Zeitschrift: Colloquium Helveticum : cahiers suisses de littérature générale et comparée = Schweizer Hefte für allgemeine und vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft = quaderni svizzeri di letteratura generale e comparata

Herausgeber: Association suisse de littérature générale et comparée

Band: - (2007)

Heft: 38: Literarische Landschaftsbilder = Images littéraires du paysage = Immagini letterarie del paesaggio = Images of literary landscapes

Artikel: "Heimkunft / An die Verwandten" : Hölderlin, poetry, and politics

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-1006444

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Joshua Robert Gold

"Heimkunft / An die Verwandten"

Hölderlin, Poetry, and Politics [1]

When considering the stakes of landscape poetry, it is worth recalling the following aside by Martin Heidegger from his 1943 lecture on Friedrich Hölderlin's elegy "Heimkunft": "Wie lange noch wollen wir meinen, es gäbe da zunächst eine Natur an sich und eine Landschaft für sich, die dann mit Hilfe von 'poetischen Erlebnissen' mythisch gefärbt werde? Wie lange noch sperren wir uns, das Seiende als seiend zu erfahren?"[2] The suggestion is clear: to the extent that it is inherited from aesthetics, the vocabulary commonly used for discussing nature poetry partakes in the metaphysical tradition. Just as experience (*Erlebnis*) depends upon the category of subjectivity, so the concept of nature and the landscape that offers itself to perception result from the reduction of world to an independent object. This subject-object dichotomy obstructs in turn the possibility of experiencing "das Seiende als seiend." No less than the landscape of literature, literary landscape shows itself to be contested ground rather than a site of innocent pleasures.[3]

One could respond that Hölderlin's poem, in supposedly recounting an actual journey, synthesizes a series of landscape impressions. Writing to his sister from Hauptweil bei St. Gallen in February 1801, he praised the mountain scenery, and remarked that "die große Natur

1 The author would like to acknowledge his debt to Professor Bernard Böschenstein of the Unversité de Genève, whose remarks on an earlier version of this essay proved indispensable.

2 Martin Heidegger, "'Heimkunft / An die Verwandten'," *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, 4th ed., Frankfurt a. M., Vittorio Klostermann, 1981, p. 21.

3 See also Heidegger on *Erlebnis* in the afterword to "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks," *Holzwege*, 5th ed., Frankfurt a. M., Vittorio Klostermann, 1972, p. 66.

in diesen Gegenden erhebt und befriediget meine Seele wunderbar." [4] Another letter to Christian Landauer from around the same time notes of the Alps: "[...] ich habe wirklich einen solchen Eindruck nie erfahren, sie sind, wie eine wunderbare Sage aus der Heldenjugend unserer Mutter Erde, und mahnen an das alte bildende Chaos, indeß sie niedersehn in ihrer Ruhe, und über ihrem Schnee in hellerem Blau die Sonne und die Sterne bei Tag und Nacht erglänzen."[5] These passages take on added significance when one observes that both letters celebrate the recent peace treaty between France and the Habsburg Empire.[6] Consequently, the mountain landscape offers Hölderlin more than mere natural beauty; it attests to an enduring moral order. Read in conjunction with these citations, "Heimkunft" seems to recall and preserve this moment of harmony. Along with the description of the Alpine landscape, which resembles Hölderlin's correspondence, the reference to "des heiligen Friedens / Bogen" in stanza five presumably alludes to the Treaty of Lunéville.[7] The text would seem to conform to the kind of transcendent experience that criticism has sought in Romantic nature poetry.

The appeal of this reading, which asserts continuity between text and experience, is undeniable; nonetheless, the assumption that "Heimkunft" memorializes a prior experience assigns to the poem a derivative status. The alternative is recognizing that the poem does not depend upon an experience for its meaning but constitutes a process in its own right. Thus, writing of landscape in Hölderlin's poetry, Paul de Man observes that such passages "are not the sensorial equivalence of a more general, ideal meaning; they are themselves this idea."[8] From this perspective, poems like "Der Rhein" or "Patmos" do not describe entities, but rework the names that designate these

4 Friedrich Hölderlin, letter no. 228, *Hölderlin Stuttgarter-Ausgabe* (henceforth StA), ed. Friedrich Beissner, Stuttgart, W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1954, vol. VI.1, p. 414.

5 Friedrich Hölderlin, letter no. 229, *ibid.*, p. 416.

6 For example, Hölderlin begins the letter to his sister as follows: "Ich schreibe Dir und den lieben Unsrigen an dem Tag, da unter uns hier alles voll ist von der Nachricht des ausgemachten Friedens, und, da Du mich kennest, braucht ich Dir nicht zu sagen, wie mir dabei zu Muth ist." Friedrich Hölderlin, *ibid.*, p. 413.

7 Friedrich Hölderlin, "Heimkunft," StA, vol. II.1, p. 98.

8 Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," *Blindness and Insight: Studies in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd ed., Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1983, p. 190.

locations. Insofar as such poems are exercises in poetic naming, the landscapes that they describe are textual landscapes rather than geographical ones. Thus, if one accepts that Hölderlin's poetry does not record what happens but is what happens, then *Heimkunft* constitutes an event instead of representing one.[9]

However, in Heidegger's reading, entitled "'Heimkunft / An die Verwandten'," this understanding of the poetic word stands beside another, mystified notion of poetry. To be sure, he criticizes any reading that takes "Heimkunft" as a depiction of the poet's 1801 journey from Switzerland to Germany. According to Heidegger, this approach to the poem falls back upon a quotidian, hence inauthentic, understanding of language. His refusal to explain Hölderlin's poem by way of correspondences between text and place emancipates the act of reading from its reliance upon extra-literary details. In this regard, his interpretation, by taking the language of the poem on its own terms, invites readers to consider the specificity of poetic language. Yet this interpretation no sooner clears certain paths than it obstructs them. The source of this obstruction is not simply Heidegger's tendency to subordinate the language of Hölderlin's poetry to the vocabulary of fundamental ontology.[10] Claiming that Hölderlin's poem attests to "heimischwerden in der Nähe zum Ursprung," Heidegger admittedly does a disservice to his own approach.[11] However, the decisive moment in his reading is his identification of poeticizing (*Dichten*), conceived as proximity to the origin, with joy (*Freude*), specifically joy at being at home in the German language. Consequently, what is striking in Heidegger's interpretation is how this detail leads him to disavow what "Heimkunft" itself states: that poeticizing names unsettledness within language, and that this unsettledness is a precondition for the poetic act. Against this claim, "'Heimkunft / An die Verwandten'" establishes a particular configu-

9 See also Bernard Böschenstein, "Die Schweizer Landschaft als Spiegel der deutschen Literatur vor und um 1800," *Hölderlin Jahrbuch*, no. 29, 1975–1977, pp. 36–55. This study has the merit of demonstrating how specific figures influence the way that a poem articulates its own operations.

10 See Theodor W. Adorno, "Parataxis. Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins," *Noten zur Literatur*, vol. III, Frankfurt a. M., Suhrkamp Verlag, 1965, p. 165.

11 Martin Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

ration of poetry, philosophy, and politics that suppresses this account of the poetic vocation.

From the outset Heidegger rejects the notion that "Heimkunft" merely recalls or records the writer's experience. He paraphrases this position as follows: "Der Hauslehrer Hölderlin ist im Frühjahr 1801 aus dem thurgauischen Ort Hauptwyl bei Konstanz über den Bodensee nach seiner schwäbischen Heimat zurückgefahren. So könnte das Gedicht 'Heimkunft' eine Poesie über eine fröhliche Heimreise darstellen."[12] This passage has the merit of stating concisely the approach that Heidegger's own interpretation will avoid. In order to highlight the limitations to this approach, he begins by drawing attention to the discrepancy between the ostensible joy that characterizes the speaker's homecoming and the tone of the concluding stanza. As he observes, "Die letzte auf das Wort der 'Sorge' gestimmte Strophe verrät nichts von der Fröhlichkeit dessen, der sorglos in der Heimat ankommt. Das letzte Wort des Gedichtes ist ein jähes 'nicht'."[13] Its brevity notwithstanding, this remark is noteworthy. Mentioning *nicht* in this manner, Heidegger acknowledges the dissonance upon which "Heimkunft" concludes – a dissonance, one hastens to add, that his own reading will downplay. Nonetheless, for the time being it is sufficient to note that this observation subtly shifts the emphasis of the reading from biographical details to the language of the poem.

Even before drawing attention to this *nicht*, Heidegger's paraphrase gives an indication of the difficulties that accompany the notion that "Heimkunft" recounts or represents an episode from Hölderlin's life. Such explanations attribute the source of the poem to the writer's experience. The centrality of experience may seem self-evident in this regard, yet according to Heidegger it remains linked to the category of subjectivity, since experience comprises impressions of an object that perception gives to consciousness. This definition is admittedly schematic, but what matters here is how "experience," inasmuch it accompanies "subjectivity," is caught up in the language of metaphysics. Moreover, referring the poem back to the subject reduces language to an instrument at the subject's disposal. A similarly quotidian understanding of language underlies the notion that

12 Martin Heidegger, *ibid.*, p. 13.
13 Martin Heidegger, *ibid.*, p. 13.

"Heimkunft," as a poem that is "about" a certain experience, depicts physical landscapes. This aspect of Heidegger's interpretation comes across most forcefully when he notes, "Wenn wir den Bodensee, der auch 'das schwäbische Meer' heißt, geographisch oder verkehrstechnisch oder auch heimatkundlich vorstellen, dann meinen wir den See, der zwischen den Alpen und der oberen Donau liegt, durch den auch der junge Rhein hindurch strömt. So denken wir dieses Wasser noch undichterisch."[14] Thus, in reading a poem, there are several possibilities for conceiving of the name "Bodensee"; nonetheless, despite their apparent diversity, these options merely reduce this name to one or another form of factual understanding. As these remarks indicate, poetry requires a kind of reading that does not depend on the language of subjectivity, or equate poetic names with designations of specific beings.

The question arises how Heidegger, in contrast to this metaphysically encumbered mode of understanding, proposes to read "Heimkunft." The immediate answer to this question, of course, is that "'Heimkunft / An die Verwandten'" never explicitly states this alternative, which instead arises out of the process of interpretation. In anticipation of a closer examination of this process it is worth considering more closely the last sentence from the aforementioned citation: "So denken wir das Wasser undichterisch." As it was shown, to equate the Bodensee as a poem names it with the Bodensee as it is factually understood fails to get at the specificity of poetic language for Heidegger. It is precisely in this way, and not in the sense of "insensitive" or "unimaginative," that he means *undichterisch*. This observation only clarifies what Heidegger's use of this word excludes. However, for the moment, one must focus upon and emphasize his reference to *denken*: "we are *thinking* this water unpoetically." The relationship between *Dichten* und *Denken*, which his writings address extensively, is too broad to be treated exhaustively here; consequently, the following observations, limited to the significance of this relationship for "'Heimkunft / An die Verwandten'," must suffice. If the very process of Heidegger's "Heimkunft" reading is evidence of "thinking in action," then it follows that, among other things, this activity, in a departure from the Western philosophical tradition, has an

14 Martin Heidegger, *ibid.*, 21.

intimate relationship to *Dichten*, just as the poet turns to those who think "daß ihr Andenken helfe, das dichtende Wort zu verstehen."[15] Where "'Heimkunft / An die Verwandten'" is concerned, this interdependence of poetry and thinking reveals the historical significance of this relationship as it bears upon the German nation – "das Volk des Dichtens *und* des Denkens."[16] We will return to this point; for now, note that the reading that Heidegger calls for entails interaction between these two activities.

When it comes to Heidegger's practice of interpretation, the alternative to thinking the poem in an *undichterisch* manner, insofar as *undichterisch* thinking relies upon extraneous "fields," is taking the poem as a process. For example, referring to the first stanza of "Heimkunft," "die das Alpengebirge nennt," Heidegger notes that these lines "steht, selbst ein Gebirge von Versen, unvermittelt da."[17] The implication is clear: rather than reproduce Hölderlin's impression of a physical landscape, the poem itself is the landscape. Remaining with the first stanza, one can point to additional details that contribute to Heidegger's approach, though they receive no mention in "'Heimkunft / An die Verwandten'." Take for example the description of the alpine dawn: "Denn es wächst unendlicher dort das Jahr und die heiligen / Stunden, die Tage, sie sind kühner geordnet, gemischt. / Dennoch market die Zeit der Gewittervogel und zwischen / Bergen, hoch in der Luft weilt er und rufet den Tag."[18] Clearly the reference to the bird and the act of calling can be read as a metaphor for the activity of writing itself. What justifies this reading is not simply that the bird is a figure often associated with song; its call, which commences the day, coincides with the start of the poem, thereby announcing a bestowing of structure upon time that would otherwise remain disordered (*kühner geordnet, gemischt*). (This notion of poetry as a temporal craft is consistent with Hölderlin's poetology,

15 Martin Heidegger, *ibid.*, pp. 30–31. For an essay that touches upon the way that Heidegger's thought reverses the traditional relationship between poetry and philosophy, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Poésie, philosophie, politique," in *Heidegger. La politique du poème*, Paris, Galilée, 2002, pp. 43–77. See also Beda Allemann, *Hölderlin und Heidegger*, Zürich, Atlantis Verlag, 1954, pp. 102–108.

16 Martin Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

17 Martin Heidegger, *ibid.*, p. 13.

18 Friedrich Hölderlin, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

which is predicated upon a series of systematically regulated tones.) From this perspective, it is hardly a coincidence that the image of the bird should resurface at a turning point in the third stanza, which describes the speaker's arrival in his homeland: "Gärten stehen gesellt und die glänzende Knospe beginnt schon, / Und des Vogels Gesang ladet den Wanderer ein."[19] Once again: these lines, though consistent with Heidegger's approach, receive no commentary; all the same, both passages illustrate how the text, by signaling its status as a poem at critical points, registers its own movement.[20]

If the poem is an event in the sense that it is a process, then what happens? The answer, according to Heidegger, is that the poem speaks the truth of origin – or as he puts it, "Heimkunft ist die Rückkehr in die Nähe zum Ursprung."[21] Yet to claim that "Heimkunft" designates a return to an origin raises still more questions: Who is returning? What origin is it that "Heimkunft" speaks of? This much is clear: we are not to understand "proximity" or "origin" in quotidian terms, that is, as "die möglichst geringe Abmessung des Abstandes zweier Örter."[22] Not only does Heidegger's use of *Nähe* and *Ursprung* in "Heimkunft / An die Verwandten" depart from their everyday meanings; the theme of proximity recurs elsewhere in his writing. This is not only true of other essays in *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* that address the motif of distance.[23] *Sein und Zeit* (1926) already states that the way of being that belongs to Dasein remains the most difficult to grasp ("Das Seiende, das wir je selbst sind, ist ontologisch das Fernste").[24] This last citation, when contrasted with "'Heimkunft / An die Verwandten'," brings into focus what Heidegger means by *Nähe* in his Hölderlin readings. Investigating *Existenzialien* ("die Seinscharaktere des Daseins"), *Sein und Zeit* at-

19 Friedrich Hölderlin, *ibid.*, p. 97.

20 For a more detailed reading of "Heimkunft" as a sustained reflection on the process of literary composition, see Wolfram Groddek, "'... und die Wolke, / Freudiges dichtend'. Der poetologische Metatext in Hölderlins Elegie 'Heimkunft / an / die Verwandten'," *Neue Wege zu Hölderlin*, ed. Uwe Beyer, Würzburg, Köngishausen und Neumann, 1994, p. 153–183.

21 Martin Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

22 Martin Heidegger, *ibid.*, p. 24.

23 See "'Andenken'," *op. cit.*, pp. 79–151.

24 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 17th ed., Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993, p. 311.

tempts to work through what is ontologically most distant about the being of Dasein.[25] Far from continuing this undertaking, "'Heimkunft / An die Verwandten'" brings the question of origin to bear upon the nation and history; to cite Heidegger once again: "Das Eigenste der Heimat ist bereits das Geschick einer Schickung, oder wie wir jetzt dies Wort sagen: Geschichte."[26] This is not to overlook how *Sein und Zeit* addresses the historicity of Dasein.[27] Nonetheless, the treatment of history in "'Heimkunft / An die Verwandten'" is more akin to "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks," which describes the artwork as "Geschichte in dem wesentlichen Sinne, daß sie [d.h., die Kunst] Geschichte [...] gründet."[28] Here two observations are in order. First, "history" does not designate a sequence of events in time, but the coming into being of a people ("die Entrückung eines Volkes in sein Aufgegebenes als Einrückung in sein Mitgegebenes").[29] Second, history is only possible on the basis of the artwork, which brings this people forth; to cite Heidegger again: "Immer wenn Kunst geschieht, d. h. wenn ein Anfang ist, kommt in die Geschichte ein Stoß, fängt die Geschichte erst oder wieder an."[30] The word play here between *geschehen* and *Geschichte* joins Heidegger's notion of the artwork as an event with his historical understanding of the artwork. The references

25 Martin Heidegger, *ibid.*, p. 44.

26 Martin Heidegger, *op cit.*, 14.

27 Martin Heidegger, *op. cit.*, pp. 372–404. See especially Chapter 5, "Zeitlichkeit und Geschichtlichkeit."

28 Martin Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

29 Martin Heidegger, *ibid.*, p. 64. James Phillips rigorously examines Heidegger's concept of nationhood in *Heidegger's* Volk: *Between National Socialism and Poetry*, Stanford, Stanford UP, 2005, pp. 1–53. Without trying to exculpate the philosopher's political commitments, Phillips shows how "Heidegger's nationalism [is] a nationalism of the assertion of the absence of the *Volk* that knows itself to be absent" (p. 12). James Ward similarly argues: "What is a people's 'own' may be understood as having, or being, a movement articulated as its own lack; an 'own' is incomplete, yet to borrow language from [*Sein und Zeit*], it is coming toward itself and thus a becoming what it already is." (James F. Ward, *Heidegger's Political Thinking*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1995, p. 210.) The argument that Heidegger attempted to surpass a political tradition predicated upon the sovereignty of a present-at-hand subject deserves to be read in conjunction with Lacoue-Labarthe's controversial argument that "le nazisme est un humanisme." *La fiction du politique. Heidegger, l'art, et la politique*, Paris, Christian Bourgeois éditeur, 1987, p. 138.

30 Martin Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

to *gründen* and *anfangen* also reveal that the title "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks" means "the origin that the artwork grants" in addition to "the process whereby the artwork originates." It is to this first sense of *Ursprung* that Heidegger will allude when, seven years after delivering the lectures that "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks" comprises, he defines "Heimkunft" as "Rückkehr in die Nähe zum Ursprung." At issue is how the artwork inaugurates the history of a nation (in this case, the German people) by naming, and thus bringing forth, the world to which it belongs.

Lest one conclude that this attempt to read "Heimkunft" in terms of the problem of nationhood is entirely willful on Heidegger's part, it is worth recalling how this theme figures prominently, albeit in a radically different manner, in Hölderlin's own writing. One need look no further than the circumstances surrounding the publication of "Heimkunft," which appeared in the journal *Flora* with the hymn "Die Wanderung" and the odes "Dichterberuf" and "Stimme des Volks" in 1802. Each of these texts easily merits its own interpretation, but what matters for present purposes is how these poems, when read together, address the genesis and history of nations, as well as poets' relationship to them. However, here the resemblance between Hölderlin and Heidegger ends, and a certain tension becomes discernable in the latter's account of nationhood. For Hölderlin's republicanism stands alongside an awareness of the self-destructive potential that nations harbor, a sensibility to which "Stimme des Volks" testifies ("Völker auch / Ergreifft die Todeslust und kühne / Städte").[31] Whereas Hölderlin's writing often warns against this capacity for annihilation, "'Heimkunft / An die Verwandten'" speaks approvingly of "die Söhne der Heimat, die fern dem Boden der Heimat [...] ihr Leben für den noch gesparten Fund verwenden und im Opfergang verschwenden."[32] Yet Heidegger is quick to point out that the origin, while revealing a uniquely German way of being historically, may not be appropriated directly; elusive and uncannily proximate, it calls for caution. In this respect he proves himself peculiarly faithful to Hölderlin, whose writing critiques nostalgia for sources or origins. For Hölderlin associates these terms

31 Friedrich Hölderlin, "Stimme des Volks," *op. cit.*, p. 51.

32 Martin Heidegger, *op. cit.*, pp. 29–30.

with a condition of ontological consistency from which self-consciousness, if disaster is not to prevail, must remain banished. "Ein Räthsel ist Reinentsprungenes. Auch / Der Gesang kaum darf es enthüllen": mortals were not intended to live as gods.[33] Similarly, Heidegger, while claiming "Das Eigenste der Heimat ist bereits das Geschick einer Schickung," also adds: "Doch in der Schickung ist das Eigene gleichwohl noch nicht übereignet. Es wird noch zurückbehalten."[34] The word *zurückbehalten*, suggesting that one may not immediately appropriate what is one's ownmost, its apparent familiarity notwithstanding, is key. To be sure, origin, as Heidegger understands it, is hardly what one unmasks and exposes; on the contrary: "Die Nähe zum Ursprung ist ein Geheimnis," yet "ein Geheimnis wissen wir niemals dadurch, daß wir es entschleiern und zergliedern, sondern einzig so, daß wir das Geheimnis *als* Geheimnis hüten."[35] Hesitation, circumvention, is in order. If "Heimkunft" names a "Rückkehr in die Nähe zum Ursprung," this *Rückkehr* is only possible when one has taken "die Last der Wanderung auf die Schulter" and gone over "zum Ursprung, damit er dort erfahre, was das Zu-Suchende sei, umd dann als der Suchende erfahrener zurückzukommen."[36] Distance from the origin is the precondition for coming into its proximity, since travel teaches the traveler how to search. However, Heidegger suggests an additional reason for the necessity of migration. Interpreting Hölderlin's use of the word *Fund* in "Heimkunft," he brings the motif of distance and proximity to bear upon the presence of the divine: "Die Zeit des gesparten Fundes ist das Weltalter, da der Gott fehlt [...] Weil jedoch der Fund als der gesparte gleichwohl nahe ist, grüßt im Nahen der Himmlischen der fehlende Gott. Deshalb ist 'Gottes Fehl' auch kein Mangel."[37] This idea of the modern age as a transition between the flight of old gods and the arrival of new appears elsewhere in *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*. However, the striking detail in this passage, and here Heidegger is not far off from "Stimme des Volks," is his admonishment that "die Landesleute [dürfen] auch nicht trachten, durch Liste

33 Friedrich Hölderlin, "Der Rhein," *op. cit.*, p. 143.
34 Martin Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
35 Martin Heidegger, *ibid.*, 24.
36 Martin Heidegger, *ibid.,* p. 23–24.
37 Martin Heidegger, *ibid.,* p. 28.

ein Gott selbst zu machen und so mit Gewalt den vermeintlichen Mangel auf die Seite zu bringen"; moreover, "Sie dürfen aber auch nicht darin sich bequemen, auf einen gewohnten Gott sich nur noch zu berufen."[38] These remarks recall a theme from Hölderlin's writing: mortals' temptation to transgress the boundary separating them from the gods. Yet is there any doubt that the *Landesleute* to whom Heidegger is referring are the Germans? In this case, leaving from the origin, insofar as it implies that a nation acquires rather than starts out with its way of being, would counteract the urge to treat the nation as a substitute for the divine. Heidegger only hints at this point, but what deserves emphasis here is that his politically oriented reading of "Heimkunft," however unsettling, does not arbitrarily pervert the poem, but mobilizes in a specific way a vocabulary already found in Hölderlin's writing.

Although Heidegger attempts to distance himself from assumptions that guide more conventional readings, a tension nevertheless arises in his account of poets and poeticizing. To be sure, his conception of poetry sits uneasily beside his historical claims; however, there is another difficulty once Heidegger, after referring to the fifth stanza, proclaims, "'Heimkunft' ist nicht ein Gedicht über die Heimkunft, sondern die Elegie ist als die Dichtung, die sie ist, das Heimkommen selbst."[39] In a sense Heidegger's reading rises or falls with this statement, which denies that "Heimkunft" concerns anything other than its own operations. Disqualifying the claim that the poem is "about" Hölderlin's 1801 homecoming conveys this position forcefully. Yet in the same breath Heidegger, by a legerdemain, characterizes the movement of the poem metaphorically, which happens in the transition from "'Heimkunft' ist nicht ein Gedicht über die Heimkunft" to the assertion "die Elegie ist als die Dichtung [...] das Heimkommen selbst." The etymological relation between *-Kunft* and *kommen*, which abets this legerdemain, enables him to glide almost imperceptibly from one statement to the next. This slippage will, upon closer inspection, have consequences for the entire interpretation.[40]

38 Martin Heidegger, *ibid.,* p. 28.

39 Martin Heidegger, *ibid.,* p. 25.

40 Kathleen Wright similarly discusses the "textual strategies" that Heidegger mobilizes to support his reading of "Germanien." See Wright, "Heidegger and the Authorization of Hölderlin's Poetry," in *Martin Heidegger: Politics, Art, and Technol-*

They appear when one examines the notion of joy (*Freude*) in Hölderlin's writing as well as in "'Heimkunft / An die Verwandten'." Consistent with his understanding of the poetic vocation, Heidegger states that the poet, leading the way for the nation, "kommt heim, indem er in die Nähe kommt zum Ursprung." He continues: "[Der Dichter] kommt in die Nähe, indem er das Geheimnis der Nähe zum Nahen sagt." So far, so good: in his role as prophet, the poet speaks and thus reveals the secret of the proximity of origin. However, Heidegger equates the coming into the proximity of origin that poeticizing is with joy; he notes of the poet: "Er sagt es [das Geheimnis], indem er das Freudigste dichtet. Das Dichten macht nicht erst dem Dichter eine Freude, sondern das Dichten *ist* die Freude, die Aufheiterung, weil im Dichten das erste Heimkommen besteht."[41] Inasmuch as "Heimkunft" refers consistently to *Freude* as well as to its variations (*freudig*, *erfreuen*, and so on), Heidegger's reading is justified. The references are too numerous to recount here, but suffice it to say that Hölderlin's poem contemplates *Freude*, not as an emotional or psychological state, but as a word.[42] This word is not without significance for his poetology, which sketches a phenomenology of poetic composition (that is, a description of consciousness as it constructs the literary artwork). For Hölderlin, writing begins in enthusiasm or elation, as the opening of the fragment "Über die Verfahrungsweise des poetischen Geistes" attests: "Wenn der Dichter einmal des Geistes mächtig ist [...]."[43] The first lines of "Heimkunft" recall this elation: "Drin in den Alpen ists noch helle Nacht und die Wolke, / Freudiges dichtend, sie deckt drinnen das gähnende Tal."[44] As "Freudiges dichtend" indicates, the cloud is just a cover for the actual concern here: the act of writing. Just as the process of poeticizing originates when spirit seizes the poet, so "Heimkunft"

ogy, ed. Karsten Harries and Christoph Jamme, New York / London, Holmes and Meier, 1994, pp. 170–171.

41 Martin Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

42 Peter Szondi has expertly examined how Hölderlin's poetry operates by dynamically unfolding and developing specific names or terms. See "Der Selbst, der Fürst des Fests. Die Hymne 'Friedensfeier'," *Hölderlin-Studien*, *Schriften*, vol. I, ed. Jean Bollack et. al., Frankfurt a. M., Surhkamp Verlag, 1978, pp. 315–342.

43 Friedrich Hölderlin, "Über die Verfahrungsweise des poetischen Geistes," *op. cit.*, p. 241.

44 Friedrich Höldelin, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

commences with the composition of something joyful. The significance of these words, which initiate the process whereby the poem acknowledges its own operations, is not lost on Heidegger. However, if his reading appears faithful to Hölderlin in this respect, he does not simply designate joy as the precondition for poeticizing; he conflates the coming home that the poem supposedly is with the joy that is poeticizing. In this way the poetic act becomes one of affirmation, just as the poem constitutes a movement of recuperation. Undoubtedly Heidegger does not mean *Freude* in the sense of "happy"; the same is true of *Heimkommen*, whose affinity to *Ge*heim*nis* testifies to what remains ontologically distant in the very proximity of origin. Nevertheless, such qualifications notwithstanding, his interpretation coerces the poem to speak in a fashion that a rigorous reading of the poem cannot uphold.

In order to see how this is the case, it is necessary to consider how the last stanza states the opposite of Heidegger's claim. Here another word regarding Hölderlin's poetics is in order. For Hölderlin's writing, in addition to naming the disposition in which poeticizing originates, also insists upon the need for sobriety in order to counteract the potentially uncontrollable character of enthusiasm. Such is the sobriety to which "Heimkunft" alludes when the speaker, having arrived in his home, asks whether his speech befits the occasion. Hölderlin writes: "Wenn wir seegnen das Mahl, wen darf ich nennen und wenn wir / Ruhn vom Leben des Tags, saget, wie bring' ich den Dank?"[45] The language here concerns forms of speech—blessing, thanking, and most importantly, naming. The other acts depend upon naming, for I must know whom to thank, and in whose name I should bless the meal. More significantly, the speaker's doubt regarding his ability to name is the first indication of his unease with the poetic calling. The next lines expand upon this doubt: "Nenn ich den Hohen dabei? Unschickliches liebet ein Gott nicht, / Ihn zu fassen, ist fast unsere Freude zu klein. Schweigen müssen wir oft; es fehlen heilige Nahmen, / Herzen schlagen und doch bleibet die Rede zurück?"[46] The vocabulary here recalls other poems by Hölderlin, but what deserves attention is the tension between silence and naming.

45 Friedrich Hölderlin, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
46 Friedrich Hölderlin, *ibid.*, p. 99.

Silence threatens the speaker, whose doubts do not concern all names, but sacred ones, "heilige Nahmen." This confession may appear startling in view of the fact that "Heimkunft" often invokes God, yet it never settles upon one appellation; for example, the poem refers to "der reine / Selige Gott," "der Gott," "der Schöpferische," and "großen Vater."[47] Thus the speaker, far from successfully naming the divine, produces a chain of substitutions for what the last stanza calls "den Hohen." In this way the poem names only the failure to name. (A similar paradox characterizes the line "Törig red ich. Es ist die Freude," where speech that defies articulation manages to speak intelligibly about itself.)[48] The qualification "und doch bleibet die Rede zurück?" suggests that the irrepressibility of speech rescues the speaker from silence. Upon raising this question "Heimkunft" reintroduces the possibility of poetry in the next lines: "Aber ein Saitenspiel leiht jeder Stunde die Töne, / Und erfreuet vielleicht Himmlische, welche sich nahn."[49] The play of strings, a metonymy for the lyre, provides a metaphor for poetry, which possibly appeases the gods (*Himmlische*). Even so, the start of the conclusion reads: "Das bereitet und so ist auch beinahe die Sorge / Schon befriedigt, die unter das Freudige kam. Sorgen, wie diese, muß, gern oder nicht, in der Seele / Tragen ein Sänger und oft, aber die anderen nicht."[50] The crucial word here is *Sorge*, which predictably commands Heidegger's attention. While *Sein und Zeit* reserves this term for the being of Dasein, "'Heimkunft / An die Verwandten'" uses *Sorge* in the more restricted sense of that reservation pertaining to the poetic word.[51] Lest the poet reveal what is joyful prematurely, "das dichtende Wort [muß] dafür sorgen, daß im Freudigen nicht das übereilt und verloren werde, was aus ihm her grüßt."[52] This is Heidegger's reason for why Hölderlin refers to "die Sorge / [...] die unter das Freudige kam." However, the conclusion of "Heimkunft" draws upon the dual meaning of *Sorge* as "worry" and "care." As preparation for the *Saitenspiel*,

47 Friedrich Hölderlin, *ibid.*, p. 96, p. 97, and p. 98.

48 Friedrich Hölderlin, *ibid.,* p. 98. See also Wolfram Groddek, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

49 Friedrich Hölderlin, *ibid.*, p. 99.

50 Friedrich Hölderlin, *ibid.*, p. 99.

51 In *Sein und Zeit Sorge* designates the structure of the being-in-the-world of Dasein. Martin Heidegger, *op. cit.,* p. 192 and pp. 323–331.

52 Martin Heidegger, *op. cit.,* p. 25.

Sorge has the sense of "care"; as that which comes "unter das Freudige," *Sorge*, inasmuch as it disrupts, connotes "worry." This last point merits emphasis, as it suggests a tension between the poet's *Sorge* and *das Freudige* that Heidegger's reading downplays. The last lines pose still another problem for Heidegger: "Sorgen, wie diese, muß, gern oder nicht, in der Seele / Tragen ein Sänger und oft, aber die anderen nicht."[53] These words, which leave untouched the ambiguity of *Sorge*, also name the poet's estrangement from others. Hölderlin implies such an estrangement when he writes that a poet (*Sänger*) has no choice whether or not to bear these *Sorgen* – hence the significance of *müssen*, *gern oder nicht*. This detail distinguishes poets from non-poets, to whom this imperative presumably does not apply. Additionally there are two ways to understand *die anderen*, of which one accentuates the poet's separation. If *die anderen* refers to *Sorgen*, the lines state that the poet's concerns (or worries) exclude all others; if *die anderen* means "other people," then these lines state that others must not carry the same concerns (or worries) as the poet. While the first interpretation already points to the poet's isolation by virtue of the specificity of his worries, the second interpretation explicitly names this condition.[54] Thus, according to "Heimkunft," to poeticize, far from establishing the poet's ties with others, is what removes the poet from the rest of humanity. In "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung," first delivered as a talk in 1936, Heidegger admittedly describes the poet as a "Hinausgeworfener," cast "in jenes *Zwischen*, zwischen den Göttern und den Menschen."[55] However, "'Heimkunft / An die Verwandten'," in calling the poem a coming home, also states that this poem is "das Heimkommen selbst, das sich noch ereignet, solange ihr Wort als die Glocke in der Sprache der Deutschen läutet."[56] Thus, if the poet according to Heidegger is an outcast, then language provides him with compensation, and poeticizing is being-at-home in language. Yet, while "Heimkunft" never actually specifies the nature of the poet's *Sorgen* – the closest we get is "Sorgen, wie diese" – it still holds that these *Sorgen*, insofar as they are obligations that follow from the poet's vocation, testify to a condition of un-

53 Friedrich Hölderlin, *op. cit.,* p. 99.
54 See also Wolfram Groddek, *op. cit.*, p. 176.
55 Martin Heidegger, "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung," *op. cit.*, pp. 46–47.
56 Martin Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

settledness that Hölderlin associates with the poetic act. This unsettledness results in turn from the poet's privileged knowledge regarding the conventional character of meaning, which "Heimkunft" demonstrates through multiple, and ultimately failed, designations of the divine. (Heidegger's understanding of poetry presupposes this conventionality, without which the independence of poetic language from the confines of empirical designations is hardly conceivable. In this regard his interpretation disavows the very perception that it brings to light.) This knowledge constitutes the poet's true burden and guarantees his isolation; it is for this reason that "Heimkunft" names the impossibility of coming home.

Doesn't Heidegger acknowledge details that cast doubt upon the speaker's identification with his countrymen? As noted above, he observes that the poem ends with "ein jähes 'nicht'"; he also acknowledges the ambiguity of the close of the third stanza: "Alles scheint vertraut, der vorübereilende Gruß auch / Scheint von Freunden, es scheint jegliche Miene verwandt."[57] Of the poet's compatriots he notes: "Sie scheinen verwandt zu sein, aber sie sind das nocht nicht – verwandt nämlich mit ihm, dem Dichter."[58] Nevertheless, the crucial detail here is Heidegger's qualification that the speaker's countrymen, while appearing related, "sind das *noch* nicht." This *noch* suggests that the poet's identification with the nation is postponed rather than disabled. Heidegger makes a similar move à propos of the *nicht* in the last stanza, describing it as "der geheimnisvolle Ruf 'an' die anderen im Vaterlande, Hörende zu werden damit sie das Wesen der Heimat erst wissen lernen."[59] Thus, Heidegger does not deny certain dissonant moments in "Heimkunft," but seeks to resolve them.[60]

How he attempts to do so is apparent from his reference to *lernen*, which attempts to affirm the poet's affinity with his countrymen by falling back upon the ideal of the poet-educator. This last remark calls

57 Friedrich Hölderlin, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

58 Martin Heidegger, *op. cit.,* p. 29.

59 Martin Heidegger, *op. cit.,* p. 29.

60 At the same time, one must not disregard those aspects of Heidegger's account of the artwork that accentuate discord or strife; such is the case with the terms *Streit* and *Riß* in "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks." Martin Heidegger, *op. cit.*, pp. 37–44 and pp. 51–52. See also James Phillips, *op. cit.*, pp. 133–168.

for a final comparison between Hölderlin's writing and "'Heimkunft / An die Verwandten'." As his early correspondence suggests, this ideal informs Hölderlin's initial conception of poets' role in revolutionary times.[61] "Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus," which bears marks of his collaboration, declares poetry "Lehrerin der Menschheit" and proclaims, "die Mythologie muß philosophisch werden, um das Volk vernünftig, und die Philosophie muß mythologisch werden, um die Philosophen sinnlich zu machen."[62] The figure of the poet-educator also remains discernable in *Hyperion* and the unfinished tragedy *Der Tod des Empedokles*. In short, Hölderlin, influenced by Johann Gottlieb Fichte's lectures *Über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten* (1794) and Friedrich Schiller's treatise *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1795), construes the poet's office according to the language of *Bildung* and *Erziehung*.[63] These terms apply to the poet himself, who must undergo an apprenticeship, as well as to the poet's task of helping the nation mature historically. His concept of *Erziehung* therefore presupposes both a mystified and a demystifiying account of poetry. On the one hand, Hölderlin succumbs to what de Man calls "aesthetic ideology": the forced reconciliation of subject and object through the instrumentalizing of art.[64] "Heimkunft" shows that Hölderlin relinquished this aspiration without ever denying the public character of his calling. However, what persists in his writing is the idea that poetry as a craft requires training; in the words Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "le courage de la

61 See for example Friedrich Hölderlin, letter no. 65, *op. cit.*, pp. 37–38.

62 "Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus," *op. cit.*, p. 298 and p. 299.

63 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Einige Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten", *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. I. 3 (Werke 1794–1796), ed. Reinhard Lauth and Hans Jacob, *Fichte Gesamtausgabe der Bayrischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Stuttgart, 1966, pp. 23–68; Friedrich Schiller, "Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihen von Briefen," *Werke*, vol. 20, ed. Benno von Wiese, Weimar, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1962, pp. 309–412.

64 Admittedly this is not the vocabulary that de Man himself uses; nevertheless, this description gets at the stakes of his critique of the aesthetic tradition after Kant. See Paul de Man, "Kant and Schiller," *Aesthetic Ideology*, ed. Andrzej Warminski, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, pp. 129–162.

poésie est la prose."[65] Heidegger, far from departing from traditional aesthetics, actually relies upon the language of *Bildung*, one of its most seductive manifestations.[66] Hölderlin himself overcomes this legacy, yet Heidegger still adheres to the model of the poet as an instructor who shapes history. Signing on to the idea that the nation learns from the poet enables him to acknowledge more ambiguous moments in "Heimkunft" while reintegrating the poet into the national community.

What distinguishes Heidegger's notion of "aesthetic education" (to use Schiller's phrase) is the role that he accords to thinking – which returns us to his description of the Germans as "das Volk des Dichtens *und* des Denkens." As noted above, Heidegger departs from the philosophical tradition by construing the relationship between thinking and poetry as one of mutual interdependence. On the one hand, poetry accomplishes what traditional philosophizing cannot; on the other hand, poetry requires thinking to render its historical meaning accessible. [67] As this last point shows, Heidegger reserves a space for the thinker, whose intermediary activity renders audible the way that the artwork names the historical way of being of the nation. It is therefore no surprise that Heidegger first delivered "'Heimkunft / An die Verwandten'" as a talk – that is, in the context of a public forum – at Freiburg University.[68] Such circumstances suggest that Heidegger, as if choosing his hero, sought to repeat what he understood to be Hölderlin's role, a possibility made more plausible by the fact that his talk commemorated the centennial of Hölderlin's death.[69] However, inasmuch as he regarded himself as a thinker rather than a poet, Heidegger also understood his historical role to be entirely different

65 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Le courage de la poésie," *op. cit.*, p. 151. For a striking example of this notion of poetry as craftsmanship, see the first part of the *Anmerkungen zum Oedipus* , StA, vol. V, p. 195

66 Critically analyzing the concept of mimesis, Lacoue-Labarthe also discusses the subject of 'Bildung'. *Op. cit.*, pp. 114–133. See also Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, "Heidegger und Hölderlin. Die Überforderung des 'Dichter in dürftiger Zeit'," *Heidegger und die praktische Philosophie*, ed. Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert and Otto Pöggeler, Frankfurt a. M., Suhrkamp Verlag, 1998, pp. 192–196.

67 Thus Heidegger says of the Germans: "Denn jetzt müssen zuvor Denkende sein, damit das Wort des Dichtenden vernehmbar wird." *Op. cit.,* p. 30.

68 "Anmerkungen," *ibid.,* p. 193.

69 See also Kathleen Wright, *op. cit.*, pp. 167–168.

from Hölderlin's. Unmistakably close yet impossibly distant: is this not the essence of the very relationship between philosophy and literature?

Abstract

In seiner Auseinandersetzung mit eher biographisch orientierten Interpretationen von Friedrich Hölderlins Elegie "Heimkunft" fällt Martin Heideggers eigene Lektüre einer Mystifizierung dichterischer Sprache zum Opfer. Statt zu erkennen, wie dieses Gedicht ein Unbehagen am konventionellen Charakter der Bedeutung ausspricht, meint Heidegger vielmehr, in "Heimkunft" werde das Dichten mit einer Heimkehr zur Sprache gleichgesetzt. Um die dissonanteren Aspekte des Gedichtes auszublenden, kehrt Heidegger die Bedeutung des Dichters als Erzieher der Nation hervor, wobei sich Heidegger auf die ästhetische Tradition bezieht, die er eigentlich kritisiert.