

ESSENTIAL WORKS OF
FOUCAULT,
1954-1984

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Ethics

edited by Paul Rabinow

Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology
edited by James D. Faubion

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The *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* has been extremely important; since 1946, it has managed patiently to dislodge Hölderlin's texts from the accumulated weight of a half century of interpretations obviously inspired by the disciples of Stefan George. Friedrich Gundolf's analysis of *The Archipelago* stands as an excellent example of this latter approach,¹ given its emphasis on the sacred, circular presence of nature, the visible proximity of the gods who metamorphose into lovely bodies, their coming to light in the cycles of history, and their ultimate return heralded by the fleeting presence of the Child—the eternal and perishable guardian of fire. Caught up in the lyricism of a fulfilling time, all of these themes served to stifle what Friedrich Hölderlin had announced in the vitality of a rupture. Following the thematics of Stefan George, the young hero of "The Fettered River," torn from the stupefied bank in a theft that exposes him to the boundless violence of the gods, is transformed into a tender, soft, and promising child. The hymn commemorating cyclical process had silenced Hölderlin's words, the hard words that divide time. It was obviously necessary to recapture his language at its source.

A number of studies (some rather early and others more recent) have significantly altered the traditional reference points of the Hölderlin chronology. Heinrich Lange's simple scheme,² which placed all the "obscure" texts (like the *Grund zum Empedokles*) in a pathologi-

*This essay, a review of Jean Laplanche's *Hölderlin et la question du père* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961), first appeared in *Critique* 178 (1962), pp. 195-209. This translation, by D. F. Bouchard and S. Simon, has been slightly amended.

cal calendar originating with the Bordeaux episode, was considerably modified some time ago; it was necessary to alter its dates so that the enigma of Hölderlin's madness could arise earlier than had been previously supposed (all the drafts of *Empedokles* were completed before Hölderlin left for France). But, in an inverse sense, the obstinate erosion of meaning proliferated; Friedrich Beissner tirelessly investigated the last hymns and the texts of madness; Leopold Liegler and Andreas Müller examined the successive configurations that developed from the same poetic core (*The Wanderer* and *Ganymede*).⁵ The escarpment of mythic lyricism, the struggle at the limits of language from which it grows, its unique expression and perpetually open space, are no longer the last rays of light escaping from the growing darkness. They arise, on the level of meaning and of time, in that central and profoundly embedded point where poetry talks freely to itself in the words [*la parole*] that are proper to it.

Adolf Beck's clarifications with respect to the biography have also led to a whole series of reevaluations.⁴ His studies bear in particular on two episodes: the return from Bordeaux (1802), and the eighteen-month period of Hölderlin's tutorship at Waltershauser from the end of 1793 to the middle of 1795 and the departure from Jena. This period is especially important for the light it sheds on relationships that were previously neglected or misunderstood. This is the time in which Hölderlin met Charlotte von Kalb; the period of his relations, at once close and distant, with Friedrich Schiller; of Johann Fichte's influence; and of his abrupt return to his mother's house. But, most important, it is a time of strange anticipations, repetitions against the grain that present in up-beat what will, in the aftermath or in other forms, be restored as a down-beat. Charlotte von Kalb obviously prefigures Diotima and Suzette Gontard; equally, Hölderlin's fervent attachment to Schiller, who, from afar, watches over, protects, and, from the heights of his reserve, pronounces the Law, delineates from the outside and within the order of events the terrible presence of the "unfaithful" gods from whom Oedipus (because he dared infringe on their territory) will turn away through the gesture in which he blinds himself: "a traitor in the realm of the sacred."⁵ And the flight to Nürtingen, far from Schiller, from legislative Fichte, and from an already-deified Goethe mute before silent Hölderlin—is there not, in the dotted line of vicissitudes, the decipherable figure of this return

home which will later be opposed, as balance, to the categorical turning-away of the gods? Yet other repetitions are introduced into the already-dense situation at Jena—invariably at Jena—but these according to the simultaneity produced by mirrors: on the level of Hölderlin's dependencies, his now established intimacy with Wilhelmina Marianne Kirnes forms the double of the enchanted and inaccessible union in which, like gods, Schiller and Charlotte von Kalb are joined; the teaching position as a young tutor, which he accepts with enthusiasm and in which he showed himself rigorous and demanding to the point of cruelty, presents in relief the inverted image of the accessible and loving master he sought in Schiller but in whom he only found discreet concern, a constant, unbreachable distance, and deaf incomprehension.

We are indeed fortunate that the *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* has remained alien to the babbling of psychologists—doubly fortunate that they have not seen fit to investigate its findings. The gods were with us; they removed the temptation of submitting Hölderlin and his madness to a stricter form of that discourse which so many psychologists (Karl Jaspers first and foremost)⁶ perpetually and pointlessly repeat: this approach, pursued to the very heart of madness, is based on the assumption that the meaning of a work, its themes and specific domain, can be traced to a series of events whose details are known to us. The question posed by this nonconceptual eclecticism, as it derives from "clinical" psychology, is whether a chain of significations can be formed to link, without discontinuity or rupture, an individual life to a life's work, events to words, and the mute forms of madness to the most essential aspects of a poem.

In fact, this possibility prescribes, to anyone who attends to it without being taken in by it, a different course. The old problem, concerned with the point at which a work ends and madness begins, is meaningless when posed in a context of uncertain dates and a maze of overlapping phenomena. Instead of assuming that a work collapses in the shadows of a pathological event once it achieves its secret truth, it is necessary to follow the movement in which a work gradually discloses the open and extended space of schizophrenic existence. At this extreme limit, we find a revelation that no language could have expressed outside of the abyss that engulfs it and that no fall could have demonstrated if it were not at the same time a conquest of the highest peaks.

This is the direction taken by Jean Laplanche in his book. He begins by adopting the discreet style of a "psychobiography." From this opening, he crosses his chosen field diagonally and discovers, approaching his conclusion, the nature of the problem which had informed his text from the start and from which it derived its prestige and mastery: how can language apply a *single and identical* discourse to poetry and madness? Which syntax functions *at the same time* on the level of declared meaning *and* on that of interpreted signification?

But, perhaps, in order to illuminate the particular powers of systematic inversion that animate Laplanche's text, we should at least pose—if not resolve—this question in its original form: what source gives rise to the possibility of this language and why, for the longest time, has it appeared so "natural" to us, that is, oblivious to its proper enigma?

As a Christianized Europe first began to name its artists, their lives were accorded the anonymous form of the hero, as if the name could only adopt the colorless role of chronological memory within the cycle of perfect recommencements. Vasari's *Vite* sets as its goal the evocation of an immemorial past, and its proceeds according to an ordained and ritual order. Genius makes itself known from infancy, not in the psychological form of precocity, but by virtue of its intrinsic right to exist in advance of time and to make its appearance only in its consummation. Genius is not born, but appears without intermediary or duration in the rift of history; similar to the hero, the artist sunders time so as to reestablish its continuity with his own hands. The manifestations of genius, however, are accompanied by a series of vicissitudes: one of the most frequent episodes concerns the passage from misrecognition to recognition. Giotto was a shepherd sketching sheep on a rock when Cimabue found him and paid homage to his hidden majesty (as the prince in medieval tales, living among peasants who adopted him, is suddenly recognized by a mysterious mark). An apprenticeship follows this experience, but it is more symbolic than real since it can invariably be reduced to the singular and unequal confrontation between the master and his disciple—the older man thought he was giving everything away to a youngster who already possessed all the older man's powers. The clash that ensues reverses their relationship: the child, set apart by a sign, transforms the master

into a disciple, and the master, whose reign was merely a usurpation, suffers a symbolic death by virtue of the inviolable rights possessed by the anonymous shepherd. After Leonardo da Vinci painted the angel in the *Baptism of Christ*, Verrochio abandoned his career and, similarly, the aging Ghirlandaio withdrew in favor of Michelangelo. The artist has yet to attain his full sovereignty; another secret test awaits him, but this one is voluntary. Like the hero who fights in black armor, his visor covering his face, the artist hides his work and reveals it only upon completion. This was Michelangelo's procedure with the *David* as it was with Uccello's fresco above the gates of San Tommaso. Finally, the artist receives the keys to the kingdom, the keys of Demiurgy. He produces a world that is the double, the fraternal rival, of our own. In the instantaneous ambiguity of illusion, it takes its place and passes for it—the monsters painted by Leonardo on the roundel of Ser Piero are as horrifying as any found in nature. Through this return to nature, in the perfection of identity, a promise is fulfilled: man is freed, as the legend recounts that Filippo Lippi was actually liberated on the day he painted a supernatural resemblance of his master.

The Renaissance attitude towards the artist's individuality conflated an epic perception which derived from the already archaic form of the medieval hero with the Greek themes of the initiatory cycle, and at their boundary appeared the ambiguous and overdetermined structures of enigma and discovery, of the intoxicating force of illusion, of a return to nature that is basically *other*, and of an access to new lands revealed as *the same*. The artist was able to emerge from the age-old anonymity of epic singers only by usurping the power and meaning of the same epic values. The heroic dimension passed from the hero to the one whose task it had been to represent him at a time when Western culture itself became a world of representations. A work no longer achieved its sole meaning as a monument, a memory engraved in stone which was capable of surviving the ravages of time; it now belonged to the legend it had once commemorated; it became in itself an "exploit" because it conferred eternal truth upon men and upon their ephemeral actions and also because it referred to the marvellous realm of the artist's life as its "natural" birthplace. The painter was the first subjective inflection of the hero. His self-portrait was no longer merely a marginal sign of the artist's furtive participa-

tion in the scene being represented, as a figure hidden at the corner of the canvas; it became, at the very center of the work, the totality of the painting where the beginning joins the ending in the absolute heroic transformation of the creator of heroes.

In this fashion, for the artist, a relationship of the self to itself was tied up in the interior of the exploit that the hero could never experience. The heroic mode became the primary manifestation—at the boundary of the things that appear and their representations, for oneself and for others—of the singleness of approach to the truth of the work. This was nevertheless a unity both precarious and ineradicable, and one that disclosed, on the basis of its essential constitution, the possibility of a series of dissociations. Among the most characteristic were: the “distraught hero” whose life or passions were continually in conflict with his work (this is Filippo Lippi who suffered from the torments of the flesh and, unable to possess the lady whose portrait he was painting, was forced to “stifle his passion”); the “alienated hero,” losing himself in his work and also losing sight of the work itself (plainly Uccello, who “could have been the most elegant and original painter since Giotto had he devoted to human and animal figures the time lost in his studies of perspective”); the “misunderstood hero,” scorned by his peers (like Tintoretto who was driven away by Titian and spurned throughout his life by the Venetian painters). These avatars, which gradually traced the dividing line between the artist’s deeds and the deeds of heroes, give rise to the possibility of an ambiguous stance (maintained through a composite vocabulary) which embraces *both* the work and what the work is not. The space cleared in the decline of heroism, a space whose nature was suspected by the sixteenth century, and one that our present culture cheerfully investigates in keeping with its basic forgetfulness, is ultimately occupied by the “madness” of the artist; it is a madness that identifies the artist with his work in rendering him alien to others—from all those who remain silent—and it also situates the artist outside his work when it blinds him to the things he sees and makes him deaf to even his own words. This state can no longer be understood as a Platonic ecstasy that protects him from illusion and exposes him to the radiant light of the gods, but as a subterranean relationship in which the work and what it is not construct their exteriority within the language of dark interiority. Given these conditions, it became possible to envisage the strange enterprise we call the “psychology of

the artist,” a procedure always haunted by madness even when the pathological dimension is absent. It is inscribed on the beautiful heroic unity that gave names to the first painters, but as an index of their separation, negation, and oblivion. The psychological dimension in our culture is the negation of epic perceptions. If we hope to understand the artists of the past, we can only do so by following this diagonal and illusive path on which the older, mute alliance between the work and the “other” of the work whose tales of heroic rituals and immutable cycles were commemorated by Vasari is at once caught sight of and lost.

In keeping with our discursive understanding, we have tried to construct the language of this unity. But is it lost to us? Or so fully incorporated in other discourses, in the monotony generated by discourses on “the relationship of art and madness,” that is nearly impossible to unravel? This unity makes possible such discourses of reassessment (I think of Jean Vinchon) and misery (I think of Jean Fretet and many others).⁷ At the same time, it is constantly occulted, deliberately neglected, and scattered through these repetitions. It lies dormant within discourse and forced by it into stubborn oblivion. This unity can be given new life only through a rigorous and uncompromising discourse such as that developed by Laplanche, perhaps the only scion to be saved from a most inglorious dynasty. Laplanche’s remarkable readings multiply the problems that schizophrenia has, of late, insistently posed for psychoanalysis.

What is the precise point of saying that the place left empty by the Father is the *same* place that Schiller occupied in Hölderlin’s imagination and subsequently abandoned, the *same* place made radiant by the unfaithful presence of the gods of the last texts prior to leaving the Hesperians under the royal law of institutions? More simply, what is this *same* figure outlined in the *Thalia-Fragment* before the actual meeting with Suzette Gontard which is then faithfully reproduced in the definitive version of *Diotima*? What is this “sameness” to which analysis is so readily drawn? Why is this “identity” so insistently introduced in every analysis; why does it seem to guarantee the easy passage between the work and what it is not?

Of the numerous paths which lead to this “identity,” Laplanche’s analysis undoubtedly follows the most secure; he moves from one approach to another without ever losing his way, without wavering in

his pursuit of this "sameness" which obsesses him with its inaccessible presence and its tangible absence. These paths form, as it were, three methodologically distinct but convergent approaches: the assimilation of themes in the imagination; an outline of the fundamental forms of experience; and finally, the dividing line along which Hölderlin's work and his life confront each other, where they are balanced, and where they become both possible and impossible in relation to each other.

1. The mythical forces, whose strange and penetrating vitality is experienced both inside and outside of Hölderlin's poetry, are those in which divine violence penetrates mortals to create a proximity in which they are illuminated and reduced to ashes; these are the forces of the Jungling, of a river at its source, contained and sealed by ice, water, and sleep, which shatters its bonds in a single movement in order to find its profound and inviting homeland at a distance from itself, outside itself. Are they not *also* Hölderlin's forces as a child, forces confiscated out of avarice and withheld by his mother, forces of which he requested the "full and unimpaired use" as a paternal inheritance he could dispose of as he liked? And are they not *also* the forces Hölderlin opposed to those of his student in a struggle exacerbated by the recognition that they were mirror images? Hölderlin's experience is totally informed by the enchanted threat of forces that arose from within himself and from others, that were at once distant and nearby, divine and subterranean, invincibly precarious; and it is in the imaginary distances between these forces that their mutual identity and the play of their reciprocal symbolization are constructed and contested. Is the oceanic relationship of the gods to the unleashing of their new vitality the symbolic and luminous form of Hölderlin's relationship to the image of the mother, or its profound and nocturnal basis? These relationships are constantly being transposed.

2. This play of forces, without beginning or ending, is deployed within its natural space, one organized by the categories of proximity and distance. These categories regulated the immediately contradictory oscillations of Hölderlin's relationship to Schiller. In Jena, Hölderlin was exalted by his "closeness to truly great minds," but, in this attractive profusion, he experiences profound misery—a desertlike emptiness that distances him from others and that creates an internal and unbreachable gap within himself. As a result of his own barrenness, he develops an abundant capacity to absorb the fertility of the

others, of this other who, in maintaining his reserve, refuses to give of himself and deliberately keeps his distance. The departure from Jena becomes comprehensible in this context: Hölderlin left Schiller's vicinity because in being close to him, he felt that he held no value for his hero, that he remained infinitely distant from him. In trying to gain Schiller's affection, he was trying "to come closer to the Good"—that which is by definition out of reach. He left Jena to realize more closely this "attachment," which was degraded each time he tried to establish a link and made more distant by his approach. It is likely that this experience was for Hölderlin connected to that of the fundamental space in which the gods appear only to turn away. This space, in terms of its basic configuration, is that of the great circle of nature, the "divine All-in-One," but this perfect circle without fault or mediation only emerges in the now extinguished light of Greece; the gods are *here* only by being *there*. The genius of Hellas, "the first-born of lofty nature," must be located in the great return commemorated in *Hyperion* in its evocation of endless circles.⁸ But in the *Thalia-Fragment*, which forms the first draft of the novel, Greece is not the land of glorious presence. When Hyperion leaves Melitus (visited for only a short time) to undertake a pilgrimage to the dead heroes on the banks of the Scamander, it too disappears and he is condemned to return to a native land where the gods are present and absent, visible and hidden, in the manifest reserve of the "supreme secret which gives life or death." Greece is the shore where gods and men intermingle, the land of mutual presence and reciprocal absence. From this derives its prestige as the land of light; it defines a distant luminosity (exactly opposed to Novalis's nocturnal proximity) which is traversed, like the flight of an eagle or a lightning flash, by the violence of an abduction that is both murderous and loving. The light of Greece is an absolute distance which is destroyed and exalted by the imminent force of the assembled gods. Against the certain flight of all things near, against the threatening shaft of the distant, what remedies are possible? Who will protect us? "Is space always to be this absolute and radiant departure, this abject volt-face?"⁹

3. The definitive wording of *Hyperion* is already a search for a fixed point: it seeks to anchor itself in the improbable unity of two beings as closely aligned as a figure and its reflection in a mirror. In this context, the limit assumes the shape of a perfect circle which includes all things, a state as circular and pure as Hölderlin's friendship with Su-

zette Gontard. The flight of the Immortals is arrested in the light that reflects two similar faces; "the divine is trapped by a mirror and the dark threat of absence and emptiness is finally averted. Language now advances against this space whose opening summoned it and it attempts to obliterate this space by covering it with the lovely images of immediate presence. The work of art becomes a measure of what it is not in the double sense that it traverses the entire surface of this other world, and then limits it through its opposition. The work of art installs itself as joy of expression and averted madness. This is the period spent in Frankfurt as a tutor for the Gontard family, a time of shared tenderness and mutual understanding. But Diotima dies; Alabanda leaves in search of a lost homeland, Adamas in search of an impossible Arcadia. The dual relationship of the mirror has been shattered by a supreme and empty form, a form whose emptiness devours the fragile reflection, a form which is nothing in itself but which designates the *Limit* in all its aspects: the inevitability of death, the unwritten law of human brotherhood, the inaccessible existence of mortals who were touched by the divine. In the pleasure of an artistic work, at the border of its language, a limit emerges whose function is to silence its language and bring the work to completion, and this is the limit which formed the work against all that was not itself. The shape of this balance is that of a precipitous cliff where the work finds completion only through those elements it subtracts from itself. The work is ruined by that which initially constituted it. The limit that balanced the dual existence with Suzette Gontard and the enchanted mirror of *Hyperion* emerges as a limit *in life* (Hölderlin's "unexplained" departure from Frankfurt) and as a limit *of the work* (Diotima's death and Hyperion's return to Germany "like homeless, blind Oedipus to the gates of Athens").

We can now see that this enigma of the *same*, in which the work merges with all that it is not, assumes an exactly reversed form from that proposed by Vasari. It becomes situated at the very center of the work, in those forces which necessitate its destruction from the start. A work and its *other* can speak in the *same* language of the *same* things only on the basis of the limit of the work. Any discourse that seeks to attain the fundamental dimensions of a work must, at least implicitly, examine its relationship to madness: not only because of the resemblance between the themes of lyricism and psychosis, or because the structures of experience are occasionally isomorphic, but

more fundamentally, because the work poses and transgresses the limit which creates, threatens, and completes it.

The gravitational pull that the greatest platitudes seem to exert on the majority of psychologists has led them for several years to the study of "frustrations"; the involuntary fasting of rats serves as their infinitely fertile epistemological model. It is because of his double grounding in philosophy and psychoanalysis that Laplanche was able to direct his study of Hölderlin to a profound questioning of the negative, in which the Hegelian *repetition* of Jean Hippolyte and the Freudian *repetition* of Jacques Lacan find themselves *repeated*: repeated, that is, by the very necessity of their destined itinerary and its conclusion.

German prefixes and suffixes (*ab-*, *ent-*, *-los*, *un-*, *ver-*) are particularly well suited (far better than in French) for expressing the specific forms of absence, hiatus, and distancing which are indispensable for the psychotic construction of the father's image and the weapons of virility. It is not a question of seeing in the father's "no" either a real or a mythical orphanage; nor does it imply the eradication of the father's characteristic traits. Hölderlin's case is apparently straightforward, but it becomes extremely ambiguous if examined in depth. He lost his father at the age of two and his mother was remarried to Gock, the burghermeister, two years later. After five years, Gock died, leaving the child with delightful memories that were apparently unaffected even by the existence of a half-brother. On the level of Hölderlin's memories, the father's place was occupied by a distinct and positive figure, and only through death did it become partially disturbed. Undoubtedly, the idea of absence will be found not in this interplay of presences and disappearances but in a context where speech is linked to a particular speaker. Jacques Lacan, following Melanie Klein, has shown that the father, as the third party in the Oedipal situation, is not only the hated and feared rival but the agent whose presence limits the unlimited relationship between the mother and child, and whose first, anguished image emerges in the child's fantasy of being devoured. Consequently, the father separates; that is, he is the one who protects when, in his proclamation of the Law, he links space, rules, and language within a single and major experience. At a stroke, he creates the distance along which will develop the scansion of presences and absences, the speech whose initial form is based on constraints, and finally, the relationship of the signifier to the signified

which not only gives rise to the structure of language but also to the exclusion and symbolic transformation of repressed material. Thus, it is not in alimentary or functional terms of deficiency that we understand the gap that now stands in the Father's place. To be able to say that he is missing, that he is hated, excluded, or introjected, that his image has undergone symbolic transmutations, presumes that he is not "foreclosed" (as Lacan would say) from the start and that his place is not marked by a gaping and absolute emptiness. The Father's absence, manifested in the headlong rush of psychosis, is not registered by perceptions or images, but relates to the order of the signifier. The "no" through which this gap is created does not imply the absence of a real individual who bears the father's name; rather, it implies that the father has never assumed the role of nomination and that the position of the signifier, through which the father names himself and, according to the Law, through which he is able to name, has remained vacant. It is toward this "no" that the unwavering line of psychosis is infallibly directed; as it is precipitated inside the abyss of its meaning, it evokes the devastating absence of the father through the forms of delirium and phantasms and through the catastrophe of the signifier.

Beginning with the period in Homburg, Hölderlin devoted himself to this absence, which is constantly elaborated in the successive drafts of *Empedocles*. At first, the tragic hymn sets out in search of the profound center of things, this central "Limitless" where all determinations dissipate. To disappear into the fire of the volcano is to rejoin, at the point of its inaccessible and open hearth, the All-in-One—simultaneously, the subterranean vitality of stones and the bright flame of truth. But as Hölderlin reworked this theme, he modified the basic spatial relationships: the burning proximity of the divine (high and profound forge of chaos where all that has ended can begin anew) is transformed into the distant radiance of the unfaithful gods; Empedocles destroyed the lovely alliance by assuming the status of a mediator with divine powers. Thinking he had realized the "Limitless," he had, in fact, merely succeeded in driving the Limits farther away in a flaw that stood for his entire existence and that was the product of his "handiwork." And in this definitive distancing of limits, the gods had already prepared their inevitable ruse; the blinding of Oedipus will not proceed with open eyes on this deserted shore where Language and the Law, in fraternal confrontation, await the garrulous

parricide. In a sense, language is the site of the flaw; Empedocles profanes the gods in proclaiming their existence and releases the arrow of absence to pierce the heart of things. Empedocles' language is opposed by the endurance of its fraternal enemy whose role is to create, in the interval of the limit, the pedestal of the Law which links understanding to necessity and determinations to their destiny. This positivity is not the result of an oversight; in the last draft, it reappears as an aspect of Manes' character in his absolute power of interrogation ("tell me who you are, tell me who I am")¹⁰ and as the unshakable will to remain silent—he is a perpetual question who never answers. And yet, having arisen from the depths of time and space, he acts as an unwavering witness to Empedocles' nature as the Chosen One, the definitive absence, the one through whom "all things return again and future events have already achieved completion."¹¹

Two extreme possibilities—the most allied and most opposed—are presented in this final and closely fought struggle. First, we are given the categorical withdrawal of the gods to their essential ether, the Hesperians in possession of the terrestrial world, the effacement of the figure of Empedocles as the last Greek, the arrival from the depths of the Orient of the couple Christ-Dionysus, come to witness the tempestuous exit of the dying gods. Simultaneously, a zone is created where language loses itself in its extreme limits, in a region where language is most unlike itself and where signs no longer communicate, that region of an endurance without anguish: "*Ein Zeichen sind wir, deutungslos*" ("A sign we are, meaningless"). The expansion of this final lyric expression is also the disclosure of madness. The trajectory that outlines the flight of the gods, and that traces, in reverse, the return of men to their native land, is indistinguishable from this cruel line that leads Hölderlin to the absence of the father, that directs his language to the fundamental gap in the signifier, that transforms his lyricism into delirium, his work into the absence of a work.

At the beginning of his book, Laplanche wonders if Blanchot, in his discussion of Hölderlin, had not rejected the possibility of extending the unity of meaning to the end of his analysis, if he had not prematurely appealed to the opaque event of madness or unquestionably invoked the mute nature of schizophrenia.¹² In the name of a "unitary" theory, he criticizes Blanchot for introducing a rupture, the absolute catastrophe of language, when it was possible to extend—

perhaps indefinitely—the communication between the meaning of schizophrenic speech and the nature of the illness. But Laplanche is able to maintain this continuity only by excluding from language the enigmatic identity which permits it to speak at the same time of madness *and* of an artistic work. Laplanche has remarkable analytic powers: his meticulous and rapid discourse competently covers the domain circumscribed by poetic forms and psychological structures; this is undoubtedly the result of extremely rapid oscillations which permit the imperceptible transfer of analogical figures in both directions. But a discourse (similar to Blanchot's) that places itself within the grammatical posture of the "and" that joins madness *and* an artistic work, a discourse that investigates this indivisible unity and concerns itself with the space created when these two are joined, is necessarily an interrogation of the Limit, understood as the line where madness becomes, in a precise sense, a perpetual rupture.

These two forms of discourse obviously manifest a profound incompatibility, even though an identical content is put to profitable use in either discourse; the simultaneous unraveling of poetic and psychological structures will never succeed in reducing the distance that separates them. Nevertheless, they are extremely close, perhaps as close as a possibility is to its realization. This is because the *continuity of meaning* between a work and madness can only be realized if it is based on the *enigma of similarity*, an enigma that gives rise to the *absolute nature of the rupture*. The dissolution of a work in madness, this void to which poetic speech is drawn as to its self-destruction, is what authorizes the text of a language common to both. These are not abstractions, but historical relationships that our culture must examine if it hopes to find itself.

"Depression at Jena" is the term that Laplanche applies to Hölderlin's first pathological episode. We could allow our imagination to play on this depressing event: in keeping with the post-Kantian crisis, the disputes of atheism, Auguste Schlegel's and Novalis's speculations, the clamor of the Revolution which was understood as the promise of another world, Jena was certainly the arena where the fundamental concerns of Western culture abruptly emerged. The presence and absence of the gods, their withdrawal and imminence, defined the central and empty space where European culture discovered, as linked to a single investigation, the finitude of man and the return of time. The nineteenth century is commonly thought to have

discovered the historical dimension; it could only open it up from out of the *circle*, the spatial form that negates time, the form in which the gods manifest their arrival and flight and men manifest their return to their native ground of finitude. More than simply an event that affected our emotions, that gave rise to the fear of nothingness, the death of God profoundly influenced our language; at the source of language it placed a silence that no work, unless it be pure chatter, can mask. Language thus assumes a sovereign position; it comes to us from elsewhere, from a place of which no one can speak, but it can be transformed into a work only if, in ascending to its proper discourse, it directs its speech towards this absence. In this sense, every work is an attempt to exhaust language; eschatology has become of late a structure of literary experience, and literary experience, by right of birth, is now of paramount importance. This was René Char's meaning: "When the dam built by men finally collapsed, torn along the giant fault line created by the abandonment of the gods, words in the distance, immemorial words, tried to resist the exorbitant thrust. In this moment was decided the dynasty of their meaning. I rushed to the very end of this diluvian night."¹⁵

In relation to this event, Hölderlin occupies a unique and exemplary position: he forged and manifested the link between a work and the absence of a work, between the flight of the gods and the perdition of language. He stripped the artist of his magnificent powers—his timelessness, his capacity to guarantee the truth and to raise every event to the heights of language. Hölderlin's language replaced the epic unity commemorated by Vasari with a division that is responsible for every work in our culture, a division that links it to its own absence and to its dissolution in the madness that had accompanied it from the beginning. He made it possible for us, positivist quadrupeds, to climb the slopes of an inaccessible summit which he had reached and which marked the *limit*, and, in doing so, to ruminate upon the psychopathology of poets.

NOTES

a The French title of this essay, "*Le 'non' du père*," contains a verbal pun, which plays off the homonymy of *non* [no] and *nom* [name].—Ed.

1 In *Dichter und Helder* (Heidelberg: Weiss, 1921), pp. 5–22.

2 Heinrich Lange, *Hölderlin: Eine Pathographie* (Munich, 1942).

- 3 Friedrich Beissner, *Hölderlin: Reden und Aufsätze* (Weimer, 1961); L. Liegler, "Der Gefesselte Strom und Ganymed . . .," *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 2 (1947), pp. 62-77; A Müller, "Die beiden Fassungen von Hölderlins Elegie 'Der Wanderer,'" *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 5 (1948-1949), pp. 103-51.
- 4 Beck has published many articles in the *Hölderlin Jahrbuch*.
- 5 Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, trans. William R. Trask (New York: Ungar, 1965), reflects his relationship to Schiller; see Michael Hamburger, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Poems and Fragments* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), pp. 4-7.
- 6 For example, *Strindberg und Van Gogh: Versuch einer pathographischen Analyse unter vergleichender Heranziehung von Swedenborg und Hölderlin* (Bern: E. Bircher, 1922).
- 7 Jean Vinchon, *L'Art et la folie* (Paris: Stock, 1924); Jean Fretet, *L'Aliénation poétique: Rembrandt, Mallarmé, Proust* (Paris: J. B. Janin, 1946).
- 8 See *Hyperion*, p. 23, for the "All-in-One"; for the genius of Hellas, see pp. 88-96.
- 9 The *Thalia-Fragment* has not been translated into English.
- 10 Hamburger, *Poems and Fragments*, p. 355.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 353.
- 12 Maurice Blanchot, "La folle par excellence," *Critique* 45 (1951), pp. 99-118.
- 13 "Seuil," in *Fureur et mystère* [1948], in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), p. 255.

SPEAKING AND SEEING
IN RAYMOND ROUSSEL*

The oeuvre is given to us divided just before the end by a statement that undertakes to explain how . . . This *How I Wrote Certain of My Books*,¹ which came to light after everything else was written, bears a strange relationship to the oeuvre whose mechanism it reveals by covering it in an autobiographical narrative at once hasty, modest, and meticulous.

Roussel seems to respect chronological order; in explaining his work he follows the thread leading directly from his early stories to the just-published *Nouvelles impressions d'Afrique* [*New Impressions of Africa*]. Yet the arrangement of the discourse seems to be contradicted by its internal space. In the foreground, writ large, is the process he used to compose his early writings; then, in ever-narrowing degrees, come the mechanisms he used to create the novels *Impressions d'Afrique* [*Impressions of Africa*] and *Locus solus* [*Solitary Place*], which is barely outlined. On the horizon, where language disappears in time, his most recent texts—the plays *La Poussière de soleils* [*Motes in Sunbeams*] and *L'Étoile au front* [*Star on the Forehead*]—are mere specks. As for the poem *Nouvelles impressions*, which has retreated to the far side of the horizon, it can be identified only by what it is not. The basic geometry of this "revelation" reverses the triangle of time. By a complete revolution, the near becomes distant, as if only in the

*Originally published in *Lettre ouverte* 4 (Summer 1962), pp. 38-51, this essay is a variant of the first chapter of Foucault's *Raymond Roussel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963). The English translation of the latter has been used as a reference, but it has been extensively modified.