in determining his final choice of narrative form. That choice remains, nevertheless, an unusual one.¹²

10 In the following I make liberal use of my short monograph on the novel, *Hölderlin's Hyperion* (Durham: Durham Modern Language Studies, 1984). I am grateful to Michael Thomson and Sam Bootle, editor and former editor of the DMLS series, for permission to do so.

11 *Neue Thalia*, 4 (1793), 181–221. The issue did not in fact appear until November 1794.

12 The most informed and informative study of *Hyperion* as an epistolary novel is Gideon Stiening's *Epistolare Subjektivität: Das Erzählsystem in Friedrich Hölderlins Briefroman Hyperion oder der Eremit in Griechenland* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2005).

There were of course many precedents for the adoption of the epistolary convention in prose fiction (as well as non-fictional discourse). In the second half of the eighteenth century most novels with any pretension to artistic merit (and many without it) tended to be either epistolary or self-consciously comic. Common to both forms is a degree of preoccupation with the act of writing itself. It is straight third-person narrative, without irony or authorial intrusion, that was the exception. Thus it is not Hölderlin's choice of the epistolary form as such that may seem surprising, but the particular use he makes of it. In the great majority of epistolary novels there is correspondence between a number of characters, a medley of voices. It is not all one way. There were, it is true, examples of one-sided correspondence in works of philosophy or literary criticism. But in fiction — at least after Samuel Richardson's successful exploitation of polyperspectivism in *Clarissa* (1748) — such limitation seemed to have little to commend it. Goethe's enormously successful novel of 1774, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*), in which we see only the protagonist's letters and can merely infer the content of any replies from his single correspondent, may thus be said to represent a departure from prevailing conventions. This also makes it an obvious point of reference for any German writer who subsequently adopts the epistolary form in an apparently similar manner. It seems pointless to deny that *Werther* exercised any significant influence on *Hyperion*. There are numerous verbal echoes and thematic correspondences, quite apart from the similarity of form. For *Hyperion*, too, consists of letters in one direction. (The letters from Diotima, Notara, and Alabanda are copied out by Hyperion and so form part of his correspondence with Bellarmin.) However, what certainly does distinguish the two novels from each other is that, whereas Werther's letters are written on a day-to-day basis, relating things largely from the immediacy of the present or near-present, Hyperion's are used to recount his past experiences, the related events all having taken place before the first letter is written.

Naturally, in neither case do the letters consist solely of narrative. What fascinates us in Goethe's novel is Werther's gradual disintegration, his slide towards mental and emotional catastrophe. His 'affliction' reveals itself in his reaction to events, but equally in his reflections on nature and the world around him. There are good grounds for seeing

the attempted articulation of his problems as an important contributory factor in the hero's downfall. Writing itself affects Werther's frame of mind and intensifies his difficulties, since it encourages him to finger his emotional wounds both old and new and wallow in his distress. It is not therapeutic or cathartic; it leads him further into the labyrinth, instead of enabling him to transcend and transmute his experiences by lending them — through articulation — mediated, reflected coherence. Whether it is because he lacks the necessary detachment or innate artistic ability, or both, the effect is to accelerate the fragmentation of Werther's world. It seems to me that, seen in this light, *Hyperion* does indeed have much in common with *Werther*. In Hölderlin's novel the past experience is further in the past, and this has a bearing on the narrator's ability to confront it and articulate it. But the experience itself is just as harrowing as Werther's (a good deal more so in fact), and in attempting to relive it, give it meaning, and commit it to paper, Hyperion is exposing himself to real danger. The narrator's present is one in which he experiences extreme oscillations of mood and undergoes a series of violent emotional shocks. At times he is very near to madness, and it is important to see this and take the possibility seriously. The narrator may know the outcome of the events within the narrative, but he is very far from knowing the outcome and consequences of the narrating activity itself, with all its associated inner turmoil. His anxiety is expressed clearly enough in various key passages which we have little excuse for overlooking or misinterpreting. For instance, when Hyperion finally summons up the courage to begin the account of his meeting and blossoming relationship with Diotima, he tells Bellarmin that he has hitherto kept the image of his love sacred and carried it within him like a holy relic: 'and if fate henceforth should seize and plunge me down from abyss to abyss and drown in me all energy and all reason, yet shall this one and only outlive myself in me and shine in me and reign in eternal, indestructible glory!' (p. 44).¹³ (The language he uses here recalls and pre-echoes that of the 'Song of Fate'.) Before confronting this most crucial episode in his own past, the narrating Hyperion anticipates

13 Letter XIII: 'und wenn hinfort mich das Schicksaal ergreift und von einem Abgrund in den andern mich wirft, und alle Kräfte ertränkt in mir und alle Gedanken, so soll diß Einzige doch mich selber überleben in mir, und leuchten in mir und herrschen, in ewiger, unzerstörbarer Klarheit!' (StA [= *Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe*] III, 51).

what might happen to him if he persists. He is badly scarred from his experiences, and realizes that reopening the old wounds, by evoking both the ecstasies and agonies, could well destroy him for good. He has been holding them back, and when at last the pressure is released, they virtually erupt into his narrative and threaten to run completely out of his tenuous control. Already at this early stage the implication would seem to be that his evolving monument to the memory of Diotima could cost him his sanity. This emerges more clearly in a later passage, which demonstrates the extreme difficulty the narrator finds in sufficiently detaching himself from his experiences to be able to write coherently about them:

All that I can speak of her is scattered words. I must forget what she is whole if I'm to speak of her. I must make believe she lived in times of old, that I knew of her through tales, if her living image isn't so to seize me that I perish in rapture and pain, if I'm not to die of my joy in her and my grief for her. (p. 51)¹⁴

Having once conjured up memories of such intensity, Hyperion must attain rational control of them, if they are not to overwhelm him. This is not idle hyperbole. To be able to write here, certainly as far as his mental and emotional stability is concerned, is a matter of life and death. But the effort almost breaks him. The letter that begins with Hyperion's proclaimed intention of proving his breast on the joys of the past till it becomes like steel, inuring himself to their 'deadly delights', the same letter that climaxes in the embrace, ends with the narrator so severely shaken that he cannot continue.¹⁵ In the following letter an apparently calmer Hyperion resumes his account of the development of the relationship, but then any semblance of smooth narrative progression is suddenly fractured by a remark which demonstrates just how vulnerable and threatened he feels: 'I ought to keep silent, ought to forget and keep silent. // But the alluring flame will tempt me till I

14 Letter XXII: 'Ich kann nur hie und da ein Wörtchen von ihr sprechen. Ich muß vergessen, was sie ganz ist, wenn ich von ihr sprechen soll. Ich muß mich täuschen, als hätte sie vor alten Zeiten gelebt, als wüßt' ich durch Erzählung einiges von ihr, wenn ihr lebendig Bild mich nicht ergreifen soll, daß ich vergehe im Entzücken und im Schmerz, wenn ich den Tod der Freude über sie und den Tod der Trauer um sie nicht sterben soll' (StA III, 59).

15 Letter XXVIII (pp. 59–63): StA III, 69–74.

plunge into it whole and perish like the fly' (p. 64).¹⁶ This image of death and disaster is clearly and unambiguously related to the activity of Hyperion as narrator, and the fate that awaits him if he continues. But he does go on, as he must, and what follows is his narration of Diotima's confession, her admission of the way in which her love for Hyperion has fractured the harmony with herself and the world, and brought about a distressing detachment from her earthly environment, from nature. This is in fact the beginning of a process which will eventually kill her, and the narrating Hyperion knows this. It is small wonder, then, that when he evokes the image of Diotima, having made her confession, embracing him and resting her head on his breast, it should prove too much for him: 'O Bellarmin! my senses fail and my mind runs adrift. // I see, I see how this must end. The rudder has fallen into the surge and the ship will be seized like a child by the feet and hurled against the rocks' (p. 65).¹⁷ What has happened here — and it strikes me as the only plausible interpretation — is that the *narrating* Hyperion feels he has gone too far. It is quite simply a crude (if not uncommon) misreading of the text to take him as referring in this passage to future events in his own past — as if he were momentarily projecting himself back into the perspective of his former self and expressing the presentiment that the love relationship is doomed and will end in tears. He has no need to tell himself this, or Bellarmin (or indeed the reader). Hyperion knows full well how it ended. All that he has been writing since making his home on Salamis — and since the twenty-third letter we know it too — has been written in the shadow of that 'sweet bewildering lethal dread' (p. 52), the knowledge that Diotima's grave is near.¹⁸ It is knowledge he has tried in vain to repress, the (relative) proximity of the island where she lived and died exercising a powerful and potentially fatal attraction, in the same way as he has resisted giving way to the deadly bliss of his memories. All to no avail, as we see. And if we look at the drastic image

16 Letter XXIX: 'Ich sollte schweigen, sollte vergessen und schweigen. // Aber die reizende Flamme versucht mich, bis ich mich ganz in sie stürze, und, wie die Fliege, vergehe' (StA III, 75).

17 End of Letter XXIX: 'o Bellarmin! die Sinne vergehn mir und der Geist entflieht. // Ich seh', ich sehe, wie das enden muß. Das Steuer ist in die Wooge gefallen und das Schiff wird, wie an den Füßen ein Kind, ergriffen und an die Felsen geschleudert' (StA III, 76).

18 Letter XXIII: 'die süßen verwirrenden tödtenden Schrecken, daß Diotima's Grab mir nah ist' (StA III, 60).

he employs at the end of letter XXIX, it is one of impending catastrophe brought about *by loss of control*: the vessel dashed against the rocks is surely Hyperion, the rudder his drowning reason. This passage marks the worst crisis in the narrator's development. He does eventually recover his control and finally, so it seems, come to terms with his experiences through the act of writing itself. But the issue is not, for the narrating Hyperion, predetermined, and he very nearly goes under in the process. We are meant to take this possibility seriously.

From the above it should be clear that we are dealing in *Hyperion* with a form of suspense that is by no means primarily tied to the events related in the narrative. Indeed, it is because the novel has too often been read as if it were the narrator's 'story' and nothing more, that it has been so badly underrated. However, once we have been alerted to the function and significance of the many comments and interpolations that punctuate the narrative, we begin to appreciate that any loss of conventional suspense — after all, Hyperion must have survived to be able to tell the tale of his (mis)adventures — is more than compensated for by the tension introduced between the narrator and his subject matter. It is a tension which in this degree would not be possible without the appreciable temporal distance between the narrated events and the narrator's present. Simplifying, one could say that in the first half of the novel we have a gloomy or even despairing narrator relating largely happy to blissful experiences from his own past; in the second half of the novel we have an increasingly calm, almost serene narrator telling of grief and disaster.

Contrary to the impression sometimes given by critics, the procedure adopted by Hölderlin in *Hyperion*, the use of the epistolary convention to narrate a life-story, is not unique to this novel. There are precedents, some of them respectable, others less so. Hölderlin could be seen here as resurrecting a form that was not in fact uncommon in the early stages of the development of the epistolary novel. Of these 'autobiographies' in letters perhaps one of the most celebrated is Marivaux' unfinished *La vie de Marianne, ou Les aventures de madame la comtesse de **** (1731–42). The most notorious is probably Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* of 1748, popularly known as *Fanny Hill*. One might well ask what reasons a writer might have for cutting up a past story into letters, instead of telling it as continuous narrative in the first person. One answer would

be that the temporal detachment of the narrator from the main events of his or her narrative offers opportunity for subtle interplay between the perspectives of present and former self, accommodating side by side experience, reaction, feeling on two distinct time levels. And then there is the often extremely sensitive and intimate nature of the subject matter. It would tend to undermine the moral credibility of the narrator (one thinks here particularly of Fanny Hill) if he or she were seen to be voluntarily exposing all to a curious world. Even the built-in distancing comments and mature critical judgments might not be an adequate defence against the charge of shameless exhibitionism. Not only must the confessions ostensibly be mediated in a private manner, as secrets entrusted to one who is worthy to receive them; but also, the narrator's reluctance to speak at all must be credibly documented. This is a fiction which it would be difficult to maintain if the narrator were seen to have a vision of his or her life in hardback from the outset. It is the function of the correspondent (about whom we may know nothing except the name, and perhaps not even that) to press the central figure into writing about past experiences which may be painful and embarrassing. The narrator has good reason for being reluctant to rake over the coals, and will need to be coaxed.

We may know virtually nothing about Hyperion's Bellarmin except that he appears to be German, lives in Germany, and is presumably a youngish man of enlightened liberal persuasion, something that would put him very much in a minority amongst his compatriots. But the most important thing about him is that he is there at all, pestering his correspondent to tell of his past life: 'I thank you for asking me to tell you about myself, for making me remember former times' (p. 9).¹⁹ It is important to remember that Hyperion the narrator begins his tale as a hermit (hence the subtitle of the novel), his self-imposed isolation largely the result of disgust with the poverty of spirit of his fellows. For that reason alone any ostensibly public form of communication (one in which, if anyone is addressed, it must be the general reader), can be excluded as a possibility, at least initially. The narrator starts as a self-confessed elitist who would address himself, if at all, only to the privileged few. He will have no desire to cast his pearls before

19 Letter III: 'Ich danke dir, daß du mich bittest, dir von mir zu erzählen, daß du die vorigen Zeiten mir in's Gedächtniß bringst' (StA III, 10).

swine: 'I will tell you ever more of my bliss ... But only to you, my Bellarmin, only to a pure free soul such as yours do I tell it. I will not be as prodigal as the sun with its rays, I will not cast my pearls before the foolish mob' (p. 59).²⁰ The sun imagery in this passage is significant, given the mythological associations of Hyperion's name and his mentor Adamas' injunction in the fourth letter that he should live up to it. For this would certainly imply detachment ('You will be lonely', p. 14), but also an active role in the development of the things of this world. The narrator's reluctance to be as liberal with his communication as his illustrious heavenly namesake with its rays suggests that he is not yet equal to his mission. This immature, misanthropic elitism is one reason why he is inclined to keep his past to himself (and why even Bellarmin has been made to wait). The other is, as mentioned above, that he is anxious about stirring up painful memories (painful, either because in themselves distressing, or because they evoke vanished happiness). In the beginning he is highly selective about what he chooses to communicate. Even so, the repression is not entirely successful. We are meant to sense the tension in the narrator caused by the awareness of what he has yet to reveal. In the penultimate version of the novel we are explicitly, and perhaps somewhat unsightly, told that the narrator can be writing of one thing and thinking of another: 'It's true that I managed to stay silent about it long enough, could often restrain myself when amongst the other memories this one would seize me; just you look! you'll find frenzied tears on many a trivial page; they belong here; I dried them and wrote of other things.'²¹ Since it would be difficult for anyone but Bellarmin to verify this, it is perhaps just as well that the passage was omitted from the final version. But it does at least emphasize the strain that his narrating activity places on Hyperion. Given the threat it poses for his stability, he needs a convincing reason for attempting it at all. If the mastering of this threat constitutes a major theme of the novel,

20 Letter XXVIII: 'Ich will dir immer mehr von meiner Seeligkeit erzählen ... Aber nur dir, mein Bellarmin, nur einer reinen freien Seele, wie die deine ist, erzähl' ich's. So freigebig, wie die Sonne mit ihren Strahlen, will ich nicht seyn; meine Perlen will ich vor die alberne Menge nicht werfen' (StA III, 69).

21 'Zwar konnt' ich doch lange genug davon schweigen, konnte oft mich halten, wenn unter den andern Erinnerungen diese mich ergriff; siehe nur hin! du wirst tobende Thränen finden auf mancher unbedeutenden Seite; sie gehören hieher; ich troknete sie und schrieb von andern Dingen' (StA III, 250–51).

as I would contend, it is difficult to see what other form could be chosen. Complaints about the perilous recalcitrance of one's subject matter and one's own inadequacy in grappling with it would appear hollow and silly, unless written with ironic intent, which is here obviously not the case. Hyperion's communications may grow into a book, an address to the public. They must on no account be seen to have been conceived as one from the outset by the narrator.

When Hölderlin temporarily abandoned the epistolary convention in the intermediate versions of *Hyperion*, in order to experiment with alternative forms, he still retained as the basic element a life-story with built-in commentary. We are presented in these versions with an already mature figure who looks back on the days of his youth, and comments and judges from a solid base of acquired insight. The higher perspective is already fixed, and is not seen to change or develop in the course of narration. How could it? In abandoning the letter form Hölderlin has deprived himself of that option. In returning to it he opens up the possibility of a double development: that of the narrator as a figure within his own narrative, and that of the narrator as he confronts his past life and attempts to come to terms with it in his writing. This would represent something more than the oscillation between different time levels of narration that one would expect to find in any epistolary novel. Such a balance of emphasis between past action and developing present, if this is indeed what we have in *Hyperion*, would seem to be Hölderlin's innovation.

It is the openness towards the future, in terms of the perspective of the individual narrator, that must have attracted Hölderlin to the epistolary form. Throughout the novel he is at pains to show that Hyperion, the writer of the letters, has a developing present and, for long stretches, an extremely uncertain future. He does this in various ways. One involves the repeated reference, already mentioned, to the narrating activity itself and the toll it is taking. Nor is it simply a matter of reflections or despairing interjections, indicating a changing mental state. The narrator's present is more than a featureless vantage point. It is given dimension in time and space. Whilst it is true that his letters have neither address nor dates, we know where he is when he writes them, and are given an impression of the passage of time through periodic references to the changing seasons. Thus, the correspondence

opens in spring, with Hyperion, having just returned from Germany, in the vicinity of Corinth. Late summer finds him on Salamis, directing his gaze towards Calauria, Diotima's island, and preparing to tell the story of his love, something he has delayed until he feels sufficient strength within himself to do so. There is a reference to winter at the beginning of the twenty-sixth letter, as the account of the relationship draws towards its climax and the narrator approaches his worst crisis.²² It is in the second volume that Hyperion indicates recovery, after his protracted stay on Salamis, and it would be tempting to assume that both narrative and narration conclude in the spring. There is admittedly no direct evidence for this. But we know that Hyperion begins writing in the spring, and that his letters end with an account of that same spring as experienced in Germany, prior to his return to Greece. And since I will argue that there is a deliberate fusion of temporal perspectives at the end of the novel, the assumption seems to me to be a reasonable one. The writing of the letters would then have taken a complete year.²³

Hölderlin's novel is subtitled 'the hermit in Greece', itself a sufficient indication that its subject is the writer of the letters and what happens to him in his isolation. One would not expect very much to happen to a hermit. The essence of his 'activity' here is the reflective and imaginative engagement with his own past, the inner processing of the events that drove him into his retreat in the first place, and this we witness in its entirety. If changes are to come about through this activity, it must be clearly seen to have extension in time, and Hölderlin does enough to

22 Letter XXVI: 'I'm building a grave for my heart, that it may rest; I spin a cocoon around myself, because everywhere it's winter, in blissful memories I wrap myself against the storm' (p. 54); 'Ich baue meinem Herzen ein Grab, damit es ruhen möge; ich spinne mich ein, weil überall es Winter ist; in seeligen Erinnerungen hüll' ich vor dem Sturme mich ein' (StA III, 62).

23 Knaupp illustrates the narrative structure of the novel with a useful diagram in the shape of an ammonite — see Michael Knaupp, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Hyperion* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1997), p. 77. This would suggest that the narrated time goes from pre-1768 (the year Hyperion moves to Smyrna) to spring 1771, the narrating time from spring 1771 to (spring) 1772. Amongst the external reference points: the Greek uprising in the Peloponnese (Orlov revolt) began in February 1770; we know that Hyperion is injured in the battle of Chesma, 5–7 July 1770, and that, after a period of convalescence on Paros, he leaves for Germany (via Sicily) in the late autumn or winter of that year. For a detailed chronology and a map of Hyperion's journeys, see *Friedrich Hölderlin: Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. by Michael Knaupp, III (Munich: Hanser, 1992), pp. 318–19, 324–25.

convey this. More would have been distracting and alien to his purpose. All we really need to know is that the writer of the letters is living alone on an island, and that months are passing whilst he writes them. Despite his naturally-motivated orientation towards the past, he must be seen to have a present within which any development may take place, and this present must be open-ended. The final words of the novel are 'So I thought. More anon.'²⁴ What might happen next is a question that will concern us later. For the moment it is sufficient to observe that the narrating Hyperion has his story which is both distinct from, and integrally related to, the story he is telling.

The Foreword

One thing emerges clearly from the note prefacing the first volume of *Hyperion*: Hölderlin is well aware of the likelihood that he will not be properly understood. As with his other famous preface, the one that introduces his great hymn 'Friedensfeier' ('Celebration of Peace', 1801), the tone here seems to be a mixture of apology and provocation.²⁵ He fears that we may not know what to make of his work, but then that may perhaps be our fault. One clearly legitimate reason for Hölderlin's misgivings is that his public will initially have only the one volume available to them. In a novel with two lines of development (the hero within, and also outside and above his narrative), both running parallel on the printed page but the one running into the other chronologically (the letter writing begins when the narrated events have ended), the separate publication of one half will present more than ordinary problems in this respect. But at least Hölderlin underlines the status of his novel as a structured work. It has a 'Plan', and he knows what it is, even if the reader is going to

24 Letter LX: 'So dacht' ich. Nächstens mehr' (StA III, 160).

25 'Ich bitte dieses Blatt nur gutmüthig zu lesen. So wird es sicher nicht unfaßlich, noch weniger anstößig seyn. Sollten aber dennoch einige eine solche Sprache zuwenig konventionell finden, so muß ich ihnen gestehen: ich kann nicht anders' (StA III, 532). In Michael Hamburger's translation: 'All that I ask is that the reader be kindly disposed towards these pages. In that case he will certainly not find them incomprehensible, far less objectionable. But if, nonetheless, some should think such a language too unconventional, I must confess to them: I cannot help it.' — See *Friedrich Hölderlin: Hyperion and Selected Poems*, ed. Eric L. Santner (New York: Continuum, 1990), p. 229.

have to wait to judge. However, Hölderlin's apparently well-founded scepticism about the likely reception of his novel is really rooted in doubts about the qualities and capabilities of his potential readership. They will be Germans, those of his own day, the very same who are going to be unmercifully castigated in *Hyperion's* penultimate letter. 'I'd happily promise this book the love of the Germans,' the preface begins, and the conditional is used advisedly.²⁶ 'Love', communal awareness, the sense of belonging to the whole, openness to the spirit of life in all its manifestations, reverence for nature and beauty, sensitivity to its articulation in poetry — that is precisely what will not be found amongst the Germans, who are, according to *Hyperion*, not only politically, but also and above all spiritually fragmented.²⁷ It seems that the Germans represent, albeit in extreme form, the diseases of the modern world (similar criticisms are levelled by *Hyperion* at his own Greek contemporaries). In their fragmentation and division, their egoism and slavish disposition, the Germans are the direct antithesis of the ancient Greeks, as seen by *Hyperion*. (It should be noted that the praise of the latter and the attack on the former occupy corresponding positions, near the end of the first and second volumes respectively. It seems unlikely that this structural correspondence is fortuitous.) In view of the severity of *Hyperion's* censure of the Germans, one might think it naïve of Hölderlin even to entertain the possibility that they might learn to love his book. But then his anger is really a measure of his deep emotional commitment to them, or rather to what they could and should be, and might indeed even become, were his seed to take root. *Hyperion* is in no small degree an exploration of the ways in which change might be brought about, and the answer seems to be the novel itself (Hölderlin was not a modest man). It is intended to be educative, though not in a preaching, narrowly didactic sense. The lesson is aesthetic. Beauty is redemptive. Were the Germans to be such that they could respond to the novel in the proper manner, were they capable of 'loving' it, then they would indeed be changed.²⁸

26 'Ich versprache gerne diesem Buche die Liebe der Deutschen' (StA III, 5).

27 See Letter LIX, p. 131: StA III, 155: 'ich kann kein Volk mir denken, das zerrißner wäre, wie die Deutschen ...'

28 Cf. Diotima's (past) vision of her ideal community (Letter LVI): 'Oh! now men no longer took the beautiful world like laymen the artist's poem when they praise the words and note the utility' (p. 113); 'Ach! nun nahmen die Menschen die schöne

Hölderlin points to two ways in which he expects his novel to be misread:

But I fear some will read it like a compendium and be overly concerned with the *fabula docet*, whilst others will take it too lightly, and neither party will understand it.

Those who merely sniff my flower mistake its nature, and so do those who pluck it merely for instruction.

The resolution of the dissonances in a particular character is neither for mere reflection nor empty pleasure. (p. 5)²⁹

One is used to writers defending their fictions on the grounds that they both instruct and entertain, mixing the pleasant with the useful.³⁰ Here Hölderlin appears to be saying that neither of these things, in themselves, is his main concern. Or rather, that any arbitrary separation of the two functions will lead to a fundamental misreading. Plundering the novel for ideas, the philosophical message, is just as aberrant as taking it simply as a story to while away one's leisure hours. In one sense what Hölderlin is arguing here is the autonomy of the work of art, the rejection of its subservience to ends and purposes outside itself, whether these be enlightenment or entertainment. He was of course not alone in defending the integrity of art against external manipulation, the attribution of objective purposefulness to what of its nature must be free and self-determined. It is, however, necessary to tread carefully here, lest one ascribe to Hölderlin a form of poetic solipsism which was alien to him. His art is not hermetic. Like all properly creative forms of human activity, it is for him a service rendered to nature.³¹ It is the

Welt nicht mehr, wie Laien des Künstlers Gedicht, wenn sie die Worte loben und den Nutzen drin ersehnen' (StA III, 131).

29 'Aber ich fürchte, die einen werden es lesen, wie ein Compendium, und um das *fabula docet* sich zu sehr bekümmern, indeß die andern gar zu leicht es nehmen, und beede Theile verstehen es nicht. // Wer blos an meiner Pflanze riecht, der kennt sie nicht, und wer sie pflückt, blos, um daran zu lernen, kennt sie auch nicht. // Die Auflösung der Dissonanzen in einem gewissen Charakter ist weder für das bloße Nachdenken, noch für die leere Lust' (StA III, 5).

30 Horace, *Ars Poetica*, line 343.

31 See the letter to his half-brother of 4 June 1799: 'Du siehest, Lieber, daß ich Dir das Paradoxon aufgestellt habe, daß der Kunst- und Bildungstrieb mit allen seinen Modifikationen und Abarten ein eigentlicher Dienst sei, den die Menschen der Natur erweisen.' In Charlie Louth's translation: 'You can see, dear Karl, that I have presented you with the paradox that the artistic and creative impulse with all its modifications and varieties is actually a service human beings render unto

unity of all life, 'einiges, ewiges, glühendes Leben', that is celebrated in the final letter of the novel, and it is Life that remains for Hölderlin the highest value.³² It is in art, specifically in poetry, that it receives articulation, quintessential expression. The work of art is autonomous in the same way as a living organism. It is an indivisible whole, yet at the same time part of the greater whole, the most intense individual manifestation of the all-pervading spirit of Life itself. It is not gratuitous that Hölderlin refers to his novel as a plant.

But what, one may ask, is the correct response to a flower? In so far as the work of art is incarnate beauty, an articulated vision of wholeness, it requires that we respond as wholes, and its effect should be to make us whole. Any one-sided appropriation is deleterious, whether we use the ideas in the work to school our intellects or simply allow the 'plant's' fragrance to give our senses an intoxicating lift. In the case of *Hyperion* the warning is not idly given. For disregard of the novel's peculiar form and structure must lead to a severe misunderstanding of the content. In fact, it is difficult to think of many other novels where such neglect can lead so fundamentally astray as here. The embodied ideas seem to be relativized at every turn, either through the narrator's distancing comments, or by becoming stages in the evolving consciousness of the narrator himself. Even the beautiful hymn to nature at the end of the novel, where one might expect to find a definitive statement, seems (at least initially) to be accorded merely provisional status: it is placed in inverted commas and qualified by the concluding 'So I thought.' Context is everything. Yet if the novel defies us to extract the message or messages, it does in fact advance the solution to a problem which is usually stated in philosophical terms. That which is neither for intellectual instruction nor for superficial, undemanding enjoyment — 'neither for mere reflection nor empty pleasure' — is said to be the 'resolution of the dissonances in a particular character'. Hölderlin does not here spell out the precise nature

nature.' — in *Hölderlin: Essays and Letters*, edited and translated with an introduction by Jeremy Adler and Charlie Louth (London and New York: Penguin Classics, 2009), p. 136.

32 Cf. M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (London: Norton, 1971), pp. 431 ff.: 'Life' is the 'ground-concept', 'the generator of the controlling categories of Romantic thought ... Life is the premise and paradigm for what is most innovative and distinctive in Romantic thinkers. Hence their vitalism: the celebration of that which lives, moves and evolves by an internal energy, over whatever is lifeless, inert, and unchanging.'

of those dissonances, but in a sense he has already alluded to them. In so far as they are concerned with the fragmentation of human faculties, the division between thought and feeling, the discursive and the intuitive, detachment and involvement, reflection and spontaneity, it could be said that they are already adumbrated in the mutually contradictory approaches which Hölderlin imputes to his potential readers: *mere* reflection or *empty* pleasure. This implies no denigration of reflection ('Nachdenken'), or indeed pleasure ('Lust') — the adjectives suggest only that both are impoverished when detached from one another. We shall be able to understand the resolution of the dissonances only if, at least for the duration of our reading, we are able to resolve them in ourselves.

'Not to be constrained by the greatest ...'

It might well be objected that the preface to the final version of *Hyperion* is too cryptic to be of much help to the bemused reader. The earlier prefaces are certainly more explicit.³³ They also have the considerable drawback of encouraging us to see the work in terms of a detachable scheme or programme, with a heavy philosophical bias. They concentrate in fact on the *fabula docet*, and whilst this might have been in some measure appropriate for the particular versions they preface, Hölderlin is now clearly anxious to avoid the impression that he is merely offering an exemplification of preconceived truths. Unlike the paradigmatic states of harmony and perfection on which he dwells in the earlier prefaces, the unspecified 'resolution of the dissonances' is something that must be realized or enacted in the work itself. What Hölderlin does, however, retain from the first preface is the quotation he now uses as a motto to introduce the first volume: 'Non coerceri maximo, contineri a minimo, divinum est.'³⁴ This time there is no attribution, no explanation given, and we are left to apply it as we may. It is in fact taken from the first section of an anonymous literary epitaph in praise of the founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius Loyola, first published in 1640.³⁵ How Hölderlin came by it

33 See StA III, 163, 235–37.

34 'Not to be constrained (confined, enclosed) by the greatest, to be contained (enclosed) by the smallest, is divine.'

35 For details and a fuller context, see StA III, 437–38. In the original, and in the preface to the 'Fragment von Hyperion', it reads: 'contineri tamen a minimo'.

is not known for certain, but his most likely source would seem to be a virulently anti-Jesuit history of the order that began to appear in 1789.³⁶ One is perhaps surprised by the peripheral intrusion of Jesuits into Hölderlin's novel, for whatever else might have motivated the choice of name for Hyperion's correspondent, as a trained theologian Hölderlin must have been aware of Cardinal Robert(o) Bellarmine(o) (1542–1621), as were no doubt many of his readers. But whether the latter would have been able to recognize the unattributed quotation or connect it with Jesuits is quite another matter. One who nowadays could is Francis, the first Jesuit Pope, and he is apparently fond of citing it. It also seems to appeal to his predecessor who even refers to *Hyperion* in this context.³⁷

When Hölderlin decided to omit any guiding interpretation of the Loyola epitaph from the final version of *Hyperion*, he almost certainly did so because he realized that it would be unnecessarily limiting. Quite apart from the general considerations that motivated the excision of explicit theorizing from the preface, he would have recognized in the epitaph a peculiar aptness to all his major concerns, whether religious, political, philosophical or aesthetic. Even the addition of Loyola's name might have seemed in some measure prescriptive. Interesting is the addition of the 'divinum est'. This is present in the original epitaph, but was omitted from the preface to the 'Fragment' where we are confronted with the contrary drives — glossed as man wanting at the same time to be *in* everything and *above* everything³⁸ — together with the implication that a notional reconciliation would represent the highest state achievable, but also that it is the very striving to achieve such balance which can be dangerous and lead to catastrophe: the attempt to reconcile the polar tensions could result in our being ripped apart by them.³⁹ In the preface to the penultimate version of the novel, which dispenses

36 Peter Philipp Wolf, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Jesuiten von dem Ursprunge ihres Ordens bis auf gegenwärtige Zeiten*, 4 vols (Zurich: Orell, Geßner, Füssli, 1789–92). The epitaph is quoted in full in the first volume, pp. 214–17.

37 Josef Cardinal Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), pp. 146–47.

38 'Der Mensch möchte gerne *in* allem und *über* allem seyn' (StA III, 163).

39 Similar tensions give Goethe's Werther cause for reflection in his letter of 21 June: 'I've had all manner of thoughts about the desire [*Begier*] human beings have to extend themselves ... to rove far and wide; and then about the impulse [*Trieb*] in them willingly to accept constraints'; translated by David Constantine, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 24.

with Loyola and epitaph altogether, we — and Hyperion — are seen as torn between extremes of massive, solipsistic expansion on the one hand, and contraction to the point of obliteration on the other. Both are dangerous, because they are literally self-destructive. This dialectical tension between self and world is an inescapable part of human experience, and yet it is the drives that create it which also charge us to overcome it.⁴⁰

The restoration of 'divinum est' suggests a religious dimension, if not in any narrow confessional sense. In its original context the statement is naturally closely associated with death, the narrow grave confining the mortal remains of one whose indomitable spirit knew no bounds:

Cuius Animus
Vastissimo coerceri non potuit unius orbis ambitu,
Ejus Corpus
Humili hoc angustoque tumulo continetur.
Qui magnum aut *Pompeium* aut *Caesarem* aut *Alexandrum* cogitas,
Aperi oculos veritati,
Majorem his omnibus leges
Ignatium.
Non coerceri maximo, contineri tamen a minimo, divinum est.⁴¹

The contrast is familiar to us from Shakespeare. One thinks here particularly of Prince Henry's lines on the death of Hotspur: 'When that this body did contain a spirit, / A kingdom for it was too small a bound, / But now two paces of the vilest earth / Is room enough.'⁴² These lines are echoed in a text that was of great, if still largely unacknowledged significance for Hölderlin, namely Macpherson's *Ossian* (1762–65): 'Narrow is thy dwelling now; dark the place of thine abode. With three steps I compass thy grave, O thou who wast so great before!'⁴³ Mention

⁴⁰ See StA III, 236.

⁴¹ Wolf, I, pp. 214–15. 'He whose spirit could not be contained by a whole globe's bounds, his body is enclosed in this low and narrow tumulus. You who deem great Pompey or Caesar or Alexander, open your eyes to the truth: as the greater than all these you will choose Ignatius ...'

⁴² *Henry IV* (Part I), Act V, Scene 4.

⁴³ James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*, ed. by Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 24, 168. The passage is included in the 'Songs of Selma', translated by Goethe's Werther.

of Caesar and Alexander might also remind us of the Yorick scene in *Hamlet*:

Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust,
the dust is earth, of earth we make loam, and why of that loam, whereto
he was converted, might they not stop a beer barrel?

Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,

Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.

Oh, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,

Should patch a wall t' expel the winter's flaw!⁴⁴

But then Hamlet can express the great/small contrast in terms of a familiar paradox without any reference to death: were it not for bad dreams, 'I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a king of infinite space.'⁴⁵

By omitting any specific reference to Loyola or to the motto's being an epitaph, Hölderlin ensures that any primary association with death is absent, and thus widens the scope of the statement considerably without in any way falsifying it. In fact, it does not seem to me that it was the anonymous author's intention to restrict his meaning either; quite the reverse. He is not simply saying that it is divine to have a great spirit and a dead body, but rather seeing in Loyola's situation the illustration of a glorious universal truth, by associating his hero with Christ himself. For this gnomic statement ought to be recognized as an allusion to the miracle of Incarnation. It is a variation of a commonplace in medieval hymnology. Sometimes, admittedly, it can be used to refer to the death of Christ: 'Brevo sepulcro clauditur, qui caelo non capitur' ('He is enclosed in the narrow tomb, he whom the heavens cannot contain').⁴⁶ But often the enclosing space is not the tomb but the Virgin's womb: 'Quem nequit totus cohibere mundus / Claudis in alvo' ('He whom the whole world cannot contain, / You enclose in your womb').⁴⁷ Or: 'Intra te clauditur, / Qui claudit omnia' ('In you is enclosed / he who encloses everything').⁴⁸ It is the paradox of incarnate divinity.

44 *Hamlet*, Act V, Scene 1.

45 *Hamlet*, Act II, Scene 2.

46 Peter Damian, 'Pascal's rhythmus ad procedendum', in *Poésie latine chrétienne du Moyen âge: IIIe-XVe siècle*, Textes recueillis, traduits et commentés par Henry Spitzmuller (Paris: Desclée, De Brouwer, 1971), p. 404.

47 Peter Damian, 'In assumptione hymnus', in Spitzmuller, p. 408; cf. also 'De virgine hymnus', pp. 408 ff.

48 Alexander Neckham [?], 'De virgine cantio', in Spitzmuller, p. 747.

Hyperion was, for the most part, written at a time when Hölderlin was furthest removed from any kind of Christian orthodoxy. The sudden irruption of Christ into his poetry comes after 1800, although there are obvious intimations of his later concerns, notably in the shape of the martyr and redeemer Empedokles, the subject of Hölderlin's unfinished drama (1797–1800). In November 1798 he can ask his half-brother: 'when will people recognize that the highest power is in its expression also the most modest and that the divine, when it makes itself manifest, can never be without a certain sadness and humility?'⁴⁹ It seems to me that the notion of suffering incarnate divinity is already clearly implied here. It is this generalized insight that will open the way for the (attempted) reintegration of Christ into Hölderlin's world, albeit on the poet's own terms. And it is in the novel that the process really begins. For the mature insight which Hölderlin offers to his brother is one which is worked out in *Hyperion*, and by Hyperion. The absolute is available to us through beauty, embodied perfection, the individual manifestations of which, whether in the glories of ancient Greece or the figure of Diotima herself, are temporal and therefore transient. It takes Hyperion a long time to come to terms with this: 'O Bellarmin! who then may say he stands fast when even the beautiful ripens so towards its fate, when even the divine must humble itself and share mortality with all that is mortal!' (p. 82).⁵⁰ If this represents the narrator's gradual and reluctant recognition of a necessary truth, marking already a measurable advance in understanding, it is transformed near the end into joyful affirmation:

... and you ask, my Bellarmin! how I feel now, telling you this?

My dearest friend! I'm at peace, for I want no better than the gods. Must not everything suffer? And the nobler it is, the more deeply. Does not holy nature suffer? O my godhead! that you could grieve as you are blissful is something I long failed to grasp. But the bliss that does not suffer is sleep, and without death there is no life. Should you be, like a child, eternal and slumber as nothingness? forego the victory? not pass

49 28 November 1798: 'O, Lieber! wann wird man unter uns erkennen, daß die höchste Kraft in ihrer Äußerung zugleich auch die bescheidenste ist, und daß das Göttliche, wenn es hervorgeht, niemals ohne eine gewisse Trauer und Demuth seyn kann?' Translation by Charlie Louth, in *Hölderlin: Essays and Letters*, p. 111.

50 Letter XXXI: 'O Bellarmin! wer darf denn sagen, er stehe vest, wenn auch das Schöne seinem Schiksaal so entgegenreift, wenn auch das Göttliche sich demüthigen muß, und die Sterblichkeit mit allem Sterblichen theilen!' (StA III, 94).

through all the perfections? Yes! yes! worthy is pain to lie at men's hearts and be your familiar, O nature! For it alone leads from one bliss to the next, and there can be no other companion. (p. 129)⁵¹

The radical dualism posited in the chronologically much earlier 'Song of Fate' (p. 123), between oblivious gods and suffering humanity, is here overcome. Hyperion finds his 'peace' (if not his resting place) in the revelation that it is the very essence of the gods' divinity to be, not only above everything, but also in everything, and as such, in their temporal aspect, subject to the same limitations as all living things, the same laws of change and decay. Without this they are nothing. For to be both is divine. The bliss of what is most intensely alive is inseparable from pain, and the featureless limbo of comatose non-feeling is no alternative. The 'condescension' of the gods, their submission to the shackles of time and space, is indeed redemptive, since through it man and all creation is raised, becoming a fitting and necessary element in the divine pageant. Everything that lives is holy.

The preface speaks of the 'resolution of the dissonances'. The Latin motto, as it stands, implies that it is divine to combine two apparently mutually contradictory qualities or modes of being. How then is this related to the conflicts sustained by Hyperion, and their eventual outcome? Each mode is in fact individually represented by a central character in the novel, and both exist in a state of initially unresolved tension in Hyperion himself. For all his nobility, Alabanda can be seen to represent the hubristic dangers inherent in idealistic radicalism. Not being willing to be constrained is allied with the impulse to dominate, to do violence to the freedom of others. It is an expression of the titanic 'monstrous striving to be everything' (p. 16) that, left unchecked,

51 Letter LVIII: 'und du fragst, mein Bellarmin! wie jezt mir ist, indem ich diß erzähle? Bester! ich bin ruhig, denn ich will nichts bessers haben, als die Götter. Muß nicht alles leiden? Und je treflicher es ist, je tiefer! Leidet nicht die heilige Natur? O meine Gottheit! daß du trauern könntest, wie du seelig bist, das konnt' ich lange nicht fassen. Aber die Wonne, die nicht leidet, ist Schlaf, und ohne Tod ist kein Leben. Solltest du ewig seyn, wie ein Kind und schlummern, dem Nichts gleich? den Sieg entbehren? nicht die Vollendungen alle durchlaufen? Ja! ja! werth ist der Schmerz, am Herzen der Menschen zu liegen, und dein Vertrauter zu seyn, o Natur! Denn er nur führt von einer Wonne zur andern, und es ist kein andrer Gefährte, denn er. — ' (StA III, 150). Beissner in his annotation of this passage (StA III, 486) insists that 'ewig' in 'ewig seyn' is used adverbially, so that the question would mean: 'should you be eternally like a child ...?' This strikes me as a grotesque (if common) misreading.

inevitably leads to tyranny, alienation, and catastrophe.⁵² Alabanda will not suffer constraint and roams far and wide in a world he despises, eager to put a new one in its place, and violently if necessary. When his efforts are frustrated, he remains defiant and unrepentant, his fiery spirit undiminished, his awareness of a pure core of indestructible selfhood his only faith:

‘So ... without freedom everything is dead.’

‘Yes indeed,’ he cried, ‘there’s not a blade of grass grows up unless it has its own germ of life within! how much the more in me! and therefore, my dear friend! because I feel myself free in the highest sense, because I feel myself beginningless, therefore I believe that I’m endless, that I’m indestructible. If a potter’s hand has made me, then let him smash his vessel as he pleases. But that which lives within must be unbegotten, must be divine of nature in its germ, sublime beyond all might and all art, and therefore invulnerable, eternal.’ (p. 121)⁵³

It is a vision that presupposes dissonance and conflict. Here freedom is expressed in an image of violence, as it has to be, since liberty is understood as the assertion of self against the constraints of inhibiting forces which are experienced as external and alien to the self. It is a vision based on division, no doubt valid in its context, as the expression of an explosive phase in the life of individuals or communities periodically necessary and justified, but no more fitted to represent the norm than are floods, volcanoes, or earthquakes within the economy of nature. For Diotima by contrast, the model is one of unity and harmony. Within a narrowly circumscribed environment she lives an idyll of naïve, unreflecting fulfilment, like a beautiful flower embedded in a protected garden. She does not feel constricted, since all she knows is part of her and she of it. She can express herself only by expressing the world around her; she is a living hymn to nature, and her proper medium is not speech but song.

52 Letter V: ‘das ungeheure Streben, Alles zu seyn’ (StA III, 18).

53 Letter LVII: ‘So [wäre es hier im höchsten Sinne wahr, erwidert ich, daß] ohne Freiheit alles todt ist. // Ja wohl, rief er, wächst doch kein Grashalm auf, wenn nicht ein eigner Lebenskeim in ihm ist! wie viel mehr in mir! und darum, Lieber! weil ich frei im höchsten Sinne, weil ich anfangslos mich fühle, darum glaub’ ich, daß ich endlos, daß ich unzerstörbar bin. Hat mich eines Töpfers Hand gemacht, so mag er sein Gefäß zerschlagen, wie es ihm gefällt. Doch was da lebt, muß un erzeugt, muß göttlicher Natur in seinem Keime seyn, erhaben über alle Macht, und alle Kunst, und darum unverleztlich, ewig’ (StA III, 141). The ‘potter’s hand’ alludes to Jeremiah, chapters 18 and 19; also Isaiah, 29:16, underlining the willed impiety of Alabanda’s words.

It is the disruptive influence of Hyperion that wrenches her from her idyll and makes her articulate. The vicarious experience of an out-of-joint world through the man she loves uproots and ultimately destroys her (as an individual), since it makes impossible a return to her haven of innocence. It is, however, the shocking knowledge of dissonance that also enables her to give voice and differentiated expression to what she has known and lived, that peace and harmony which pass all human understanding. Her conception of freedom, the cornerstone of her faith, is the experienced oneness with the life of nature. It is something that is available to her now only through death, the final shedding of all that makes her distinct and different, painfully detached from that life. Her eloquent and lovely swansong displays a form of egalitarian radicalism that puts to shame Alabanda's elitist and egocentric liberalism:

Those poor souls who know nothing but their own sorry handiwork, who are merely slaves of need and scorn genius, and who do not honour you, childlike life of nature! let them fear death. Their yoke is become their world; they know nothing better than their bondage; dread the freedom of the gods that death gives us?

But I don't! I have gone beyond the patchwork made by hand of man, I have felt the life of nature that passes all thought — even if I became a plant, would the harm be so great? — I shall be. How should I be lost from the sphere of life where the love eternal, that is common to all, holds all natures together? How should I depart from the covenant that binds all beings? This is not so easily broken as the loose bonds of our age. It's not like a market day when folk flock together and make a great bustle and then disperse. No! by the spirit that unites us, by the god's spirit that is proper to each and common to all! no! no! in nature's covenant troth is no dream. We part to be only more inwardly one, more divinely at peace with all, with ourselves. We die in order to live.

I shall be; I do not ask what I shall become. To be, to live, that is enough, that is the glory of the gods; and that is why all that is life is equal in the divine world, and there are there no masters and menials. Natures live together like lovers; they have all in common, spirit, joy and eternal youth. (p. 127)⁵⁴

54 Letter LVIII: 'Die Armen, die nichts kennen, als ihr dürftig Machwerk, die der Noth nur dienen und den Genius verschmähen, und dich nicht ehren, kindlich Leben der Natur! die mögen vor dem Tod sich fürchten. Ihr Joch ist ihre Welt geworden; Besseres, als ihren Knechtsdienst, kennen sie nicht; scheun die Götterfreiheit, die der Tod uns giebt? // Ich aber nicht! ich habe mich des Stükwerks überhoben, das die Menschenhände gemacht, ich hab' es gefühlt, das Leben der Natur, das höher

The stress is on equality, but here, as in Hyperion's own equivalent concluding statement, it is a non- or even anti-Jacobin conception of equality that is voiced. Diotima delights in the diversity of all genuine manifestations of Life, insisting only that they are all equal in value and fundamentally related, emphatically not that they should be forced to conform to one another. In this celebration of Life, from which all hierarchical notions are absent, Diotima wishes for nothing better than to be 'in everything'. She would be content to be 'contained by the smallest': 'even if I became a plant, would the harm be so great?' Whatever Hölderlin may have meant in the preface to the 'Fragment', it is clear that this carries no negative connotations here. There is a definite rightness about everything Diotima is meant to say throughout the novel, and her statements are never relativized in any way. It is only that their ultimate truth is not immediately grasped by Hyperion himself. Given the undoubted authority of Diotima's words, it is thus all the more significant that she stresses that her way should not be his; not because the ultimate goal of unity with the life of nature is wrong, but because he is to realize it in a less private, self-effacing manner. It is Diotima who assigns Hyperion his mission. After addressing her trinity of sun, earth, and aether, and praying that errant man will return from his exile into the divine fold, into the home of nature, she continues: 'You know this word, Hyperion! You began it in me. You will fulfil it in yourself, and only then rest.'⁵⁵ In what sense he is to realize the promise of her words arguably becomes finally clear to Hyperion only when he copies out for Bellarmin the letter in which they occur. To the reader

ist, denn alle Gedanken — wenn ich auch zur Pflanze würde, wäre denn der Schade so groß? — Ich werde seyn. Wie sollt' ich mich verlieren aus der Sphäre des Lebens, worinn die ewige Liebe, die allen gemein ist, die Naturen alle zusammenhält? Wie sollt' ich scheiden aus dem Bunde, der die Wesen alle verknüpft? Der bricht so leicht nicht, wie die losen Bande dieser Zeit. Der ist nicht, wie ein Markttag, wo das Volk zusammenläuft und lärmt und auseinandergeht. Nein! bei dem Geiste, der uns einiget, bei dem Gottesgeiste, der jedem eigen ist und allen gemein! nein! nein! im Bunde der Natur ist Treue kein Traum. Wir trennen uns nur, um inniger einig zu seyn, göttlicherfriedlich mit allem, mit uns. Wir sterben, um zu leben. // Ich werde seyn; ich frage nicht, was ich werde. Zu seyn, zu leben, das ist genug, das ist die Ehre der Götter; und darum ist sich alles gleich, was nur ein Leben ist, in der göttlichen Welt, und es giebt in ihr nicht Herren und Knechte. Es leben umeinander die Naturen, wie Liebende; sie haben alles gemein, Geist, Freude und ewige Jugend' (StA III, 147–48).

55 'Du kennst diß Wort, Hyperion! Du hast es angefangen in mir. Du wirst vollenden in dir, und dann erst ruhn' (StA III, 147).

it should be obvious that she envisages for him a social and public function which, for the time being at least, would deny him the luxury of dying into nature. This function is unambiguously related to the bringing back of his fellow-men out of their lamentable alienated state to the harmony that is their birthright. It is not enough for Hyperion to experience unity; he must himself unify. Taking the three watchwords of the French Revolution, it could be said that Alabanda's 'liberty' and Diotima's 'equality' find their resolution in the 'fraternity' which Hyperion must strive to realize.

Hyperion actually uses the adjective 'brüderlich' (fraternal) in the vision of unity celebrated in the final letter of the novel:

"You springs of the earth! you flowers! and you forests and you eagles and you fraternal light! how old and new is our love! — We are free, we don't anxiously strive to be outwardly equal; how should not vary the modes of life? but we all love the aether, and deep in our innermost being we are all of us like." (p. 136)⁵⁶

Here the word is applied to the light and any political meaning might seem oblique. But since it is immediately followed by a sentence featuring the adjective 'frei' (free) and the verb 'gleichen' (to be equal, like), it is difficult to believe that this is fortuitous and the language innocent of any revolutionary associations. On reading and being impressed by a substantial early fragment of the novel Hölderlin's mentor, Friedrich Stäudlin, told him to make sure to insert into the finished product 'cryptic passages about the spirit of the age'.⁵⁷ That spirit was of course one of revolutionary turmoil and upheaval, and it is indeed reflected in the novel in a number of telling ways (though perhaps not so telling that any political import is immediately obvious). Like many of his generation — one might think here of Wordsworth, also born in 1770 — he was enthused by the promise of the French Revolution. Again, like many, he became appalled by the excesses of a revolutionary fanaticism which embodied the negation of the very ideals it purported to uphold. But unlike some, he continued to hold firm his faith in

56 Letter LX: 'Ihr Quellen der Erd'! ihr Blumen! und ihr Wälder und ihr Adler und du brüderliches Licht! wie alt und neu ist unsere Liebe! — Frei sind wir, gleichen uns nicht ängstig von außen; wie sollte nicht wechseln die Weise des Lebens? wir lieben den Aether doch all' und innigst im Innersten gleichen wir uns' (StA III, 159).

57 'Unterlassen Sie doch nicht ... versteckte Stellen über den Geist der Zeit in dieses Werk einzuschalten!!!' (4 September, 1793; StA III, 299).

the validity of the ideals themselves.⁵⁸ Hölderlin situates his novel in Greece, the classical cradle of democracy; significantly, though, not in ancient Greece but in that of the near-present, the historical background being the unsuccessful Russian-backed insurrection against the occupying Turkish power, which took place in 1770.⁵⁹ Hyperion, as one 'keen to see the world a better place' (p. 29), finds himself suddenly confronted, as he sees it, with the practical opportunity of making his dreams a reality. Disaster and disillusionment quickly follow. But we misinterpret Hyperion's failure as guerrilla and military leader, and indeed the failure of the insurrection itself (historical fact), if we take it to imply that revolutionary activism is wrong in any absolute sense. Surely Hölderlin would not be wishing to argue that the Greeks should not try to rid themselves of the Turkish yoke. The point is that Hyperion must not expect his ideal community to be brought into being by such methods. Diotima's misgivings about Hyperion's active participation in the revolt are well founded. Ideologically motivated violence has an inevitable tendency to lose touch with its original inspiration, and become an end in itself: 'You will conquer ... and forget what for' (p. 84).⁶⁰ And crucially, Hyperion himself is not destined to serve the cause in this way, though others may be: 'Even if it's right ... it's not what you were born for' (p. 83).⁶¹

What then is Hyperion's true vocation? According to Diotima's vision for him at the end of the first volume, he is to become the educator of his people.⁶² It is difficult to see how he can do so by remaining a hermit. The subtitle of the novel is justified because what is documented is Hyperion's journey into isolation and his gradual emergence from it. The figure of the recluse thus stands in the middle of Hyperion's development, and yet at the same time at the beginning and end of the novel. It is the incipient hermit who writes the first letter, and it is the

58 See my essays 'Hölderlin and Revolution', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 12 (1976), 118–36; and "'Diß ist die Zeit der Könige nicht mehr": Hölderlin and Republicanism', *Strathclyde Modern Language Studies, Special Issue: The French Revolution: German Responses*, 11 (1991), 39–56.

59 For the so-called Orlov revolt, the nature of Hölderlin's sources, and the use he makes of them, see David Constantine, 'The Insurrection of 1770', in *In the Footsteps of the Gods: Travellers to Greece and the Quest for the Hellenic Ideal* (London: Taurus Parke Paperbacks, 2011), pp. 168–87.

60 Letter XXXIII: 'Du wirst erobern ... und vergessen, wofür' (StA III, 96).

61 Letter XXXIII: 'Wenns auch recht ist ... du bist dazu nicht geboren' (StA III, 96).

62 Letter XXX: 'Du wirst Erzieher unsers Volks' (StA III, 89).

last of the letters that relates how he came to turn his back on humanity and throw himself into the arms of nature. But the Hyperion who writes at the end is no longer a hermit. He may still be detached from the world of men, but at least he is now looking towards and not away from it. For he is communicating with it, and in his last major direct statement, the scathing censure of the Germans, he is making himself the spokesman of those who suffer in it and would presumably wish to change it.⁶³ There is of course a nice paradox in the last two letters of the novel, the Hebrew-prophet-like berating of the Germans being followed by the ecstatic hymn to nature. For it is the hermit, in his misanthropic isolation, who experiences the ineffable bliss of all-unity. And it is the mature Hyperion, no longer at odds with himself, and alive to his social responsibilities, who paints a most devastating picture of fragmentation and division. Implicit in both situations is a combination of involvement and detachment. But true synthesis is achieved only on the level of the narrator, for it is he who juxtaposes his philippic with the vision of all-unity which, though the product of the hermit's experience, is here articulated for the first time.

The precise status of the hymn to nature in the last letter has been the subject of much discussion. Formerly it could be widely assumed that the disillusioned and battle-scarred Hyperion retires to commune with nature, and that was that. If there were to have been anything more, it would have had to come in a third volume, which is indeed what some of Hölderlin's contemporaries seem to have expected. In the absence of that we are left with an uncompromising statement of radical pantheism, representing the sum of Hyperion's wisdom after his disasters in love and war. Recognition of the novel's sophisticated narrative structure, with the distinction between narrated and narrating time, has naturally led to a reappraisal, and even a devaluation of the significance of the last letter. For if one is going to argue that Hyperion develops in the course of his narrating, it seems difficult to admit the conclusive validity of an experience he has before he starts writing. And indeed, in so far as the vision of unity embodies coherent thoughts, Hyperion seems expressly to distance himself from them in the novel's final words: 'So I thought,'

63 Letter LIX: 'I spoke in your name too, I spoke for all who live in this land and suffer as I suffered there' (p. 134); 'Ich sprach in deinem Namen auch, ich sprach für alle, die in diesem Lande sind und leiden, wie ich dort gelitten' (StA III, 156).

the implication being that he has moved on since then, though he has yet to tell us where. Yet by its very position at the end of the novel the hymn to nature is given authority. It is what is left ringing in our ears when we finish our reading. Moreover, attempts to differentiate the narrator's painfully acquired insights — 'My dearest friend! I'm at peace ...' (p. 129) — from those expressed in the vision experienced in the German spring are forced to resort to casuistry. Though the accents might be different, it all seems to be there already: the acceptance of suffering (as another word for joy), its function within the dynamic harmony of nature, appreciation of essential unity in the midst of apparent chaos, the identification of life and love. It seems that we have come full circle and that the end result of the narrator's deliberations is to discover what he already knew. And in a sense this is true.

Perhaps the most important point to make about the vision of unity at the end of the novel is that it is not sustained. It is not simply that the ecstatic mood ebbs away, for it would not be humanly possible to prolong it beyond a certain point, but that the experience itself does not lead to lasting insight. Or rather the insights associated with it appear to have no sustaining power. That this is so is shown by the narrator's sorry plight in the opening letters, which of course postdate the beatific vision with which the novel closes. That vision, nevertheless, represents a turning-point in *Hyperion*'s development and the axis of the novel itself. Though it apparently quickly fades, together with the confidence it inspires, it is — while it lasts — an experience of unique intensity and cosmic vastness, which takes him far beyond anything he has known before. His thoughts and feelings suffuse the whole of nature, no longer focused on the solitary mediatory figure of the loved one. It is the shock of reawakening and finding himself finite again that causes *Hyperion* most distress, and it is this jarring contrast which is treated at length in the second letter of the novel and constitutes perhaps the most obvious 'dissonance' of all. The experience of all-unity may be transient, but it is repeatable. Once *Hyperion* has broken through the barriers and succeeded in universalizing his love for Diotima, extending it to the whole of nature, he is able to do so again and again. The first such experience, precisely because it represents a breakthrough, is the most important, and this in itself justifies its prominent position at the end of the novel. It marks the end of a phase

in Hyperion's life, and also the beginning of a new one with a new set of problems. In the second letter we find Hyperion struggling to come to terms with the provisional and fragile nature of a synthesis which had seemed decisive and absolute:

My whole being stills and listens when the gentle ripple of the breeze plays about my breast. Often, lost in the immensity of blue, I look up into the aether and out into the hallowed sea, and it's as if a kindred spirit opened its arms to me, as if the pain of isolation were dissolved in the life of the godhead.

To be one with everything, that is the life of the godhead, that is the heaven of man.

To be one with everything that lives, to return in blissful self-oblivion into the all of nature, that is the summit of thoughts and joys, that is the holy mountain pinnacle, the place of eternal peace where noon loses its sultriness and the thunder its voice and the boiling sea becomes like a waving corn-field.

To be one with everything that lives! At these words virtue lays aside its wrathful harness, the mind of man its sceptre, and all thoughts melt away before the vision of the world's eternal oneness like the toiling artist's rules before his heavenly Urania, and iron fate renounces its dominion, and from the covenant of beings death disappears, and indivisibility and eternal youth blesses, makes beautiful the world. (p. 8)⁶⁴

Then, however, comes the inevitable fall:

On this height I often stand, my Bellarmin! But a moment of reflection casts me down. I begin to think, and find myself as I was before, alone, with all the pains of mortality, and my heart's sanctuary, the world's

64 Letter II: 'Mein ganzes Wesen verstummt und lauscht, wenn die zarte Welle der Luft mir um die Brust spielt. Verloren in's weite Blau, blik' ich oft hinauf an den Aether und hinein in's heilige Meer, und mir ist, als öffnet' ein verwandter Geist mir die Arme, als löste der Schmerz der Einsamkeit sich auf in's Leben der Gottheit. // Eines zu seyn mit Allem, das ist Leben der Gottheit, das ist der Himmel des Menschen. // Eines zu seyn mit Allem, was lebt, in seeliger Selbstvergessenheit wiederzukehren in's All der Natur, das ist der Gipfel der Gedanken und Freuden, das ist die heilige Bergeshöhe, der Ort der ewigen Ruhe, wo der Mittag seine Schwüle und der Donner seine Stimme verliert und das kochende Meer der Wooge des Kornfelds gleicht. // Eines zu seyn mit Allem, was lebt! Mit diesem Worte legt die Tugend den zürnenden Harnisch, der Geist des Menschen den Zepter weg, und alle Gedanken schwinden vor dem Bilde der ewigeinigen Welt, wie die Regeln des ringenden Künstlers vor seiner Urania, und das ehrene Schicksaal entsagt der Herrschaft, und aus dem Bunde der Wesen schwindet der Tod, und Unzertrennlichkeit und ewige Jugend beseeligt, verschönert die Welt' (StA III, 8–9).

eternal oneness, is no more; nature's arms are closed, and I stand before her like a stranger and cannot comprehend her. (p. 9)⁶⁵

'On this height I often stand ...' The feeling of unity with all that lives, first experienced with overwhelming intensity in the German spring, has since recurred and can be reproduced by Hyperion (in short bursts), as it seems, almost at will: 'just forget that men exist, starving, vexed and deeply harassed heart! and return whence you came, into the arms of nature, never-changing, beautiful and tranquil' (p. 8).⁶⁶ Yet it appears that Hyperion has lost as much as he has gained. In the first place, the experience is achieved at the cost of isolation from the rest of humanity. The 'world's eternal oneness' provides a refuge, his 'heart's sanctuary', into which the hermit escapes, effectively denying his brotherhood with those he should be helping: 'And one last time I looked back into the cold night of men and shuddered and wept for joy that I was so blissful' (p. 136).⁶⁷ And secondly, having once achieved this bliss, he has to face the fact that it too is ephemeral and cannot be held, but at best recaptured in isolated moments. Moreover, the very intensity of this periodical, and paradoxically exclusive experience of unity makes its loss or absence, which constitutes Hyperion's normal state, all the more bitter and difficult to bear. Thus what had seemed to offer an ultimate resolution of Hyperion's conflicts proves in fact to have exacerbated them by unbearably intensifying the contrast, in terms of his own experience, between unity and separation, fulfilment and despair. To have only one foot in Eden, as opposed to both or neither, proves to be the worst fate of all.

This is Hyperion's situation at the beginning of the novel, that is to say, when he begins to write. His writing proceeds from the experience in extreme form of both unity and alienation, and the dominant tone at the beginning is one of despair at the periodicity and ultimate

65 'Auf dieser Höhe steh' ich oft, mein Bellarmin! Aber ein Moment des Besinnens wirft mich herab. Ich denke nach und finde mich, wie ich zuvor war, allein, mit allen Schmerzen der Sterblichkeit, und meines Herzens Asyl, die ewigeinige Welt, ist hin; die Natur verschließt die Arme, und ich stehe, wie ein Fremdling, vor ihr, und verstehe sie nicht' (StA III, 9).

66 Letter I: 'vergiß nur, daß es Menschen giebt, darbenendes, angefochtenes, tausendfach geärgertes Herz! und kehre wieder dahin, wo du ausgiengst, in die Arme der Natur, der wandellosen, stillen und schönen' (StA III, 8).

67 Letter LX: 'Und Einmal sah' ich noch in die kalte Nacht der Menschen zurück und schauert' und weinte vor Freuden, daß ich so seelig war' (StA III, 159).

ineffectualness of the moments of harmony. They cannot be preserved, carried over into his normal waking life and made fruitful there. They presuppose abandonment of self, the temporary eclipse of consciousness and individuation. As soon as Hyperion attempts to grasp what it is he is experiencing, the experience itself dissolves into nothing. And this is as it must be. For thinking is a divisive activity that presupposes a conscious, and therefore distinct, finite, and transient subject reflecting on, and therefore detached from a world which it can only know as an object, something external and alien to the self. And this reflective, analytical tendency is something which has been intensified beyond the ordinary in Hyperion by his stay in Germany and his introduction to the desert of philosophical speculation, divorced from its primal sources: 'Amongst you I became so very rational, learnt to distinguish myself perfectly from what is around me, and now I'm set apart in the beautiful world, expelled from the garden of nature in which I grew and bloomed, and shrivel under the noonday sun' (p. 9).⁶⁸ Here we see again how crucial the German experience is for Hyperion. For it brings into sharp focus both the tendencies which he shares with, and also inherits from Alabanda and Diotima. Germany gives him nature in all its glorious beauty and vitality, inviting ecstatic communion and total immersion. It also aggravates his propensity towards elitist detachment, both by providing him with a soulless and horribly fragmented society to despise, and by schooling that faculty within him which automatically destroys feelings of oneness and unity, since it is dependent for its operation on the antithetical opposition of subject and object. The dilemma, which is implied at the end of the novel by the juxtaposition of the attack on the Germans and the hymn to nature, is here, at the beginning of the novel stated in explicit terms, and there would appear to be no way out. To be in everything and above everything at the same time, consciously to grasp the ineffable joys of self-abandonment; to retain and preserve them beyond the moment of the experience itself, so that they could inform and enhance our everyday lives, this would indeed seem to be a task beyond mere mortals. And yet it is the statement of the dilemma which itself incorporates the promise of its own solution.

68 Letter II: 'Ich bin bei euch so recht vernünftig geworden, habe gründlich mich unterscheiden gelernt von dem, was mich umgiebt, bin nun vereinzelt in der schönen Welt, bin so ausgeworfen aus dem Garten der Natur, wo ich wuchs und blühte, und vertrokne an der Mittagssonne' (StA III, 9).

‘... return whence he came’

It should again be stressed that the task undertaken by the narrator is both hazardous and necessary. It is Hyperion's self which is to be rescued, since it cannot survive in a state of constant oscillation between extremes of dissolution and alienation. Madness threatens, either through loss of rational control, or through autistic isolation. These states are characterized, in their extreme form, by the absence of relationship, since relationship presupposes both cohesion and distinction, and cannot exist where identity or division are absolute. The integrity of the self can be achieved and maintained, only if it can comprehend itself in relation to the whole of which it is part, in a state of distinction without division. For Hyperion this requires a mode of reflection which must be more than merely an articulation of the dilemma (although this is certainly a start). If the problem is that the ecstatic union with nature occurs outside the limits of consciousness and is not amenable to rational analysis, then the only way in which it can be comprehended, integrated into the temporal experience of the individual self, is as something absent, something lost. It must be supplied with a framework, a context in time. It must be given a history.

It is a characteristic feature of some of Hölderlin's greatest hymns that the glorious and overpowering epiphany of an unspecified deity is followed by a gesture of withdrawal on the part of the poet.⁶⁹ The unmediated presence of the deity cannot be sustained, nor can his nature be grasped, except by means of a distancing procedure that can involve a survey of the god's mediated presence (incarnation) and subsequent absence in human history. What is experienced as immediately near cannot be grasped, and yet it must be grasped if its intensity is not to overwhelm. Undifferentiated divinity is consuming fire. For the narrating Hyperion, as we have seen, the 'living image' of Diotima assumes the same threatening quality as these numinous presences. And the reaction is similar. The detachment required if the mind is not to break would ideally be effected by transposition into temporal distance: 'I must make believe she lived in times of old, that I knew

69 See my essay, 'Meaning in History: "Chiliasm" in Hölderlin's "Patmos"', *Colloquia Germanica*, 11 (1978), 19–52, pp. 41–42.

of her through tales' (p. 51).⁷⁰ Whether he is confronting the 'terrible glory of antiquity' (p. 16),⁷¹ Diotima, or his own beatific experiences of all-unity, the necessary combination of involvement and detachment, being 'in' and 'above', can be realized only by the development of an integrating historical consciousness. Memories must be both evoked and interpreted as meaningful. The constant oscillations must be seen to form part of a progression. It is only in memory that the contradictions can be accommodated and reconciled. And Mnemosyne is, of course, the mother of the Muses.

Innocence is never known to itself, and awareness of it can only ever be as something lost, in the recollection of the consciousness that destroys it. Golden ages are always in the past, and this is true both of the individual and the race. Hölderlin's Christ departs in order that he should be preserved and understood in man's memory, and it is 'remembrance' of him that is celebrated in the Eucharist. The perfect mystic vision of Plato's divinely-possessed philosopher is a product of anamnesis, the sacred recollection of the Ideas: his soul regains its wings because it is 'always dwelling in memory as best it may upon those things which a god owes his divinity to dwelling upon.'⁷² It is in the contemplation of beauty that the recollection is awakened. For the Hölderlin who wrote 'Menons Klagen um Diotima' ('Menon's Lament for Diotima'), 'Andenken' ('Remembrance'), and 'Mnemosyne', it is certainly true that 'recollection had come to symbolize ... the poet's link with the Absolute.'⁷³ That Hölderlin is indeed a writer of elegiac temper is not to be denied, and it is clearly significant that he confers upon the protagonist of his novel a pronounced 'elegischer Charakter'. But it ought also to be clear that there is much more to this than mere wistful nostalgia for a vanished fantasy. The source of the sadness is intoxicating joy, grief and sorrow the medium through which this joy is articulated: 'Many have tried, but in vain, with joy to express the most joyful; / Here at last, in grave sadness, wholly I find it expressed.'⁷⁴ Harmony requires

70 See above, n. 14.

71 Letter V: 'die schreckende Herrlichkeit des Altertums' (StA III, 18).

72 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249c (translation by Walter Hamilton).

73 David H. Miles, 'The Past as Future: "Pfad" and "Bahn" as Images of Temporal Conflict in Hölderlin', *Germanic Review*, 46 (1971), 95–118, p. 115.

74 'Sophokles' (c. 1799) ('Viele versuchten umsonst, das Freudigste freudig zu sagen / Hier spricht endlich es mir, hier in der Trauer sich aus' (StA I, 305). Translation by Michael Hamburger, in *Hyperion and Selected Poems*, ed. Santner, p. 139. Note that

dissonance and discord in order that it may be expressed at all. In the letter to his half-brother, quoted above (p. 159, n. 49), Hölderlin writes 'that the highest power is in its expression also the most modest and that the divine, when it makes itself manifest, can never be without a certain sadness and humility?' It is this, it will be noted, *in its expression*. 'There's reconciliation in the middle of strife', Hyperion writes at the end.⁷⁵ Unity is expressed through differentiation, the latter being the necessary image or echo of the former, the only way in which this is capable of being reproduced. The source of poetry is the experience of primal unity, its function to give it expression. But the act of articulation itself requires both the detachment of the poet and the prismatic division of that which is being expressed. In this sense it will not be surprising if the poet and his work display 'an elegiac character'.

Achim von Arnim called *Hyperion* an elegy,⁷⁶ and clearly it does have some of the characteristics conventionally associated with the word. The fulfilment enjoyed in happier times weighs heavily on Hyperion, both in the form of his own past experience and also that of the long-departed glory of his fatherland. Modern Greece indeed represents an appropriate choice of setting for a character such as Hyperion. (Given the potentially subversive nature of the subject matter, one cannot help feeling that Hölderlin would have been running something of a risk if he had set the novel anywhere near Germany.) The transience of a great culture, the ephemeral nature of human happiness, the fleeting quality of moments of fulfilment, these are things which Hyperion finds very difficult to come to terms with. The particular narrative technique adopted in the novel is uniquely appropriate to a character of this kind. It enables him to indulge a sense of loss and vast regret, mournfully to reflect on the passing of things of great beauty even as he conjures them before our eyes. Nothing lasts. To say that in itself takes time, and we are made to feel it passing whilst Hyperion writes. Transience is the real challenge Hyperion has to face, and it seems that the task laid upon him is to accept and affirm it, and also in doing so evolve a strategy for defeating it. The problem is a human one and its solution is poetic. There is therefore nothing arbitrary about the elegiac character of the

Hamburger is constrained by the metrical demands of the elegiac couplet, hence his 'grave sadness' for 'Trauer' ('sadness'/'grief').

75 Letter LX: 'Versöhnung ist mitten im Streit' (StA III, 160).

76 See StA III, 319.

novel and its central figure. It corresponds perfectly to Hölderlin's convictions about the nature of life and poetry. And lest we be inclined to dismiss these as merely eccentric, it must be pointed out that he by no means stands alone. In the peculiar significance that he attaches to recollection and memory Hölderlin could be said to articulate, arguably in its purest form, one of the most characteristic tendencies of his age. For his exact contemporary Wordsworth 'poetry takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity', and it has been suggested that the formulation might owe something (via Coleridge) to Schiller.⁷⁷

It is indeed to Wordsworth's *Prelude* that some of the most perceptive critics are inclined to compare *Hyperion*. One of the more obvious affinities is the circular structure of both works. As M. H. Abrams observes of *The Prelude*: 'Its structural end is its own beginning; and its temporal beginning ... is Wordsworth's entrance on the stage of his life at which it ends.'⁷⁸ In both works it is the evolving consciousness of the narrator that conditions the structure, and produces the combination of retrospection and progression. 'Wordsworth does not tell his life as a simple narrative in past time but as the present remembrance of things past in which form and sensation "throw back our life" and evoke the former self in a multiple awareness that Wordsworth calls "two consciousnesses".'⁷⁹ Could it not also be said that *Hyperion*, too, constitutes the 'prelude' to itself, in that it embodies an account of its own genesis? For the purposes of the argument it is necessary to suppose that it is Hyperion's novel (rather than Hölderlin's), and that we take the concluding pages to be indeed the climax of the work. And this would seem to be the great virtue of the comparison, as presented by Cyrus Hamlin in a very fine, if neglected essay, that it rescues and reinforces the hymn to nature at the end of the novel. As Hamlin writes: 'For both poets the act of recollection or remembrance

77 Wordsworth, *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (1800) — see Schiller: *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, edited and translated by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. clxvii; also Michael John Kooy, *Coleridge, Schiller and Aesthetic Education* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 36–37. The relevant passage is from Schiller's review of Bürger's poems: 'aus der sanftern und fernenden Erinnerung mag er dichten', translated in Kooy as: 'from tranquil and distanced recollection is poetry made'.

78 M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 79.

79 Abrams, p. 75.

is identical with the poetic process. Poetry may thus be understood as a retrospect by the poetic self upon itself and as the recreation of moments of experience which are beyond understanding.⁸⁰ In the case of *Hyperion*, who is or becomes the poet here, the experience which is being re-created, that from which the writing proceeds and in which it ends, is the experience of all-unity in the German spring. Hamlin argues that:

the entire experience as presented to us in the final letter of the novel serves as a paradigm for the poetic process itself, as it applies both to the composition of *Hyperion* and to Hölderlin's subsequent practice as a poet. The origin of poetry is the experience of ecstasy or inspiration, here represented as a visitation by the spirit of Diotima, Hyperion's Muse. Only for such experience is the poetic vision, or intuition, authentic. And the motive for writing the poem is found in the immediate response to this experience, as indicated with regard to the novel by the fact that Hyperion apparently returned to Greece immediately after the experience of epiphany in order to start writing his letters to Bellarmin ... The fact that the novel concludes with the narration of this event in Hyperion's life suggests that here, in comprehending this experience, the novel achieves fulfilment and completion.⁸¹

At first sight this might seem to be open to a number of objections. Firstly, as has been argued, the experience of all-unity here is not unique, except perhaps in intensity, for it proves subsequently to be repeatable. Moreover, as I have also argued, such experience serves, precisely because of its fleeting nature, rather to exacerbate Hyperion's problems than to solve them. And furthermore, how is one to account for the apparently relativizing inverted commas around the concluding passage, and the narrator's distancing 'So I thought'? Nevertheless, it seems to me that Hamlin's insights here are valid. The only qualification I would perhaps apply to his argument is that, as formulated here, it might appear to be suggesting that Hyperion returns home specifically to write his letters and recapture his experience. Now although this is in effect what happens, the conscious motivation is something that grows in the course of writing and is hardly present at all in the initial letters, where Hyperion has to be prodded into communication in the

80 Cyrus Hamlin, 'The Poetics of Self-consciousness in European Romanticism: Hölderlin's *Hyperion* and Wordsworth's *Prelude*', *Genre*, 6 (1973), 142–77.

81 Hamlin, p. 152.

first place, and, once embarked on it, still has formidable obstacles to overcome. Insight into the true nature of his activity comes very late indeed.

But what of the above-mentioned objections? An obvious point to be made is that the first and decisive experience of all-unity is the last to be related, and therefore the first to be fully comprehended. The experiences of which Hyperion writes in the second letter are, for him, at the time of writing, elements of an unresolved and apparently unresolvable tension which is driving him to distraction. By the time he reaches that stage in his narrative when the first experience occurs, he knows what he is about, understands the experience and its meaning, and can present it in the form of a solution, not a problem. This is accomplished by a subtle fusing of perspectives that takes place in the last letter.

The experience related in that letter is, like all experience *within Hyperion's narrative*, recounted, recollected experience. It is something he had then: 'so I thought,' he says, not once but twice.⁸² It is not, of course, the first time he has recounted his past, as opposed to his present, thoughts; though nowhere else does he use quotation marks for anything other than direct speech, and even then only when there is no accompanying saying verb and to distinguish speakers from one another.⁸³ Admittedly, he did speak at the time, or thinks he did, but has no recollection of what he might have said: 'and words I spoke, it seems to me, but they were like the fire's rush when up it flares and leaves behind the ashes' (p. 136).⁸⁴ Curiously, this is then immediately followed by the passage in question, in which we appear to have an exact reconstruction of the thoughts behind the hypothetical words — set off from the rest of the text by speech marks at the beginning of each line.⁸⁵ Yet the thoughts, as we have them, are not known to have been

82 Apart from the last line of the novel, the phrase occurs at the beginning of the passage in quotation marks: 'O du, so dacht' ich, mit deinen Göttern, Natur! ich hab' ihn ausgeträumt, von Menschendingen den Traum' (StA III, 159); "'O you," so I thought, "with your gods, nature! I've dreamed it out, the dream of human things"' (p. 136).

83 For more on Hölderlin's use of quotation marks, and the procedure adopted in the translation, see below p. 191.

84 Letter LX: 'und Worte sprach ich, wie mir dünkt, aber sie waren wie des Feuers Rauschen, wenn es auffliegt und die Asche hinter sich läßt' (StA III, 159).

85 Forty-five of them in the original Cotta edition, all exclusively on the left. There are no concluding quotation marks at the end of the 'speech', though Beissner supplies them: StA III, 160.

uttered at the time of the experience itself, nor can they even be said to have been consciously formulated in Hyperion's mind at that time. They would appear then to be the articulation of (re)creative reflection on the part of the narrator. Hamlin argues, plausibly, that what we are in fact presented with here is a purposeful confusion introduced by Hölderlin between the experience of the character Hyperion and his subsequent narration of it: 'The confusion may be regarded as an attempt to fuse the two perspectives. The speech is certainly the product of creative reflection ... but it is also a fully accurate recreation of the hero's reverie in response to his visitation ...'⁸⁶ In this way the circle is closed. The two perspectives come together as a paradigm of the poetic process itself, 'which originates in ecstasy and concludes in reflective self-understanding.'⁸⁷

Yet we still have to confront the question as to why, having ingeniously closed the circle (the final image in the novel is one of circulation), Hölderlin then, disconcertingly, opens it again in the novel's last line. Let it once more be stressed that this is in no way intended to prejudice the authority of the vision itself. The glorious affirmation of Life is not to be dismissed as 'relatively immature' (compared to the reflections that follow the transcription of Notara's account of Diotima's death).⁸⁸ That is to say, it may have been at the time of the initial experience, but is no longer so in its present formulation. The distinction is crucial. Whatever we make of the final passage, there can be no doubt that the last letter does voice a critical attitude towards the hermit's self-indulgent self-abandonment. 'Thus I gave myself up more and more to blissful nature,' writes the mature Hyperion, 'and almost too endlessly. How gladly I'd have become a child to be closer to her!'⁸⁹ Here the (almost) total immersion in nature is clearly associated with an attitude which, from the point of view of the mature narrator, must

⁸⁶ Hamlin, p. 152.

⁸⁷ Hamlin, review of Friedbert Aspetsberger, *Welteinheit und epische Gestaltung: Studien zur Ichform von Hölderlins Roman 'Hyperion'* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1971), in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 73 (1974), 292–96, p. 295.

⁸⁸ 'My dearest friend! I'm at peace ...' (p. 129); cf. also above, p. 159. For Ulrich Gaier, in 'Hölderlins "Hyperion": Compendium, Roman, Rede', *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch*, 21 (1978/79), 88–143, p. 108, n. 66, the concluding hymn to nature is 'vergleichsweise leichtsinnig'.

⁸⁹ 'So gab ich mehr und mehr der seeligen Natur mich hin und fast zu endlos. Wär' ich so gerne doch zum Kinde geworden, um ihr näher zu seyn!' (StA III, 158).

be regarded as regressive. For the naïve, un(self)conscious innocence of childhood, which is longed for by the hermit and which is still lovingly and nostalgically celebrated in the third letter, is not only recognized by the narrator as something which is not realistically available to him, but is actually explicitly rejected as inadequate, even as an ideal. After all, he has written only a few pages earlier (p. 129): 'But the bliss that does not suffer is sleep, and without death there is no life. Should you be, like a child, eternal and slumber as nothingness? forego the victory? not pass through all the perfections?'⁹⁰ Yet in the final letter the narrator who proclaims this conviction is confronted with a former self who would like nothing better than to sink into oblivious communion with nature, abjuring his fellow man, himself and all he knows and has learnt, and in fact is on the point of doing just that, losing himself in ecstatic, spontaneous babbling, ephemeral froth without substance. This is not to deny the reality of the experience while it lasts. The point is that it cannot last. Because it is so totally spontaneous, and above or beyond or below rational comprehension, it leaves nothing behind but a sense of loss and despair. It is only in the interpreting recollection of the narrator that the experience acquires structure and content; and that only at the end of a long process of reflection which produces in Hyperion a comprehensive sense of himself and the meaning of his life. The thoughts with which Hyperion is credited in this concluding passage are valid only if taken in conjunction with all that precedes them. They are valid as the culmination of a series of experiences and reflections on those experiences, and indeed reflections on the reflections. They are of limited validity as the spontaneous outpouring of the hermit. The Hyperion who has the experience has turned his back on his fellows and relinquished self-control. He is not even in a position to preserve his ecstatic intuitions for himself, still less communicate them to others. He is 'in' his experience to such a degree that he can no more grasp it than the aether. Yet the experience will have lasting value for himself and others only if it can be given some form of articulation, and this the hermit is patently incapable of doing. Even if he is already at this stage in a position to sense the unity of all things, including the positive value

90 Letter LVIII: 'Aber die Wonne, die nicht leidet, ist Schlaf, und ohne Tod ist kein Leben. Solltest du ewig seyn, wie ein Kind und schlummern, dem Nichts gleich? den Sieg entbehren? nicht die Vollendungen alle durchlaufen?' (StA III, 150).

of pain and suffering, the conviction as yet has no sustaining power; it belongs to a passing phase, another swing of the pendulum. The activity of the narrator is not pure cerebration, but ultimately practical and sustained demonstration of a truth which emerges 'in eternal, indestructible glory' only in the narrator's own creation, as a result of that creation.⁹¹ It's important therefore that the provisional and inchoate nature of the hermit's bliss be indicated, and the reader referred back (and forward) to the next stage in Hyperion's development, which begins with the writing of the letters. Hence the justification for the 'So I thought. More anon' which obliges us to ask what could follow in Hyperion's narrative, the answer being that he returned to Greece and started to write the letters we have just been reading.

At the end of the first letter Hyperion writes (addressing his own heart): 'just forget that men exist ... and return whence you came, into the arms of nature' (p. 8).⁹² This is echoed by the motto from *Oedipus Coloneus* with which Hölderlin prefaces the second volume of the novel and which might be translated: 'Not to be born is, past all prizing, best. But when a man has seen the light of day, this is the next best by far, that with the utmost speed he should go back whence he came.' The echo makes it seem likely that Hölderlin uses the motto for his own purposes, so that it need not necessarily strike the pessimistic note which it has in its Sophoclean context (though that might be in some measure appropriate for the nature of the events to be narrated). Certainly, death and reunion with nature may be seen as equivalents, witness Diotima. But we would also do well to note the final sentence of Hyperion's hymnic vision: 'The arteries part and return in the heart and one eternal glowing life is All' (p. 137). It is hardly fortuitous that the novel ends with an image of circulation (of the bloodstream), nor that in the German it is a metrical line whose catalectic final foot is completed by being joined to the first.⁹³ The motto from Sophocles

91 Letter XIII: 'in ewiger unzerstörbarer Klarheit' (StA III, 51). For the rendering of 'Klarheit' as 'glory', see below p. 200.

92 'vergiß nur, daß es Menschen giebt ... und kehre wieder dahin, wo du ausgiengst, in die Arme der Natur' (StA III, 8).

93 'Es scheiden und kehren im Herzen die Adern und einiges, ewiges, glühendes Leben ist Alles' (StA III, 160). As Hans Gerhard Steimer notes in his excellent 'Hölderlins Klauseln', *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch*, 31 (1998/99), 281–328, p. 282, after the unstressed opening syllable, there is a sequence of eight dactyls in a row followed at the end by a trochee which, if joined up to the first syllable of the sentence, yields a ninth

can be seen as a hint to the reader not to ignore the circular structure of the novel. The structure of *Hyperion* is circular and at the same time open. And if it were not open, it would not be obviously circular. The narrator's concluding comment ensures that it is both. For if the fusion of the two perspectives at the end were too perfect, we would be in danger of taking the end to be the end, and might well miss the second line of development altogether. The snake must be *seen* to have its tail in its mouth. Yet we are dealing here with a circularity that accommodates progression (which is why critics can talk of the novel as having a spiral structure). The progression is dependent on the circularity. As linear development it is incomplete, and there is a risk that the ending will be seen as an ultimate solution, a detachable end-product (the novel's message) which transforms all that precedes it into redundant scaffolding. Coleridge claims 'the common end of all narrative, nay of all Poems, is to convert a *series* into a *Whole*'.⁹⁴ And this is precisely what Hölderlin (or perhaps one should say, Hyperion) has done here. In interpretative recollection what is initially a disjointed series is transformed into a whole, and the truth is the whole. The circle and the line have to be combined. For what is purely cyclical lacks progression, and what is purely linear lacks wholeness. At the risk of appearing wilfully paradoxical, one could add that the linear sequence of experiences, the raw material of Hyperion's narrative, betrays a seasonal, cyclical rhythm (from joy to despair), and that it only achieves retrospective linearity, in the sense of meaningful progression, through the adoption of the circular narrative procedure whereby end is joined to beginning. At the same time the circular route to understanding issues in a definitive advance, so that the mature narrator ends on an ascending course, where the hero of the narrative is still trapped within the cycle of bliss and despair.

The way out and the way forward for Hyperion has been found in writing. Not that his writing is obviously therapeutic, at least initially. He begins by giving vent to his despair and then, at the instigation of Bellarmin, proceeds with justifiable reluctance to recall the harrowing events of his life, at the same time recording his present reaction to

dactyl. I cannot believe this is not intentional. (Nor have I found any satisfactory way of replicating it in English.)

94 To Joseph Cottle, 1807 (Letter 135); Abrams, p. 271.

them. By the beginning of the second book of the first volume he begins to suspect that there may be a hidden pattern, and therefore meaning, to his experiences, though for the time being it remains hidden.⁹⁵ At the same time there are indications that his state of mind is becoming more stable. He begins to employ oxymoronic expressions, suggesting an emergent ability to embrace polarities, rather than being thrown off balance by them.⁹⁶ The second book of the first volume proves to be the most severe test of all for the narrating Hyperion, since it is here that he is forced to confront the most blissful experience of his past life, the blossoming of his love for Diotima, knowing all the time what the fate of the relationship is going to be. The strain drives the narrator to the brink. Once this ordeal has been successfully sustained, there seems to be a steady advance towards tranquillity and serenity of vision. The gap between Hyperion as narrator and as the central figure of his own narrative widens, almost to the point where his ability to empathize with his former self is challenged. The straightforward transcription of the lovers' correspondence, with very little in the way of comment, might indicate this. It seems to me questionable to speculate, as has been argued, that the division of Diotima's swansong into instalments should be seen as suggesting that Hyperion is periodically overcome as he copies it out. The 'continuations' are surely to be taken as those of the dying Diotima, indicating resumption of writing, and telling evidence of her physical weariness and exhaustion. But it is of course Hyperion who does the transcribing, so that even here he is rewriting his life. And by the time he copies out the swansong, he realizes what has been happening. It is not simply that he has grown calmer by learning to accept his fate. He has made sense of it in the only way open to him, by fulfilling the mission assigned to him by Diotima. 'You would have to go under,' she writes:

95 See p. 41: 'Or I look out upon the sea and ponder my life, its rising and sinking, its bliss and its grief, and my past often sounds to me like a lyre when the master runs through all the tones, throwing together discord and harmony in hidden order.' Letter XII: 'Oder schau' ich auf's Meer hinaus und überdenke mein Leben, sein Steigen und Sinken, seine Seeligkeit und seine Trauer und meine Vergangenheit lautet mir oft, wie ein Saitenspiel, wo der Meister alle Töne durchläuft, und Streit und Einklang mit verborgener Ordnung untereinanderwirft' (StA III, 47).

96 Cf. p. 42: 'in smiling earnest', 'like the starry heavens I'm both still and moved'. Letter XIII: 'mit lächelndem Ernste', 'wie der Sternenhimmel, bin ich still und bewegt' (StA III, 48).

you'd have to despair, yet the spirit will save you. No laurel will comfort you, and no wreath of myrtle; Olympus will, the living and present, that eternally youthful blossoms around all your senses. The beautiful world is my⁹⁷ Olympus; in this you will live, and with the holy beings of the world, the gods of nature, with them you will be joyful. ...

Grieving youth! soon, soon you will be happier. Your laurel failed to ripen and your myrtles faded, for priest you shall be of divine nature, and your poetic days burgeon already. Oh, could I only see you in your future beauty! Farewell. (pp. 126, 128)⁹⁸

The double reference to myrtles and laurels should, as Ryan has persuasively argued, be taken as alluding to Hyperion's activity as a lover and a man of action.⁹⁹ With the death of Diotima and the failure of the insurrection, fulfilment is denied to him in both these spheres. Diotima's consolation for him is that his true vocation lies elsewhere. And what she has to say about it must be seen in conjunction with her earlier vision of his mission at the end of the first volume, when the lovers contemplate the ruins of Athens. There Diotima exhorts him to become the 'educator' of his people. Hyperion appears excited by the prospect, and what on that occasion he envisages as the goal of his future efforts emerges clearly enough in his recorded thoughts, which conclude the volume and are offered without comment by the narrator, suggesting that the ideal they celebrate remains valid:

Do you ask after men, nature? Do you lament like a lyre which the brother of chance, the wind alone plays, since the artist who kept it in tune is dead? They will come, your men, nature! A rejuvenated people will rejuvenate you too, and you will become as its bride, and the ancient covenant of spirits will renew itself with you.

97 Not wishing to follow some editors in assuming a misprint in the original edition here (*mein* for *dein*), I have opted for 'my' rather than 'your'. For the reasons, see below, p. 190.

98 Letter LVIII: 'Du müßtest untergehn, verzweifeln müßtest du, doch wird der Geist dich retten. Dich wird kein Lorbeer trösten und kein Myrthenkranz; der Olymp wirds, der lebendige, gegenwärtige, der ewig jugendlich um alle Sinne dir blüht. Die schöne Welt ist dein Olymp; in diesem wirst du leben, und mit den heiligen Wesen der Welt, mit den Göttern der Natur, mit diesen wirst du freudig seyn. ... Trauernder Jüngling! bald, bald wirst du glücklicher seyn. Dir ist dein Lorbeer nicht gereift und deine Myrthen verblühten, denn Priester sollst du seyn der göttlichen Natur, und die dichterischen Tage keimen dir schon. O könnt' ich dich sehn in deiner künftigen Schöne! Lebe wohl' (StA III, 147, 149).

99 Ryan, *Exzentrische Bahn und Dichterberuf*, pp. 198–99.

There will be but one beauty; and humanity and nature will unite into one all-embracing godhead. (p. 77)¹⁰⁰

In whatever way this rejuvenation of his people, this higher synthesis of mankind and nature is to be achieved, it will clearly be the result of public activity. It will not be brought about by a complete retreat into silent or inarticulate communion with nature, and this is not the way in which Diotima's final words should be construed. Becoming a priest of nature will entail something more than transient and subjective experiences of total absorption, though it may be conditional on an ability to have them. The experience of all-unity must be rendered capable of mediation. It must be communicated. As that other Diotima tells Socrates in *The Symposium*, the object of love is not simply beauty; its object is to 'procreate and bring forth in beauty'.¹⁰¹ Hyperion must be active and not merely passively receptive to the gods of nature. The 'spirit' which is to rescue him must, in one sense at least, be his own. In the words of the woman of Mantinea, Diotima could be said to hope for Hyperion that 'having his eyes fixed on beauty in the widest sense, he may,' with her death, 'no longer be the slave of ... devotion to an individual example of beauty ... but by gazing upon the vast ocean of beauty to which his attention is now turned, may bring forth in the abundance of his love of wisdom many beautiful and magnificent statements and ideas ...'¹⁰² Hyperion will indeed find solace in nature, but only if the experience engages his understanding, and above all, issues in creative activity. Priests mediate. The days that Diotima prophesies for Hyperion will be 'poetic' ('dichterisch'), and I take the adjective to have both a subjective and an objective sense. That is to say, Hyperion will both experience and communicate poetically. He will have been made capable of appreciating universal beauty, Diotima's 'Olympus'. And he will also be able to articulate his perceptions, sharing

100 Letter XXX: 'Du fragst nach Menschen, Natur? Du klagst, wie ein Saitenspiel, worauf des Zufalls Bruder, der Wind, nur spielt, weil der Künstler, der es ordnete, gestorben ist? Sie werden kommen, deine Menschen, Natur! Ein verjüngtes Volk wird dich auch wieder verjüngen, und du wirst werden, wie seine Braut und der alte Bund der Geister wird sich erneuen mit dir. // Es wird nur Eine Schönheit seyn; und Menschheit und Natur wird sich vereinen in Eine allumfassende Gottheit' (StA III, 90).

101 Plato, *The Symposium*, 206e (translation by Walter Hamilton).

102 *Symposium*, 210e.

and mediating his experience of a beautiful world, and developing a similar response in his fellows.

Clearly if the narrating Hyperion is to accept his vocation, he is obliged to emphasize his detachment from the incipient hermit at the end of the narrative. Priests are not hermits. They may stand apart, but they are not permanently turned away from the communities they serve. What they receive, they transmit. Their unworldliness, their apparent aloofness from human affairs is justified as a necessary concomitant of their mission, since it is only by remaining detached from the world that they are able to serve and influence it. Their detachment is thus an expression of their commitment to mankind, and only as such is it valid. As an end in itself it has no value, issuing merely in social sterility and impotence. The hermit's isolation is a denial of humanity, and in rejecting his fellowship with others, he is condemning himself. Literal perdition, loss of self and soul, awaits those who would abandon humanity; their speech is without echo, their gratification chimerical (for they lack a self to fulfil), 'and they go under in their solitude.'¹⁰³ One might think here of the vision of Tree of Life in Hyperion's final speech, where he sees himself at the top and the rest of humanity down amongst the roots — but it is still the same tree. The distance from ordinary humanity implied in Hyperion's words still holds good (and indeed receives its justification, like everything else in the hymn to nature) when they cease to be mere intuitions and become articulated speech. The difference is that now they are communicated, so that the isolation is lifted and relationship established. The hermit addresses only nature. The poet-priest is addressing men.

The hermit's retreat from the world is an extreme reaction to the frustrations of excessive engagement with it. Either way, he would seem to have deprived himself of the possibility of 'proper effectivity'.¹⁰⁴ As a hermit Hyperion has turned his back on his fellows, and his beatific experience of nature remains subjective, private and uncommunicated. And he pays the penalty for this. He loses himself in the experience, and is left with nothing. Because the experience is not articulated, it is not preserved. But then, on Hyperion's return to Greece, the recovery

103 The last of 'Seven Maxims' — see Adler's translation in *Hölderlin: Essays and Letters*, p. 243; 'und Sie gehen in ihrer Einsamkeit unter' (StA IV (1), 247).

104 'rechte Wirksamkeit' — see above, n. 103.

begins. It is a process of recovery in that an anguished soul gains peace of mind; in the sense that the self comes to itself and establishes its identity through reflective recollection; and also in the related sense that lost experiences of beauty are recreated in such a way that they acquire permanence and objective validity. It is in the communication of such experience that Hyperion finds both his mission and his salvation. It is in and through his writing that he develops the embracing consciousness, of himself and the world, that constitutes the resolution of the dissonances. And it is only in creative writing ('Dichtung') that such consciousness could possibly be fostered and expressed. Who but a poet could be both in everything and above everything? And how else could he accomplish this but through the medium of his own work? The simultaneity of experience and reflection, involvement and detachment, is available only to the mediating consciousness of the poet. It is difficult to see how it could be achieved directly, in life, for we are not gods. But it can be created and sustained in the work itself, which is the product of poetic recollection. Discrete experiences can be reconstituted and held together in the interpretative, reflective consciousness of the poet, whose primal impulse is the sense of the unity and cohesion of all life. If the essence of beauty is 'εν διαφερον εαυτω' (pp. 70, 71), the poetic work, reflecting this, will be a differentiated, an 'organized', articulated unity, a linguistic incarnation.¹⁰⁵ And like God in relation to the world, the poet will be both in and above his creation. And this is nowhere better demonstrated than in the last letter of *Hyperion* where the narrator contrives to empathize with an ecstatic experience of his former self, conveying it to us from the inside, as it were, and at the same time makes it clear that he is presenting us with a retrospective articulation of something beyond words. And moreover, implied within the act of articulation itself is criticism of the self-abandonment which was a pre-condition of the initial experience. Intense involvement is combined with clear-headed detachment, and the latter is emphasized by the narrator's concluding comment, which brings us back to his own present, refers us to his past, and anticipates his future. Hyperion is in control. He is not wholly contained in the work he has just created, but is

105 Letter XXX: 'the One differentiated in itself'; Heraclitus, rendered by Hyperion as 'das Eine in sich selber unterschiedne'. Cf. also Abrams, p. 260, where the allusion is to Blake.

poised to continue writing, presumably on the basis of the combination of experience and insight, and insight into that combination, which he has evidenced in his letters. Thus Hyperion's novel, no less than *The Prelude*, 'incorporates the discovery of its own *ars poetica*'.¹⁰⁶ In its turn it promises to be the prelude to future works. 'More anon.'

If the arguments advanced above are valid, *Hyperion* deserves pride of place in any list of 'self-begetting' novels. The type is defined by Steven Kellman as follows:

Truly *samizdat* in the original sense of self-publishing, it is an account, usually first-person, of the development of a character to the point at which he is able to take up his pen and compose the novel we have just finished reading. Like an infinite recession of Chinese boxes, the self-begetting novel begins again where it ends. Once we have concluded the central protagonist's story of his own sentimental education, we must return to page one to commence in a novel way the product of that process ... We are at once confronted with both process and product, quest and goal, parent and child.¹⁰⁷

Far-fetched as it may seem, Hölderlin might even be said to anticipate Proust by linking 'within a single book the story of the spiritual genesis of a vocation, the story of the genesis of a work, and the very embodiment of that work.'¹⁰⁸ It should not, however, be necessary to argue Hölderlin's modernity here. For what he offers us in his novel is a remarkable practical realization of the Romantic aspirations of his own generation. If we think of Romanticism in terms of the poetics of self-consciousness, we are confronted here with a work which, as narrative, contains its own built-in commentary and critique; which is about the growth of comprehensive self-awareness in its narrator as he narrates; and which turns out to be writing about writing in that it culminates in the narrator's recognition of his poetic vocation, realized both practically and theoretically in the work he has just written. It is more surely a novel of poetic initiation than Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802). Hölderlin has his poet initiated by making him the

¹⁰⁶ Abrams, p. 78.

¹⁰⁷ Steven Kellman, *The Self-Begetting Novel* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 3. This stimulating study is based largely on French models, and gives no consideration to *Hyperion* and — as indicated by the absence of Hoffmann, Jean Paul, Raabe and others from the index — precious little to a rich German tradition of self-conscious fiction.

¹⁰⁸ Kellman, p. 27, quoting Germaine Brée on *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

writer of the work that constitutes his initiation. The writing is therefore self-contained and self-justifying. At the same time, it embodies a statement about the function of poetry ('Dichtung') and the vital role of the poet in society, exemplifying the aesthetic evangelism which is such a characteristic feature of the age. Poetry is redemptive — has it not just saved Hyperion? The poet is the teacher of his people, and Hyperion's first pedagogical act as an (almost) fully-fledged poet is to berate Bellarmin's, and of course Hölderlin's people, like a fiery Hebrew prophet. The *disjecta membra* of German society are confronted with a gospel of reunification through beauty. The roots of division are conveyed in terms of familiar polarities: subject and object, self and world, individuation and unity, thinking and feeling. And the resolution is seen to be accomplished in the aesthetic act itself. Bearing in mind the observations above on the linearity and circularity of the novel, it could be argued that in *Hyperion* we have perhaps the most perfectly achieved example of 'progressive universal poetry', to use the terms of Friedrich Schlegel's famous Romantic programme (1798).¹⁰⁹ That the combination of involvement and detachment here does not yield irony in the conventional sense will be readily acknowledged, though it in no way vitiates the argument. The dialectical tension between the narrator and the subject of his narrative (the feelings, thoughts and actions of his former self) is expressed not only by the device of juxtaposing narrative and distancing comment, but also quite remarkably by fusing them and making the same words serve both perspectives, in the consummating vision at the end of the novel.

Hölderlin's obsession with his own art has, however, always to be seen in the context of his devotion to nature. His thorough-going pantheism survives the speculative acrobatics of Kantian and post-Kantian transcendentalism, and he is never really tempted to find beauty solely in the eye of the beholder or interpret nature as alienated ego. The problem is rather that man is alienated nature and has to be taught to recognize the primacy of the source of his own being. This is accomplished by accepting the alienation itself as a necessary and divinely-sanctioned differentiation of primal oneness, a prismatic division whose function is to articulate the unnamed and unknowable in quintessential form. The division itself cannot be reversed, except

109 Friedrich Schlegel, 'Athenäums-Fragment', No. 116.

in death (or self-transcending peak experiences of short duration and variable degrees of legitimacy), and the inevitable pain and suffering of separation has to be borne. Indeed, it has to be affirmed as the source of ultimate bliss, since without it there is no feeling of any kind. But it can only be affirmed as the result of the experienced conviction of the unity of 'one eternal glowing life'. And it is this, above all, that poetry must communicate.

Englishing *Hyperion*

This is not the first English translation of Hölderlin's novel, nor will it, I hope, be the last. It is not intended as a critical response to the perceived shortcomings of other versions, two of which appeared after I had begun work on my own.¹¹⁰ On the contrary, I am grateful to, and have learnt from all of them. We are each of us contributing in our own different ways to the afterlife of a remarkable and beautiful work, one that deserves to be far better known than it is in the anglophone world.

Every translation presupposes an 'original', although the concept can be a rather slippery one, and a translator may often find her/himself in the role of editor as well.¹¹¹ In the present instance this should not really be a problem. After all, in the post-war period Hölderlin has been the subject of extensive and meticulous editorial activity, issuing in two multi-volumed historical-critical editions (Appendix A). And whereas much of his major poetry remained unpublished in his lifetime — ensuring that the sorting and deciphering of the manuscripts he left behind, sometimes virtual palimpsests, has proved to be a task of hideous complexity — *Hyperion* actually appeared in print. Nor has the copy sent to the publisher survived, only various drafts in manuscript, including substantial fragments of one which is quite close to the finished version, as issued by Cotta in 1797 and 1799. On the face of it, therefore, the situation would not seem unduly complicated. However, the original edition inevitably contains misprints. Some of these were picked up post-publication by Hölderlin himself and corrections and

¹¹⁰ Those of Ross Benjamin and India Russell — see Appendix B.

¹¹¹ On the instability of originals, and translators as editors, see Karen Emmerich's stimulating *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

additions inserted into the dedicatory copies for Susette Gontard (the model for Diotima) and his good friend Franz Wilhelm Jung. These corrections and modifications have been duly incorporated into the two historical-critical editions and their offspring. But Hölderlin was not the world's greatest proof-reader, either before or after publication, and there are numerous occasions when the modern editor will see the need to intervene (though not to the extent evinced by nineteenth-century editions, including the second Cotta of 1822, published of course without Hölderlin's imprimatur). In almost all cases these will be minor matters, affecting mainly consistency of spelling and punctuation. Sometimes, however, the most conscientious editor can make arbitrary decisions or even mistakes.

It might seem from the referencing conventions adopted in the 'Afterword' that I favour Beissner's *Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe* (StA) over Sattler's *Frankfurter Hölderlin Ausgabe* (FHA). This is not the case. The reason I quote and use page references from the former is simply that the Stuttgart edition is readily available online. Beissner's *Hyperion* does in fact contain blemishes. For instance, in the twenty-seventh letter when Diotima speaks of the implications of Hyperion's idealism, his search for a better world, she is made to say: 'one can't say precisely when it was there, when it went away' (p. 57). Here Beissner's text, and all subsequent editions based on it, including Schmidt's, has: 'man kann so genau nicht sagen, wenn es da war, wenn es weggieng'.¹¹² In the critical apparatus we are told that, instead of the conjunction 'wenn', Cotta's second edition of 1822 has 'wann'.¹¹³ Given the wide variety of eighteenth-century practice in the use of conjunctions — for instance, the occurrence of 'wenn' as an interrogative — Hölderlin's usage here would not raise many eyebrows. Admittedly, judging by *Hyperion*, he seems more likely to use 'wann' where one would nowadays expect 'wenn', rather than vice versa.¹¹⁴ And in fact, if one actually consults

112 StA III, 66–67.

113 StA III, 362 (line 34).

114 One example, but by no means the only one, in Letter LV: 'Du lächelst, Alabanda? o wie oft, in unsern ersten Zeiten, hast du so gelächelt, wann dein Knabe vor dir plauderte, im trunknen Jugendmuth' (StA III, 127); ['You're smiling, Alabanda? Oh, how often in our early days together did you smile that way when your boy prattled away before you in the drunken exuberance of youth' (pp. 109–110).] Here Hölderlin uses 'wann' as the equivalent of 'whenever', although elsewhere he

Cotta's first edition, it is clear that Beissner is quite simply wrong. There in the first volume we read: 'man kann so genau nicht sagen, wann es da war, wann es weggieng' (p. 118). It seems then that Beissner has mistakenly taken over the 'wenn' reading from the second Cotta edition of 1822. This is clearly what the editors of the FHA assume him to have done.¹¹⁵ The trouble is that it is not there either. In the same place on the same page in the same volume we read: 'man kann so genau nicht sagen, wann es da war, wann es weggieng'.¹¹⁶ But at least in this instance, even if the footnote is wrong, the Frankfurt edition gives us an accurate primary text, without editorial intervention. This cannot be said of the change of possessive pronoun, already referred to, in the final instalment of Diotima's swansong: 'The beautiful world is my Olympus' (p. 126). Here the FHA follows nineteenth-century editions in substituting 'dein' ('your') for 'mein' ('my').¹¹⁷ One could perhaps understand the reasoning behind the change, if any were offered. But as far as I can tell, it has never been properly argued. I see no problem in having Diotima say the equivalent of: 'for me the beautiful world is Olympus'. And whatever shortcomings Hölderlin might have had as a proof-reader of his own work, one would have thought that he would have given particular attention to Diotima's last letter, and therefore himself picked up and corrected any blatant error in the copy he dedicated to her.

For the purposes of the translation I have been extremely reluctant to assume any but the most obvious of misprints. There is just one notable exception, which I take to be sanctioned by Hölderlin himself. In the eighteenth letter we are told that Diotima's heart was at home amongst the flowers:

She called them all by name, made them new and more beautiful
names out of love and unerringly knew the happiest season of each.

also tends to have 'wenn'. As the conjunction for non-recurrent events he usually has 'da', even 'wie', hardly ever 'als'.

115 FHA 11, 662: '[line] 12 StA (mit der zweiten Auflage von 1822) *wenn es da war, wenn.*'

116 It seems to me that the editors of the FHA have not actually consulted the Cotta second edition themselves, relying rather on Gustav Schlesier's later compilation of a list of corrections made in red ink in a copy of the original Cotta, in preparation for the 1822 edition. For this list, see Gustav Schlesier, *Hölderlin-Aufzeichnungen*, ed. by Hans Gerhard Steimer (Weimar: Verlag Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 2002), pp. 165–68. The FHA editors must have assumed that the correction is one that Schlesier missed, for it is not in his list either.

117 See above, p. 182; FHA 11, 766.

Like a sister when from every nook a loved one comes clamouring, each wanting to be greeted first, so the still being was busy with hand and eye, blissfully distracted, whenever we walked through wood or meadow. (p. 49)¹¹⁸

The image of the sister being besieged by a multitude of boisterous siblings perhaps recalls Lotte in Goethe's *Werther*. However, any element of riotousness is absent from the original as published, where the verb I have rendered as 'comes clamouring' is simply the rather tame 'entgegenkömmt' ('comes towards'). Beissner himself points to the possibility that this might be down to compositor's error, since the surviving last draft has 'entgegentönt' (literally: 'sounds towards').¹¹⁹ Originally this was 'ruft und winkt' ('calls and waves'), which also suggests lively competing for attention. Why Hölderlin should later have amended 'entgegentönt', and substituted a bland nothing verb, is beyond me. I have therefore chosen to assume that he did not.

With regard to punctuation, this translation generally tries to be faithful to usage in the original so far as this is not merely a matter of the grammatical conventions of German, but characteristic of Hölderlin's (or Hyperion's) style and reflects the rhythms of the source. Thus, I generally preserve the position of the many question and exclamation marks if possible, even if this might occasionally look odd in English. However, I have deviated in one significant respect, and that concerns the use of inverted commas. As mentioned above, the convention adopted in the original — and also in the published 'Fragment' and Hölderlin's manuscripts — seems to be that they are only used for direct speech when there is no saying verb that makes it clear who is speaking. For instance, „Werden wir das?“ in the draft becomes in the final version: Werden wir das? fragt' ich.¹²⁰ The principle is fairly straightforward, or would be if editors did not occasionally decide to remove quotation

118 'Unter den Blumen war ihr Herz zu Hause, als wär' es eine von ihnen. // Sie nannte sie alle mit Nahmen, schuff ihnen aus Liebe neue, schönere, und wußte genau die fröhlichste Lebenszeit von jeder. // Wie eine Schwester, wenn aus jeder Eke ein Geliebtes ihr entgegenkömmt, und jedes gerne zuerst begrüßt seyn möchte, so war das stille Wesen mit Aug und Hand beschäftigt, seelig zerstreut, wenn auf der Wiese wir giengen, oder im Walde' (StA III, 56).

119 StA III, 259, 525. A diplomatic transcription and facsimile of the MS may be found in FHA X, 308–309.

120 Letter XX: "'Shall we?' I asked" (p. 50); StA III, 260, 57.

marks for no apparent reason.¹²¹ Nevertheless, it will not be a convention familiar to many modern anglophone readers, who may be inclined to ask what is so special about the sporadic instances where it is employed (and may well also find the plethora of saying, crying, asking verbs a little repetitive, but that cannot be helped). I have therefore made the decision to use quotation marks for direct speech throughout, whether or not it is made explicit by a verb. Like Trask (Appendix A) I also use them for direct thought. There are numerous occasions throughout the narrative where Hyperion records the thinking of his former self, and if one is going to argue that it is important to be able to distinguish between the perspective of the hero within the narrative and that of the maturing narrator, then it seems to me that visual assistance of this kind is no bad thing. I have chosen to use single quotation marks, except for Hyperion's final 'speech'. As already mentioned, Hölderlin emphasizes its unique significance by having quotation marks at the beginning of each of the original's forty-five lines. Rather than trying to reproduce this, I have here chosen to distinguish the passage by using double quotation marks.

The modern sanitized texts of German 'classics' tend to obscure (if not conceal) the fact that these were produced when even the written language had yet to be thoroughly standardized. Nor is it only a matter of orthography, which can nowadays look decidedly antiquated, although that is perhaps the most striking difference.¹²² If the English of my translation comes across to the reader as a strange mixture of the poetically highly charged with the colloquial and regional, my justification is the nature of Hölderlin's original and the impression it makes on me. There are numerous occasions where he deviates from currently accepted norms. There follow some examples. I have already mentioned the use of temporal conjunctions ('wenn', 'wann'), although any unorthodoxy will not be reflected in an English translation, where just the one will do, namely 'when'. Similarly, though still common

121 Beissner arbitrarily deletes the first quotation marks in the novel: [„]Und wenn ich frage?["] (StA III, 33). And both StA and FHA delete the second set: [„]sind es und werden es seyn["] (StA III, 57; FHA XI, 650; Cotta I, 102), though they are clearly there in the draft.

122 And can lead translators astray. For instance, Hölderlin spells 'glimmen' ('glimmer') as 'klimmen', though it has nothing to do with 'climbing'; Letter XLV: 'klimmt noch in uns ein Sehnen nach den Tagen der Urwelt' (StA III, 112).

enough in spoken German, using the conjunction 'wie' in comparisons of inequality would nowadays attract the red pen and a firm underlining in student work.¹²³ Similarly, the use of 'so' as a relative pronoun.¹²⁴ What would doubtless elicit a double underlining with an exclamation mark in the margin, are vestiges of the Swabian strong adjectival ending following the definite article in the plural. These are a feature of Hölderlin's language in his letters, and not every instance is picked up in the Cotta edition of *Hyperion*.¹²⁵ There are instances of double negatives for emphasis.¹²⁶ I wish I dared to replicate these in the English, but since the construction has been frowned on too much for too long, I fear it would jar unacceptably. There are sundry deviations from conventional word order, particularly the position of the auxiliary in subordinate clauses, although in an eighteenth-century context they are perhaps not quite so striking.¹²⁷ Some apparent solecisms appear to be Swabianisms, for instance, 'nimmt' instead of 'nehmt', as the second-person plural familiar form of 'nehmen'.¹²⁸ This is 'corrected' in the 1822 edition, though not the anacoluthon in 'wir fürchteten uns, sich ihrer [der Liebe] zu überheben in Reden und stolzen Gedanken', where in the

123 Cf. Letter XLVIII: 'stille zu stehn, ist schlimmer, wie alles' (StA III, 116). Elsewhere he can be more orthodox — cf. Letter 27: 'ich versteh' es und besser, als du' (StA III, 66); Letter 58: 'alt zu werden, da wo alles alt ist, scheint mir schlimmer, denn alles' (StA III, 149). But that such 'correctness' perhaps goes against the grain, is suggested by the following examples from the drafts: 'ich war besser, wie sie!' (StA III, 242); 'Warum bin ich später geboren, wie er' (StA III, 273).

124 Letter XLIX: 'Diese trauernde Erde! die nakte! so ich kleiden wollte mit heiligen Hainen, so ich schmücken wollte mit allen Blumen des griechischen Lebens!' (StA III, 117).

125 Cf. Cotta II, 96: 'die schöne Tage'.

126 Cf. Letter VIII: '[das merkte keiner,] da vermißte keiner nichts' (StA III, 40); Letter XXIII: '[da wäre ja geholfen,] wo kein Gott nicht helfen kann' (StA III, 60).

127 For instance, Letter VII: '[das hat manchen zum Thoren gemacht vor andern,] die er sonst, wie ein Orpheus, hätte beherrscht' (StA III, 39); '[Unsre Seelen mußten um so stärker sich nähern,] weil sie wider Willen waren verschlossen gewesen' (StA III, 26); 'daß er mit seinem Diener von Räubern wäre überfallen worden ... daß er den Weg aus dem Walde verloren gehabt und darum wäre genöthigt gewesen, auf der Stelle zu bleiben' (StA III, 25). The last example contains a colloquial south-German pluperfect of which Duden would disapprove.

128 Letter LVIII: 'o nimmt die allesversuchenden Menschen, nimmt die Flüchtlinge wieder in die Götterfamilie, nimmt in die Heimath der Natur sie auf, aus der sie entwichen!' (StA III, 147). And just as well. I shudder to think of the lovely lines from 'Abendphantasie' being 'corrected': 'o dorthin nimmt mich / Purpurne Wolken! und möge droben // In Licht und Luft zerrinnen mir Lieb' und Laid! — ' (StA I (1), 301).

infinitive clause a third-person reflexive pronoun ('sich') is used instead of the first-person plural ('uns').¹²⁹

One does not have to read very far in the German *Hyperion* before encountering examples of elision more commonly associated with the spoken language. One might think here of the frequent omission of the second 'e' in 'gehen', here clearly outnumbered by 'gehn'. Many involve the contraction of 'es' ('it') to 's': with pronouns — 'ich's', 'mirs', 'dus', 'dirs', 'ihr's', 'man's'; with conjunctions — 'wie's', 'wenn's', 'weils'; with verbs — 'braucht's', 'geht's', 'giebt's', 'hab's', 'ists', 'sind's', 'war's', 'sahen's'. And there are literally hundreds of instances of the elision of the final 'e' of a verb before a word starting with a vowel. On the first page alone we have 'wär' ich', 'würd' ich', 'schnürt' er'.¹³⁰ Bearing all this in mind, I had no compunction about using English contractions in the translation. If they might seem unsuitably colloquial for a literary text of such high seriousness, then so be it. But one ought also to consider that the novel is epistolary, consisting of letters addressed to a familiar, so that the contractions are perhaps not out of place. There is, however, a further argument that is relevant here. It was the young Nietzsche who claimed that the prose of his favourite poet's novel is music.¹³¹ Like many of the deviations from 'normal' word order, the elisions of Hölderlin's language are often there to serve euphony and rhythm. He abhors vowel sounds in hiatus and generally does his best to avoid them. Whether hiatus can ever be pleasing on the ear in either language is perhaps moot. In any case, in the translation I have taken my cue from the original by, for instance, using contractions such as 'I'm', 'you're', 'we're', 'they're', for 'I am', 'you/we/they are', and as far as possible trying to circumvent hiatus elsewhere.

As Hölderlin indicates in the Preface, the meaning of his novel is the whole. What it means is inseparable from how it means. In order to render that meaning one must at least try to approximate to its linguistic beauty, which is not an incidental bonus, but an integral part of the message. In one of her letters Susette Gontard expresses surprise

129 Letter XXXVI: StA III, 100, 471–72. Beissner argues that this also corresponds to Swabian usage, quite apart from here avoiding an ugly 'uns, uns' sequence.

130 StA III, 7. There would appear to be no fewer than 327 examples of verbs ending with an apostrophe followed by 'ich'.

131 Friedrich Nietzsche: 'diese Prosa ist Musik', 'Brief an meinen Freund, in dem ich ihm meinen Lieblingsdichter zum Lesen empfehle' (19 October, 1861).

that Hölderlin should call his dear *Hipperion* a novel. For her it is more like a 'beautiful poem'.¹³² And indeed it confronts the translator with demands that are normally associated with lyric poetry, rather than prose. I confess that I find myself unequal to the task, in the sense that I can only hope to hint at the rhythms of the novel's language, but there is no way in which I can closely replicate them in English. The reader should still at least be able to recognize that the original is written in poetic prose, though not perhaps that some of the lines resolve into hexameters.¹³³ At the most basic level I can follow Hölderlin in as far as possible avoiding sequences of more than two unaccented syllables, and also steering clear of stress clashes.¹³⁴ This often involves rejecting polysyllabic Latinate vocabulary. In the rendering of the 'Song of Fate' (p. 123) I have tried to be more faithful to the stress patterns and rhythms, but with limited success, since accented sounds may still be of varying length — there cannot be many four-syllable words that take less time to say than 'Götterlüfte'. In the third stanza I opted for the archaic northern 'blindling' for 'blindlings', not only because it looks almost identical to the German, but because I hear it as longer than 'blindly'.¹³⁵

If being faithful to Hölderlin's text means mediating its beauty, there are bound to be occasions when the literary will have to be privileged over the literal. But I have tried to keep these to a minimum. I would rather take liberties with the conventions of English than with Hölderlin, subject only to the results being consistent with my notions of what is poetically effective. It is a besetting sin of literary translations to be linguistically conservative. This is especially inappropriate when we are dealing

132 Letter of 19 March, 1799 (StA VII (1), 75).

133 Cf. Letter V: 'wie ein Geist, der keine Ruhe am Acheron findet' (StA III, 17). I am grateful to Wolf Schmidt for this example.

134 See Steimer, 'Hölderlins Klauseln', p. 287: 'Für die Diktion des Romans ist nämlich charakteristisch, daß sie den Hebungsprall ebenso meidet wie Folgen von mehr als zwei gleichmäßig tonlosen Senkungen.'

135 Rightly or wrongly, I read the German 'blindlings' here as a near-spondee. I was tempted to follow Edwin Muir and have the variant spelling 'blindlings' in English, but then the word would likely be taken as a noun ('blind person'). I would rather it suggest a neologism: 'blindly (s)tumbling' (?). For Muir's fine part-translation, see 'A Note on Friedrich Hölderlin', *The Freeman*, 7 (1 August 1923), p. 489. Together with two stanzas from 'Patmos' in the same article, this represents Muir's earliest translation from Hölderlin, and the only one he published of the 'Song of Fate', much though it meant to him.

with the work of a writer who was developing into one of the greatest poets of world literature, and who himself used translation to push the boundaries of literary German.¹³⁶ As David Constantine observes: 'There is in [translations], very often, a poorer deployment of the host language's lexical and grammatical possibilities, altogether less variety of utterance ... Translations die fast because there is, on the whole, less adventure, less risk, less departure from the norm in them than in the originals.' And, of particular relevance to the translation of an eighteenth-century source: 'You have to write in a language neither antiquarian nor up-to-the-minute modern; which is to say a language which is, in relation to the text equivalently poetic.'¹³⁷ There are excellent lessons to be learnt here, but applying them successfully is of course a tall order.

One of the things I have tried to do in the translation is to use, wherever feasible, English words that are cognate with the German. Occasionally this involves slight shifts of meaning, a subtle approaching of the source to the target language. For instance, 'Strom' normally suggests something rather more imposing than 'stream'; 'wirken' would not normally be rendered by 'work'; and 'wandern' is given here throughout as 'wander', even though there is an element of aimlessness in the English verb which is not quite so present in the German. In these and other cases, I have allowed myself to be swayed by my own feeling for the euphony of Hölderlin's language and a desire to approximate to it, if necessary at the cost of strict accuracy. For instance, at the beginning of the second volume:

A brother of spring was the autumn for us, full of mellow fire, a feast time for commemorating sorrows and past joys of love. The withering leaves wore the red hues of dusk, only the spruce and the laurel stood in eternal green. In the bright breezes wandering birds lingered, others swarmed in vineyard and garden, merrily reaping what people had left. (p. 81)¹³⁸

136 Particularly in his translations from Pindar and Sophocles. See StA V: Übersetzungen.

137 David Constantine, *Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 46–47.

138 Letter XXXI: 'Ein Bruder des Frühlings war uns der Herbst, voll milden Feuers, eine Festzeit für die Erinnerung an Leiden und vergangne Freuden der Liebe. Die welkenden Blätter trugen die Farbe des Abendroths, nur die Fichte und der Lorbeer stand in ewigem Grün. In den heitern Lüften zögerten wandernde Vögel, andere schwärmten im Weinberg, und im Garten und erndteten fröhlich, was die Menschen übrig gelassen' (StA III, 93).

In the first clause of the last sentence the loveliness of the season is causing the birds to delay their migration. But rightly or wrongly, there is no way in which I could countenance such a jarring word as 'migrating' in this context.

As far as 'Mädchen' is concerned, like other translators I have felt obliged to opt in the great majority of instances for the cognate 'maiden' (and this definitely does not imply an answer to a meaningless question). Given the pedestal he places her on, it seemed to me to be utterly incongruous to have Hyperion referring to Diotima as a 'heavenly girl'.¹³⁹ On the other hand, she would be hardly likely to address herself as a 'silly maiden'.¹⁴⁰ One decision in favour of a cognate word might seem more contentious.

'What are we talking about just now?' I could cry, 'it's often so hard, you can't find the matter to hold fast your thoughts.'

'Are they taking off into the air again?' replied my Diotima. 'You'll have to bind lead to their wings, or I'll tie them to a string, like the boy his flying dragon, so they can't get away from us.'¹⁴¹

In modern German 'Drachen' means 'kite', and is distinguished, at least in the nominative, from 'Drache', the mythical fire-breathing monster. In Hölderlin's day there appears to have been no distinction in the word, at least to judge by a contemporary bilingual dictionary, which gives as one of four definitions for 'der Drache': 'the Dragon, a Machine of Paper &c. which the Boys let fly into the Air.'¹⁴² According to the Oxford English Dictionary 'dragon' as 'paper kite' seems no longer to be current, except in Scots usage. Nevertheless, I have opted for it here. It seems to me that there is an ironic contrast between the formidable lofty thoughts and the callow youth who has them, and this is brought

139 Letter XXI: 'des himmlischen Mädchens' (StA III, 58); Letter XXX: 'das himmlische Mädchen' (StA III, 86). Other epithets preceding 'Mädchen' include: 'herrliches' ('glorious'/'magnificent'), 'edles' ('noble'), 'göttliches' ('divine'), 'hohes' (literally 'high'), and 'heiliges' ('holy'/'hallowed').

140 Letter XLIII: 'o des albernsten Mädchens!' (StA III, 109).

141 'Wovon sprechen wir doch geschwind? konnt' ich rufen, man hat oft seine Mühe, man kann den Stoff nicht finden, die Gedanken daran festzuhalten. // Reißen sie wieder aus in die Luft? erwiederte meine Diotima. Du mußt ihnen Blei an die Flügel binden, oder ich will sie an einen Faden knüpfen, wie der Knabe den fliegenden Drachen, daß sie uns nicht entgehn' (StA III, 66).

142 Joh(an)n Ebers, *The New and Complete Dictionary of the German and English Languages* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Haertel, 1796), I, p. 608.

out better by the use of 'dragon' here. Certainly, Hyperion's slightly peeved reaction suggests he is sensitive to the implications of the simile.

In a very modest way I have tried to make room for a fuller range of literary English than may be usual in a translation of this kind. This involves what I hope is judicious use of northern or Scots words, not for their own sake, but when they seem to me to be the best choice. Some, such as 'burn', 'dreich', 'couthie', 'reekie', 'fey', 'thrawn', 'airt', 'drouth' ought to present no problem. Others, such as 'drum(b)ly' or 'wimple' should be self-explanatory from the context, I hope. If not, they can usually be found in good dictionaries. And they are words that appeal to me. It is not that I hear Hyperion speaking English with a Scottish accent. But then neither do I hear him using bland Received Pronunciation. When reading Hölderlin for myself in German, I try, as best I can, to incorporate a Swabian lilt — and make 'Geist' as frothy as possible.

Finally, something ought to be said here about intertextuality. It is difficult for anyone reading the original to avoid picking up the odd echo from *Werther*, and Hölderlin clearly wrote *Hyperion* in the expectation that his readership would know Goethe's novel. However, there have been at least twenty different translations of the latter into English, including four in the last fifteen years, so that it is clearly extremely unlikely that any precise verbal echoes would be registered by an anglophone — not even the 'einiges, ewiges, glühendes Leben' at the end of Hölderlin's novel, which surely recalls Werther's 'das innere glühende, heilige Leben der Natur'.¹⁴³ *Hyperion* also contains a possible allusion to Mignon's song in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795): 'Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühen, / Im dunkeln Laub die Gold-Orangen glühen ...'. It is difficult to avoid thinking of this when we read Hyperion's evocation of the groves of Angele: 'wo die goldne Frucht des Zitronenbaums aus dunklem Laube blinkt'.¹⁴⁴ Goethe's lines are themselves a reminiscence from James Thomson's *Seasons* (1744 edition): 'Bear me, *Pomona!* to thy Citron-Groves; / To where the Lemon and the piercing Lime, / With the deep Orange, glowing thro' the Green,

143 See Werther's letter of 18 August, in Constantine's translation: 'the holy fires of the inner life of Nature' (p. 45).

144 Letter XXIX: 'where the golden fruit of the citron tree gleams through the dark green' (p. 74)

/ Their lighter Glories blend.¹⁴⁵ In the earlier unpublished version of Goethe's novel, the foliage from which the lemons glow had been 'green' rather than 'dark'.¹⁴⁶ Since the relevant passage in Thomson was added too late to be included in Brockes' translation (1745), and Goethe learned to read English early with his father, the only source for the echo in Mignon's song must be the original. As far as we know, Hölderlin never developed a reading knowledge of English, the only book in the language he is known to have fleetingly had in his possession being 'Monk' Lewis's translation of Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*. Goethe's novel obviously made an impression on Hölderlin, and so I tend to assume an echo in *Hyperion*, though it is unlikely to resonate in the translation. The same will be true of the probable allusion to Augustine's *Confessions* at the beginning of the fifth letter, 'Whither could I flee from myself ...?', which surely bears more than a passing resemblance to 'quo a me ipso fugerem?' from the fourth book of the *Confessiones*.¹⁴⁷ The Bible is another matter.

It is no surprise that someone who grew up in an orthodox Protestant (if perhaps pietistically inclined) environment in provincial Württemberg in the last third of the eighteenth century, who spent five years at the theological seminary ('Stift') in Tübingen (1788–93), and whose whole education was in fact predicated on the assumption that he would become a minister of religion, should be thoroughly conversant with the Bible, particularly in Martin Luther's translation (1545). And there are of course numerous turns of phrase in *Hyperion* that are obviously biblical. One example may serve for many. When Hyperion's father offers the Pauline advice: 'prüfe alles und wähle das Beste!', I have translated with something close to the equivalent in the King James Bible (1611): 'prove all things and hold fast the best!' (p. 17).¹⁴⁸ That may perhaps be seen as making the biblical allusion too

145 James Thomson, 'Summer', *The Seasons* (London: A. Millar, 1744), p. 82.

146 Curiously enough, Thomson's friend and fellow Scot, John Armstrong, has a very similar line in his *Art of Preserving Health* (1745) 'Thro' the green shade the golden Orange glows' (Bk 2, line 331) — See Adam Budd, *John Armstrong's The Art of Preserving Health: Eighteenth-Century Sensibility in Practice* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 76.

147 'Wohin könnt' ich mir entfliehen [, hätt' ich nicht die lieben Tage meiner Jugend]?' (StA III, 17); Augustine, *Confessiones*, Book IV, ch. 7 (12).

148 Letter VI: StA III, 20. See 1 Thessalonians 5:22/21: 'Prove all things: hold fast that which is good'; 'Prüfet aber alles / und das Gute behaltet.'

explicit, but on the other hand it enables me to use the cognate 'prove' for 'prüfe' without appearing to indulge in antiquarianism. Whenever I think I have picked up a biblical reference, image, or idiom, I have tried if possible to reflect it in the English. Occasionally this might result in a translation that appears to deviate wilfully from the obvious. A case in point would be the final lines of the second stanza of the 'Song of Fate': 'Und die seeligen Augen / Bliken in stiller / Ewiger Klarheit', where I have 'And the blissful eyes / Gaze in eternal / Tranquil glory'.¹⁴⁹ As mentioned above (p. 143), the imagery of the Song is anticipated in the thirteenth letter:

Ich hab' es heilig bewahrt! wie ein Palladium, hab' ich es in mir
getragen, das Göttliche, das mir erschien! und wenn hinfort mich das
Schicksaal ergreift und von einem Abgrund in den andern mich wirft,
und alle Kräfte ertränkt in mir und alle Gedanken, so soll diß Einzige
doch mich selber überleben in mir, und leuchten in mir und herrschen,
in ewiger, unzerstörbarer Klarheit!¹⁵⁰

The language in the last clause recalls the shining light of the glorious gospel of Christ, the image of God.¹⁵¹ I cannot be the only translator to be struck by the inadequacy of 'clarity' as a rendering for 'Klarheit', either here or in the 'Song of Fate'. Quite apart from the prosaic flatness of the word, it lacks all religious resonance by comparison with the German. For 'Klarheit' occurs fifteen times in the Luther Bible (always in the New Testament), but 'clarity' not at all in King James. On every occasion bar one the word used here is 'glory', and even the exception features the adjective 'glorious'. Examples: 'And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid' (Luke 2:9); 'And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory ... But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory' (Luke 9:30–32); or 'There is one glory of the

149 Letter LVIII (p. 123): StA III, 143. I have reversed the order of the epithets for reasons of rhythm.

150 StA III, 51; 'I've kept it sacred! like a palladium I've carried it within me, the divine that was revealed to me! and if fate henceforth should seize and plunge me down from abyss to abyss and drown in me all energy and all reason, yet shall this one and only outlive myself in me and shine in me and reign in eternal, indestructible glory!' (p. 44).

151 Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4.

sun, another of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory' (1 Corinthians 15:41).¹⁵² If we look at the definitions of 'glory' in the OED, we find amongst them: 'the majesty and splendour attendant upon a manifestation of God'; 'resplendent beauty or magnificence ... effulgence of light such as is associated with conceptions of heaven'; 'the splendour and bliss of heaven'. It seems to me that, in the circumstances, 'glory' represents in almost every respect a better choice than 'clarity', particularly in the 'Song of Fate'. It does not, admittedly, contrast as well with 'confusion' in the last line of the 'Song'. But one cannot have everything.

One respect in which *Hyperion* might seem to have no similarity with *Werther* is in the significance for the latter of Macpherson's *Ossian*. No less than seven percent of Goethe's novel consists of translation from two of the Ossianic poems, the recital of which by the protagonist precipitates the tragic outcome.¹⁵³ And throughout the novel there are sundry echoes of his favourite reading in the letters he writes. There would appear to be nothing comparable in *Hyperion*. And yet, a twentieth-century critic can claim that the novel is 'unthinkable' without *Ossian*.¹⁵⁴ He does not go into specifics. But then neither do those contemporaries of Hölderlin who are reminded of *Ossian* when they read *Hyperion*. The earliest reviewer (1799) states explicitly that whoever does not like *Ossian* will cast the book aside after the first letter.¹⁵⁵ Reactions that suggest an Ossianic influence on the novel, whether approving or not, continue well into the nineteenth century.¹⁵⁶ The reason they have not been much in evidence in more recent years is not far to seek. Macpherson's work is assumed, wrongly, to be totally fraudulent; it is assumed, equally wrongly, to be aesthetically worthless. Consequently, it is left unread.

152 It should be noted that in the Luther Bible, at least since 1984, 'Klarheit' has been replaced here by 'Glanz', and the total instances of the word have been reduced to two.

153 For the role of Ossian in *Werther*, also the way it is tackled by anglophone translators, see Howard Gaskill, "'Arise, O magnificent effulgence of Ossian's soul!": Werther the Translator in English Translation', in *Translation and Literature*, 22 (2013), 302–21.

154 Herbert Schöffler, 'Ossian: Hergang und Sinn eines großen Betrugs', in Schöffler, *Deutscher Geist im 18. Jahrhundert. Essays zur Geistes- und Religionsgeschichte*, 2nd edition (Göttingen 1967), pp. 135–54, pp. 149–50. The essay first appeared in 1941.

155 See StA III, 323 for this benevolent anonymous review of the first volume.

156 One of the last comes from Karl Rosenkranz in his Hegel biography of 1843 — see Howard Gaskill, 'Hölderlin und Ossian', *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch*, 27 (1990–91), 100–30, pp. 114–15.

Embarrassment combines with ignorance to repress the uncomfortable truth, that historically *Ossian* is one of the most influential works in world literature.¹⁵⁷ Whether we like it or not, Hölderlin knew the Ossianic poetry extremely well. He can be shown to have devoured it as an adolescent, declaring his intention to read it until he has it (half) off by heart.¹⁵⁸ Nor was his admiration confined to a youthful phase. Probably the last work he prepared for publication, the stunningly beautiful *Pindar-Fragmente* (1804?), features *Ossian* in the final sentence of the final Fragment.¹⁵⁹ Nor will *Ossian* have been too far from his mind when he was working on *Hyperion*. Franz Wilhelm Jung, whose acquaintance Hölderlin first made on his arrival in Frankfurt in January 1796, was himself producing a translation of *Ossian* in free rhythms and immediately sought to gain the poet's interest in it. Successfully, as it seems, for when Jung was negotiating with the publisher Cotta, late in 1797, the manuscript was with Hölderlin, whose judgement is expected to carry authority. Almost a year later Jung claims in a letter to Fichte that Hölderlin is pressing him to publish the translation. And in 1799, when Hölderlin was attempting to set up his abortive literary periodical *Iduna*, it was his intention to include commented excerpts from Jung's *Ossian*. Hölderlin's affection for Jung is demonstrated by the fact that, together with Susette Gontard, he has a corrected copy of *Hyperion* (first volume) dedicated to him. Under the circumstances, it would not be surprising to find a plenitude of Ossianic resonances in the novel, if one knew what to look for. I have attempted to translate in such a way that anglophones familiar with *Ossian* — and they do exist — might also be reminded of it when they read *Hyperion*.

James Macpherson wrote his translations/adaptations/fabrications of ancient Gaelic verse in what he calls 'measured prose', whilst continually

157 For evidence of the ubiquity of *Ossian*, including the impact on art and music, see *Ossian in Europe*, ed. by Howard Gaskill (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004); also 'Versions of Ossian: Receptions, Responses, Translations', ed. by Howard Gaskill, in *Translation and Literature*, 22 (2013), 293–435. For *Ossian* in Germany, see the magisterial study by Wolf Gerhard Schmidt, 'Homer des Nordens' und 'Mutter der Romantik': James Macphersons *Ossian* und seine Rezeption in der deutschen Literatur, 4 vols (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003–4); for Hölderlin, see especially II, pp. 901–26; for *Hyperion*, pp. 905 ff.

158 To Immanuel Nast, March 1787: 'da leß ich ihn so lang, biß ich ihn halb auswendig kan' (StA VI, 16).

159 StA V, 290; Adler, *Hölderlin: Letters and Essays*, p. 339.

underlining the lyrical beauties of his originals. Translators of the English text did not feel constrained to follow Macpherson in reproducing it in prose, poetic or not, but one who did is Schiller's friend Johann Wilhelm Petersen, whose *Die Gedichte Ossians neuverteutschet* appeared in 1782.¹⁶⁰ This is, in my view, the translation that exerted the greatest influence on Hölderlin, the one he was going to read and re-read until he had it by heart.¹⁶¹ The first German translation, in fact the first complete translation of Macpherson's *Ossian* into any language, had been made into hexameters by Michael Denis, appearing in 1768–69.¹⁶² In 1784 he adapted his version to accord with Macpherson's revised edition, *The Poems of Ossian* of 1773, and took the opportunity to issue it together with three volumes of his own poetry, written under his bardic name Sined (Denis spelt backwards).¹⁶³ It is known that Hölderlin must have had access to this edition, or at least to one of its volumes, since as an eighteen-year-old he uses as a motto lines taken from one of Sined's poems.¹⁶⁴ Although the Denis was probably not so suitable for everyday use (I find it difficult to imagine Hölderlin wandering around with expensive bulky quarto volumes under his arm — Petersen's translation comes in a handy single octavo), it is tempting to think that he might have found time to peruse the German version of Hugh Blair's 'Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian', with which Denis opens the third volume. Blair writes: 'The "joy of grief," is one of Ossian's remarkable expressions, several times repeated.'¹⁶⁵ Denis translates: 'Die *Wonne der Wehmuth* ist einer von Ossians merkwürdigen Ausdrücken, den er zu verschiednen Malen wiederholt.'¹⁶⁶ This felicitous phrase, the first ever occurrence, was coined by Denis (or suggested to him) too late for inclusion in the first two volumes of 1768, though he made sure to incorporate it throughout in the revised edition of 1784. And it appealed to others too, whatever they might have thought of Denis's hexameters. For it is taken over by all German translators of the complete *Ossian*

160 Tübingen: Heerbrandt.

161 For the reasons, see Gaskill, 'Hölderlin und Ossian', pp. 106–9.

162 Denis, *Die Gedichte Ossians eines alten celtischen Dichters*, 3 vols (Vienna: Trattner, 1768–69).

163 *Ossians und Sineds Lieder* (Vienna: Wappler, 1784).

164 See StA VI (2), 508; the lines are from the fourth volume, p. 163.

165 'Critical Dissertation', in *Poems of Ossian* (ed. Gaskill), 343–408, p. 381.

166 *Ossians und Sineds Lieder*, III, p. xcv (Denis's italics).

before 1800, including of course the three known to be known to Hölderlin (Petersen, Denis, Jung).¹⁶⁷ When he has Hyperion write, then: 'Wie aber am Strahle des Morgenlichts das Leben der Erde sich wieder entzündete, sah ich empor und suchte die Träume der Nacht. Sie waren, wie die schönen Sterne, verschwunden, und nur die Wonne der Wehmuth zeugt' in meiner Seele von ihnen', he is deliberately evoking *Ossian*.¹⁶⁸ Amongst historians of eighteenth-century German literature there has been a widespread tendency to misattribute 'joy of grief' (usually to Edward Young), or to assume that 'Wonne der Wehmuth', if not a catchphrase spontaneously self-generated in an age of sensibility, derives from Goethe, whose short and joyfully weepy poem of that title was written in 1775, but did not appear in print until 1789. Certainly, if editors think it worth a comment, they refer only to Goethe, never to *Ossian*.¹⁶⁹ Yet I cannot believe that someone who knows the work as well as Hölderlin can possibly write 'Wonne der Wehmuth' in all innocence of its Ossianic associations. I have therefore translated the passage: 'But when the life of the earth took fire again from the ray of the morning light, I looked up and sought the dreams of the night. Like the beautiful stars they had vanished, and only the joy of grief bore witness to them in my soul' (p. 61).

Ironically, it is with some slight reluctance that I use 'joy of grief' here.¹⁷⁰ Both this phrase and its German equivalent are too readily associated with mawkish sentimentality, tears without fears. Blair defines it as 'that gratification, which a virtuous heart often feels in the indulgence of a tender melancholy.'¹⁷¹ But there is more to it than that. Naturally, one can regard the 'joy of grief' as typical of the contemporary predilection for diluted mixed feeling and the pleasures of melancholy in which anything genuinely painful is kept at arm's length. But *Hyperion* is made of sterner stuff, and even *Ossian's* pathos is not groundless. When we read: 'There is a joy in grief when peace dwells in the breast

167 A successful, if unpoetic prose version was that of Edmund de Harold, *Die Gedichte Ossian's eines alten celtischen Helden und Barden*, 3 vols (Düsseldorf, 1775; also Mannheim, 1782; Münster, 1795).

168 Letter XXVIII: StA III, 71.

169 Cf. Beissner, StA III, 462.

170 David Schwarz is the only other anglophone translator to do so, in his re-working of Trask (who has 'ecstasy of grief'). I presume that Schwarz recognizes the allusion — see Hölderlin: *Hyperion and Selected Poems*. ed. by Santner, p. 57.

171 'Critical Dissertation', *Poems of Ossian*, p. 381.

of the sad. But sorrow wastes the mournful,¹⁷² may we not think of 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'? The narrating Hyperion's journey is one from joy and grief to the joy of grief, and embodies perhaps its finest celebration in world literature.

172 *Poems of Ossian*, p. 381.

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