

**Romantic Revolution and the Psychoanalysis of Totalitarianism: A Post-Freudian Reading of Friedrich Hölderlin's *Der Tod des Empedokles*.**

**(Harald Weilnböck)**

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I

A clearly defined and useful psycho-historical concept of a totalitarian disposition both in the psychological sense and with regard to its aesthetic expression is still in great demand. The historians' debate in German academia on how to historicize Nazism, the discussions about Martin Heidegger's, Paul de Man's, Ernst Jünger's and other prominent intellectuals' involvement in National Socialist politics, the more recent phenomenon of the so-called Stasi-context literature produced by former East-German writers who spied for the secret service (notably Sascha Anderson), and, in a more historical perspective, the recurring question about the political implications of Friedrich Nietzsche's and Richard Wagner's work, like many other related issues eventually revolve around the questions: What is the relationship between culture and politics, between cultural artifacts and reactionary and/or revolutionary politics? Is there a manner in which one could reasonably speak of totalitarian aspects of an artifact? More precisely: Can one determine elements, motives, forms of interaction and modes of expression within the artistic and intellectual production of a social setting or milieu as indicating a psychological propensity or affinity of this milieu for destructive, alienating and/or totalitarian forms of life and politics, and if so, precisely where and how do they appear, and on what basis could one reliably define them?

The necessity of the attempt to find answers may seem more evident than the questions themselves. However, identifying the underlying criteria for such answers may allow us to evaluate the large number of different discourses which lay claim to certain interdependencies between cultural products and totalitarian politics. In the end, what is at stake is the very possibility of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, a newly structured

recollection and psychologically refined rewriting of the dialectics of bourgeois enlightenment, one that proceeds with careful introspection as well as quasi-therapeutic empathy and does not engage in anxious finger pointing and self-centered allocation of responsibilities, so that it may avoid turning into what it set out to fully understand and overcome. The reality of some of these strategies, however, proves *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* to be a very difficult task indeed, and the danger of engaging just another or the same *Bocksgesang* about yet another issue of German life and letters overshadows German Studies and the humanities.

In my attempt to demonstrate how the above formulated questions can be approached in a responsible and fruitful manner, I will not turn towards a psychoanalysis of individual Nazi figures' textual productions<sup>1</sup> nor will I turn to the aforementioned intellectuals. Rather, in order to achieve a both long-term and in-depth psychological understanding of what in my view are the cultural indications of an affinity for destructive rather than constructive political options within a social milieu, I will examine texts of Friedrich Hölderlin. While not depicting socio-cultural realities mimetically, the literary text contains sensitive perceptions and can provide subtle reflections about the psychodynamics and motivational forces which are at work in the socio-cultural sphere from which it emerges.

The reasons for the choice of Hölderlin's *Der Tod des Empedokles* become clearer in the process of detailed analyses of this drama which depicts a forcefully inspired and vehemently missionary and revolutionary figure who, after failing to achieve his dream about a liberated society, commits suicide. Hölderlin reception may serve as a first indication of the complexity of this oeuvre. Since the beginning of the 20th century Hölderlin was frequently cited as expressing both National Socialist and Conservative ideals as well as Communist and leftist ones, while he himself refers to the French Revolution as the essential political anchor of his writing. The French Revolution/Jacobean terror in turn is claimed as an anticipation of historical phenomena as different as Socialism, Liberalism and National Socialism. The following study seeks to

establish a basis on which one can begin to unravel these political and interpretative claims by means of psychoanalytic investigation into aesthetic productions.<sup>2</sup>

In rereading Hölderlin's drama as the artistic expression of a significant psycho-historical aspect of the environment around him, I make use of a post-Freudian understanding of narcissism and relationship dynamics. The more recent psychoanalytic theories of narcissism (H. Kohut, O. Kernberg) and object-relations (D. Fairbairn, W.D. Winnicott, J. Benjamin) as well as the experiences which have been made in practiced psychotherapy since Freud aptly provide us with an increasingly precise notion of the dynamics and conditions of socio-cultural alienation and its implications for individual suffering. Object-relations psychoanalysis rejects the notion of the primacy of sexual and aggressive drives as well as the primacy of any linguistic superstructure, although it is able to integrate the findings and experiences of both the Freudian and the Lacanian approach. Object-relations psychoanalysis gives priority to questions about how people in a given social milieu relate to each other, how they relate to material things, and to abstract entities as texts and issues of public discourse. It probes the means and styles of interaction on all possible levels (such as the physical, non-verbal and verbal), whether they are practiced in child-rearing or whether determine behavioral patterns in adult culture, and asks the question of how these styles can be historically evaluated with respect to either their enriching or detrimental effect on the liveliness, creativity, empathy, and peace of a socio-cultural milieu. In sensitively reading the various expressions of an socio-cultural milieu to search not only for overtly violent and destructive, but above all for subliminal phenomena as for example double-bind and charismatic structures of interactions and other subtle forms of possessive, abusive, and non-empathetic relationships, object-relations psychoanalysis focuses on an ideal of personal freedom through relatedness, i.e. of emancipation and demarcation which, however, is inseparably conditioned on the capacity to relate and empathetically understand each other and oneself. The inability of a social milieu to allow for a relatedness of this kind entails various modes and patterns of interaction which have been described as narcissistic in contexts of psycho-therapeutic experience. They often correlate with (self-)destructive behavior and under certain

circumstances facilitate/prompt the choice of alienating or even totalitarian forms of relationships and politics. The imaginative and artistic exploration of such choices will provide ample insight in its motivational dynamics.

Among the most pivotal of narcissistic phenomena--as they are considered to have appear in the psycho-historical contexts of real existing totalitarianism as well as they are sensitively reflected in the texts I analyze in the following--are the experiences of the self's de-realization through fusion or merger with other persons or entities. The fundamental failure of self-demarcation, as hymnically as it might express itself once transformed into motives of Romantic literature, in any real socio-historical context indicates a large cultural deficit both in individual and social emancipation and in relatedness of the self and others. Instead of establishing and maintaining clearly enough delineated and therefore all the more enriching and stable personal and object-relations, the interaction mode follows a regressive impulse to surrender to less stable and less mature forms of relating as identification and object merger. This relational mode implies the milieu's loss of a truly personal and yet related and alert mode of perception, judgment and intention. Moreover, it always also implies a strong impulse for unconditional aggressive outburst of what Kohut called "narcissistic rage" whenever the actual state of fusion appears in the least endangered. It is my main psycho-historical argument that if a propensity for narcissistic fusion and de-personalisation dominates a social milieu and thus defines its normalcy, it constitutes the socio-cultural breeding ground for forms of destructive and/or totalitarian politics.

Concretely speaking, this sort of symbiotic affinity for fusion might express itself socially in the form of mass ecstasies in large groups, in any politically and revolutionary motivated male bonding with specific like-minded individuals, in various exclusive forms of religious and/or artistic enthusiasm for a certain aesthetic *sujet* or a certain philosophical world view, be this a monotheistic, pantheistic and/or animistic world view or a particular approach to perception and art; symbiotic affinity might also express itself in pedagogic and political messianism in as much as this implies unconditional fusion with a younger generation or with a particular social formation, and most fundamentally, in what has been

defined as romantic love to another person.<sup>3</sup> In his *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse* Freud already attempted to formulate a connection between certain mechanisms of unhappy love, identification, religious sentiment and warfare.

Romantic figures like Hölderlin's Empedokles or Hyperion,<sup>4</sup> who are driven by a desire to completely lose themselves in art, religion, politics, friendships, cabals, or in romantic love, represent a literary reflection of the experience of personal de-realization through narcissistic merger and provide insight into the dynamics of the merger as well as into the process of its transformation into artistic expression. In fact, all the aforementioned different social functions and fields of interaction among themselves synaesthetically fuse, thus losing their borders and any sense of difference. Already in Hölderlin's *Hyperion* one witnesses countless invocations of the transformation of love into art, art into love and religion, religion into friendship and art, which in the end becomes war and loneliness. These social realms appear to enter and dissolve into a psycho-historically quite fateful state in which real life is experienced as the (narcissistic and) undifferentiated totality of a *progressive Universalpoesie* (Friedrich Schlegel) or a *Gesamtkunstwerk* and have completely lost touch with any alternative modes of perception and interaction since the very idea of an alternative gets lost in an all-encompassing *oneness*.

The little known obverse of this enthusiastic tendency for comprehensive and (self-)idealizing fusion with another person/entity is a heightened potential for uncontrolled (narcissistic) rage. This psycho-dynamic provides a useful explanation for why the romantic individual and its milieu are often portrayed as at the same time passionately poetic and, in an often inexorable way, belligerent. The (not only romantic) affinity towards the paradoxical perception of the self as existing in an all-pervasive and yet monadic fusion with the cosmos, with Hölderlin expresses itself philosophically as concepts of pantheism and of *All-Einheit* (all-oneness). Such concepts inspire notions and productions of art, but also potentially extend into all other realms of socio-cultural exchange and politics. Pantheistic *All-Einheit* in its generally overlooked but revealing double sense of totalized all-connectedness and profound loneliness (*Alleinheit*) effectively

represents the two most crucial and complementary aspects of the narcissistic position: Combining an imaginative and hypertrophic sense of all-connectedness with the real inability to relate to oneself and to others, this narcissistic position is artistically reflected in Hölderlin's text and can be taken to be indicative of the in the psycho-historical milieu of his time.<sup>5</sup>

Let it be noted at the outset here that the question about the psychology of totalitarian dynamics has been asked numerous times.<sup>6</sup> While most of the responses seem partially compatible with the observations culled from studies on narcissism, the psychohistorian Fred Weinstein, in his *Dynamic of Nazism*, is the first scholar who consistently applies post-Freudian diagnostic paradigms to the explanation of a totalitarian social milieu. However, his main emphasis lies on the political realm rather than on the role of culture and aesthetics while he does not at all draw from literature as a possible source of psychological and socio-historical insight.

Extending Weinstein's argument, I take the totalitarian disposition of a socio-cultural milieu to be defined as a psychological situation of heightened narcissistic instability. This milieu disposition is capable of producing and cultivating all sorts of both idealizing and aggressive effects which manifest themselves in the behavioral patterns of individuals, in the dynamic of their social formations, and in motives and phenomena of their artistic productions. Approaching a text like Hölderlin's *Empedokles* from this perspective will both generate new and different conclusions about the text and have implications for viewing certain aspects of historical forms of real existing totalitarianism which occurred more than one hundred years later and bears psycho-dynamic similarities to what is expressed in the text. Contrary to orthodox approaches, narcissism and object-relations psychoanalysis provide a sensitivity which is capable of going beyond the rather obvious indications of a violent, authoritarian and/or sadomasochist character. Nevertheless, with regard to *Empedokles* even these more obvious indications were consistently overlooked and still need to be emphasized.

Hölderlin's text and its characters display and enact quite subtle aspects of a narcissistic psychological dynamic which need to be examined in order to fully understand

an essential factor of the motivational and inspirational underpinnings of this text, with regard to both expressions of individual suffering and its implications for the collective historical situation. Empedokles's pantheistic nature enthusiasm, his concepts of cosmological and atmospheric fusion via ether (*Äther*), his religious and/or artistic zeal, his revolution-inspired male bonding with Pausanias, his pedagogic messianism and political radicalism regarding Sicily, and the romantic love relationship with Panthea have to be closely examined. In the following I attempt to show how these motives and phenomena, in the perspective of recent therapeutic discourses, can be read as literary renditions/ representations/ delineation of symptoms from a spectrum of narcissistic disorders. These phenomena express various effects of the impulse for fusion with a totality, thus catering to the need for self-aggrandizement and compensating for the threatening and anxiety-inducing lack of a stable identity. In this psychoanalytic perspective, I will read *Empedokles* as the unwitting depiction of a narcissistic dynamic within the socio-cultural milieu from which the texts emerge. I also attempt to explain from a psychoanalytic perspective why in such a milieu dynamic both individual and collective faculties of perception and memory as well as the ability to mourn are likely to be profoundly affected. The application of subtle psychoanalytical tools can help to dissolve the seeming paradox of how a literary figure like Empedokles who frees his slaves, rejects his nomination of king of Sicily and is driven by such highly humanistic and communitarian ideals can at the same time display the psychological dynamic of a highly destructive and potentially totalitarian force.

Beyond the overall analysis of behavioral and linguistic structures, the reading will give particular emphasis to phenomena and textual dynamics of visuality and acoustics. For, not only do substantial differences (between art, religion, love, friendship, politics, war etc.) fuse together in the perception of the texts' characters, but the very process of literary expression at work in Hölderlin's text to a certain degree seems both affect and reflect the dynamics of merger and loss of object demarcation. Hölderlin's text displays the tendency to synaesthetically fuse the discursive level of literary depiction with the dynamics of an intensely sensual mode of interaction which focuses both on a purely

visual and acoustic level. Thus blurring the general sense of borders and difference, this dynamic tends to dissolve the awareness of the discursiveness and particularity of specific relationships and specific acts of socio-cultural exchange. Giving much evidence of an increasing cultural preoccupation with the specular and the acoustic, Hölderlin's text appears to indicate the socio-cultural restructuring of the psychosomatic organization of the senses.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, this shift in the general mode of the self and its perspective faculties implies modifications in its object-relations which in turn are likely to affect the very relation between the author, his text and its readers, one particularly indicative albeit very complex dimension of which is the relation of the author and text to its *implied reader*. Therefore, one final perspective of analytical inquiry will be the attempt to evaluate the *implied reading process* of Hölderlin's texts. In particular I question whether one can describe the reception of Hölderlin in the 20th century as a solemn, quasi-religious, or hymnal mode in more precise object relational terms.

## II

The love relationship between Empedokles and Panthea is paradigmatic for the psychological and relational dynamic depicted in the drama as a whole as well as for a significant aspect of the socio-cultural experiences from which this text draws its inspiration. The narcissistic and symbiotic quality of Panthea's infatuation is poignantly reflected in the primal scene of the couple's relationship, long before the drama starts, which we read as an account of Panthea. Having a special rapport with the gods, Empedokles manages to heal moribund Panthea. This interaction has the pathos of a divine resurrection and reflects a typical narcissistic fantasy of the omnipotent healer. Moreover, viewed in its relational implications this scene give a perfect description of a completely symbiotic life form: "and when this wonderful man gave me the healing drink, my quarreling life melted into magical reconciliation" ("und als der Herrliche den Heiltrank mir / gereichte, da schmolz in zaubrischer Versöhnung / mir mein kämpfend Leben ineinander . . . ") (Emp.II;698).

It is not so much two lovers who meet here on equal terms, but rather a god and his female pupil. Any sense of delineation between the two figures gets melted ("schmolz") in the ecstatic merger of total identification on which the narcissist, both the one in the upper and the one in the lower position, is dependent in order to achieve a stable sense of identity and avoid the horrors of manic and depressive suffering which Empedokles expresses numerous times. Panthea exclaims: "and as I had returned to sweet sensationless childhood, I slept waking for many days and hardly needed a single breath of air" (" . . . und wie / zurückgekehrt in süße sinnenfreie / Kindheit schlief ich wachend viele Tage fort, / und kaum bedurft ich eines Othemzugs - . . . ") (EmpII;698). On an allegorical level this passage contains a psychological subtext, i.e. it is about a miraculous incidence of healing a terminal illness but at the same time it is about something other than that: it expresses the longing for a particular ideal of a romantic mode of relational existence. In so doing it idealizes a state of (un-)consciousness that consists of "sensationless" and dreamy floating between sleeping and awakening. Here, a symbiotic attachment to an outer system of psychological life-support replaces personal perception and psychosomatic sensation to the extent that Panthea almost feels able to dispense with her independent oxygen supply, (" . . . and hardly needed a single breath of air").<sup>8</sup>

This primal scene of romantic love expresses a quite intricate passion in which both individuals seem to take turns in playing the role of the god and the infant. However, in this text only the female character appears to be permitted to overtly act out the role of the infant, which will render the more controlled male counterpart all the more endangered and also dangerous. In this scene of initiation, romantic love is defined as serving the maximally asymmetrical function of saving another person's life. The romantically beloved is needed not as partner and lover in his own right but as narcissistic *self-object* (Heinz Kohut) which like a parent for a little child has the life-saving function to grant the most basic material and emotional support. The narcissistically fragile male figure in this scenario expresses the constant need of self-objects who serve as a psychological intensive care unit, in order to keep in check the suicidal weakness of his core identity. However, precisely because of its life-saving importance, Panthea, like any male or female *self-*

*object* in real life, will also induce tremendous anxiety and aggression which is the psychological reason why this text avoids any encounter between Panthea and Empedokles.

Hölderlin's earlier text, *Hyperion*, was still coping directly with the unconsciously quite threatening presence of the female figure, famous Diotima. She was partaking intensely--maybe too intensely--in the male course of events before she was finally expelled from the plot and received her melodramatic end. This was, as it were, in order not to further interfere with the solipsistic male-bonding between Hyperion and Bellarmin. At the end of the novel and after even the male bonding with any of the mail figures has failed to result in a meaningful and/or lasting relationship this fixation is projected onto an infinite future of bourgeois literary production when Hyperion closes with the phrase: "more of this next time" ("Nächstens mehr") (Hyp.II;782). Since it almost exclusively consists of Hyperion's own letters without including a single response from his totally abstract and voiceless pen-pal Bellarmin, this particular sort of bourgeois novel writing and literature production appears to fulfill the function of the narcissistic mirror itself. Literature as well as Hyperion's invisible but ever-available male German friend serve the crucial and for Hyperion indispensable function of *self-objects*, on which the romantic lover Hyperion is dependent in order to be able to face any form of close relationship with a woman, a man, or with the real object world in general.

However, any situation of prolonged narcissistic identification--be it with persons, with texts or other entities--entails a potential for aggression since the world and even the textual world of literary writing cannot possibly always comply with the idiosyncratic requests of the *mirror hungry* narcissistic personality. This potential of narcissistic rage in some sense seems more prevalent in *Hyperion*. While Empedokles commits suicide in leaping into the volcano, Hyperion views himself as a volcano which pours out boiling oil onto others (Hyp.II;596). Thus Hyperion und Empedokles appear to depict and personify the destructive and self-destructive component of an identical psycho-social disposition. Moreover, rage and narcissism seems to be encoded already in the only thing we know about Bellarmin, which is his name. Based on its Latin roots, this name can be read as

Bell(um)-Armin(ius), beautiful, belligerent German Hermann. The name signifies the primary psychological theme of the text as well as of a good part of its reception. It delineates a complex of narcissistic male beauty and (revolution) warfare, thus betraying the impulse for narcissistic mirror identification and its build-up of violence.

In this context, the female figure Diotima in *Hyperion* is bound to pose an intricate threat to the male protagonist. Therefore, she remains idealized but increasingly excluded from the interaction and finally expelled from the text. Hölderlin's later text, not surprisingly, avoids the encounter between male and female altogether. However, although Empedokles never actually meets with Panthea during the play, the female figure, again not surprisingly, in many ways textually frames the male and structures the whole text. To begin with, Panthea appears on the scene in perfect symmetrical order at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the drama. Secondly, Panthea seems to spend a good part of her day following Empedokles, secretly watching him while not daring to speak to him (Emp.II; 198; 697) and fusing with him in some sort of all-encompassing and voyeuristic admiration. From the reader and author perspective, the male figure Empedokles is provided with an imaginary safety net of perfect mirroring.

For the understanding of the ramifications that this theatrical arrangement has for the (implied) reading/ reception process it is crucial to keep in mind that the entire constellation is a male literary fantasy by a male author, reflecting the need for total and permanent mirroring through a mother-like, absolutely reliable, self-object. The fact that the author and the reader/audience are aware that Panthea is watching but Empedokles as a figure is not, turns this scenario into a perfect narcissistic set-up between the author, the implied male reader/audience, and the male protagonist of the text: Following an almost religious structure of the guardian angel, the author suggests to the reader that he and Empedokles, without even being aware of it and without needing to be aware of it, are followed and guarded by a quasi transcendental parental figure. In so doing, the author suggests a narcissistic autarky which is a circular concept to an extent since he gave Empedokles the grandiose power to save the life of Panthea who now guards him perfectly. What is more, through this arrangement, the figure Empedokles is saved from

having to deal with the profound ambivalence that would surface if Panthea were to really enter the scene and initiate a true relationship. The implied reader and the (implied) author, on the other hand, identify with this situation of perfect mirroring while they are safely situated in front of a literary fiction and thus do not have to deal with any concrete ambivalence either. This mirror transference between male protagonist and the male reader/author of the text in its relational structure reflects the male-bonding couples who are so frequent in Hölderlin's texts and in romantic literature in general. Empedokles deals with Pausanias, as the implied reader deals with the text, and as Hyperion deals with Bellarmin, Adamas, and Alabanda, who at the end of this story are finally replaced by the production of literature itself--by the unending text of Hyperion's own letters. The reader/author has it both ways: While reading and following the Empedokles figure he becomes Empedokles's shadow just like the Panthea figure concretely is, and while identifying with Empedokles he at the same time can feel and relish the female shadow following him as he reads. This guarding self-object shadow for the reader is represented by a female literary figure and results from a particular manner of reading literature which because of its identification dynamics could be called *mirror reading*.

Being in the shadow and being the entity which provides it at the same time, the romantic reader of this text is granted the illusory and narcissistic position of the "Stolzgenügsame" ("the proudly (self-)sufficient") (Emp.II;757). This is how Pausanias perceives his master letting himself be fooled about the tremendous fragility of suicidal Empedokles who he adores as a heavenly figure. The reader in turn is set up to be fooled about his position vis-à-vis the text. While the reader appreciates the text and still might imagine himself to be in a position of relative independence and demarcation from it, the text imposes a relatively strong urge for identification with the male protagonist. The reader is in fact left little space: He is won over by the monolithic perspective and monologuous structure of the drama as well as by the hypnotic force of Hölderlin's poetic language; the reader is won over in as much as he represents the type of reader that the cultural milieu has produced alongside with the author. The quasi-institutionalized factor, which is silently presupposed and taken for granted in this particular psycho-social

mechanism of literary interaction, is the factor of the watching or reading person who is ready for identification. It is this very performance of writing and reading-watching that the implied male reader (and author), while engaging in it, distances from himself and projects onto the female figure Panthea who indeed follows and watches Empedokles while telling his story and the his-story of Sicily. As a reference point for the reader/audience, Panthea represents the allegory of the reliable and obedient reader just as she represents the perfectly adjusted and totally available self-object on the level of the fictional interaction on stage.

One other detail about Panthea's (re-)birth highlights the particular passivity in the dynamics of (male) narcissistic perception which here is projected on a female figure: "In youthful curiosity my eyes were unfolded through the day, and there he stood, Empedokles, oh, so divine and so present; in the smiling of his eyes my life reawakened" (" . . . mein / Auge sich in jugendlicher Neugier dem Tag er- / schloß, da stand er, Empedokles! o wie göttlich / und wie gegenwärtig mir! am Lächeln seiner Augen/ blühte mir das Leben wieder auf") (Emp.II;698). It is not really Panthea who sees and looks at the world, but instead it is the day which activates and feeds into her passive gaze: her "eyes *were* unfolded through the day"<sup>9</sup> (my emphasis).

Moreover, it turns out that within the narcissistic bind nothing is perceptible except what is reflected in the smile of another eye. This, indeed, seems to be one of the primal literary scenes not only of Lacan's concept of the mirror stage but also of Heinz Kohut's notion of the *mirror transference* during the treatment of narcissistic disorders. Within the *mirror transference*, the world is perceived and accepted only in as much as it acts as an absolutely reliable onlooker for the actions of the protagonist, just like Panthea functions as onlooker for Empedokles. Everything else creates anxiety and fierce anger and is vehemently rejected or annihilated. Panthea's speech is crowned by the phrase: "and then I was the most tender reflection of his" (" . . . und ich war der zarte / Widerschein von ihm") (Emp.II;698). In the psycho-historical setting of a narcissistic milieu, people tend to act as if they were tender reflections of one another. If one adds to this the simultaneous build-up of narcissistic rage, which according to Kohut inevitably occurs whenever the real

world is not able or does not want to act like a reflection, one gets a quite explosive socio-cultural climate where one only suspected romanticism.

The Empedokles figure shows this rage only in one single unguarded moment: when the people of Sicily decide to turn away from him. What is generally disregarded or held to be an expression of a proper citizen's justified anger bears every sign of a fit of narcissistic rage that is by definition (Kohut, "Thoughts on . . .") limitless and unconditionally aimed at total annihilation of its cause: "You may perish, you nameless folks, die a slow death, and because there always are wolves where there are corpses there will be one for you which will suck your blood and cleanse Sicily of you; may this country dry out and turn into desert" (" . . . - ha geht / Nun immerhin zu Grund, ihr Namenlosen! / Sterbt langsamen Tods, und euch geleite / Des Priesters Rabengesang! und weil sich Wölfe / Versammeln da, wo Leichname sind, so finde sich / Dann einer auch für euch; der sättige / von eurem Blut sich, der reinige / Sicilien von euch; es stehe dürr / das Land . . . ") (Emp.II;718). This does not sound quite as romantic as the tender love romance and yet is its immediate flip side. The tender esoteric philosopher of nature and homeopathic medicine for one furious second displays a monstrous rage--anticipating the stereotypically modern pattern of Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde, or, if you will, the dialectic of enlightenment that Adorno and Horkheimer see as the center of totalitarianism.

Walter Sokel, a Thomas Mann scholar, wrote about a similar passage in *Death in Venice*, a text which is situated shortly before the first World War. Sokel draws a parallel to a passage from Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Thomas Mann: ". . . that curse and death should do away with all the disturbing life around so that he alone could stay with the beautiful boy on the island" (my translation) ("als könne Fluch und Tod alles störende Leben in der Runde entfernen und er allein mit dem Schönen auf dieser Insel zurückbleiben") (576). Following Sokel's argument, this doing away with all the life of the world is, indeed, quite close to what Hitler envisioned in case the Aryan revolution failed as he then expected the globe "to fly through space again like it did millions of years ago, totally deserted and devoid of any population" ("wieder wie einst vor Jahrmillionen menschenleer duch den Äther ziehn") (Hitler in Sokel 410). Coincidentally or not, when Hitler speaks of space he

uses Hölderlin's favorite term *Äther*. In the dramatic set-up of Hölderlin's *Empedokles* the annihilation fantasy includes a wolf who is supposed to do away with all signs of life in Sicily because a borderlining, i.e. near-psychotic, revolutionary figure was disappointed and rejected by whom he fancied to be his people, i.e. the people of and for his mission.

This remains Empedokles's only outburst of uncontrolled rage. Moreover, it seems that this passage is directly motivated by an emotional outburst of the author himself rather than by a consciously applied aesthetic maneuver. Hölderlin later decided to omit it and the way he does this still reflects his original emotion of rage and the urge to repress it: On the margin of the first version of the drama one finds the comment: "No curse! He must love, *ad infinitum* and then die . . . he must drain out any sense . . . of reconciliation" ("Kein Fluch! er muß lieben, bis ans Unendliche hin . . . er muß den Rest an Versöhnungskraft . . . gleichsam aufzehren") (Emp.II;597). This is, indeed, a strange form of love and social affection since its paradoxical function is to destroy all potential for reconciliation, just like the love between Empedokles and Panthea forecloses any true relationship. The narcissistic rage which was allowed to express itself for one moment is effectively retracted and carefully controlled and denied throughout the rest of the text and will eventually build the inspiration for the suicide of the text's protagonist. But even the self-censored version of *Empedokles* gives one ample reason to wonder: what are the less conscious motivations which this romantic wise man, esoteric priest, and medical miracle worker is drawing from when he makes the seemingly heroic decision to sacrifice his life for what he perceives to promote a humanist and socialist cause? It is no coincidence that at the outset of the drama we find him caught up in what is usually perceived as a quite legitimate and even honorable romantic distress. In clinical terms, this distress is nothing other than a severe attack of depression that is bound to follow each of his manic phases in which he feels himself to be the center and the *leader* of his mass gatherings. Empedokles inescapably wavers between manic grandiosity and suicidal depression. He is grandiose as revolutionary leader and as miracle healer. But when he falls back into depression, which quite tellingly already occurs *before* the people of Sicily turn against him, he literally goes to (psychic) pieces and, in order to avoid the ultimate fragmentation of the self into

psychosis, he in the end is compelled to take refuge in suicide. What is generally held to be the most heroic and selfless sacrifice in the name of social-democracy turns out under closer examination to follow a tragic dynamics of manic depression and suicide.

Moreover the sacrifice turns out to be the most subtle imposition of power because, through his Christ-like death, Empedokles does nothing less than inscribe himself as the god of the future paradise of Sicily that he so generously predicts: "If the happy days of Saturn then arrive, think of previous times and find the warmth with the genius of the fathers' tales [i.e. the tale about Empedokles]; and then the golden cloud of sadness and memory be all around your happiness" ("Wenn dann die glücklichen Saturnustage / Die neuen männlichern gekommen sind, / Dann denkt vergangener Zeit, dann leb erwärmt / Am Genius der Väter Sage wieder! . . . Und mit der goldnen Trauerwolke lagre/ Erinnerung sich!, ihr Freudigen! um euch.-") (Emp.II;746). It proves the intricacy of repetition compulsion that, while Empedokles attempted to declare himself a god--unsuccessfully, as a result of personal rather than of political reasons--, he still attempts to establish himself as god-like "genius of the fathers' tales" upon his suicidal departure. Unfortunately for the Sicilians, in evoking the "cloud of sadness," this move, on top of subtly imposing power over them, is paradoxically designed to spoil the pleasure it promises.

Moreover, the careful combination of lukewarm happiness and mellow tears which Empedokles suggests is far from anything that could be considered the grief work or mourning which would be expected and necessary in such a moment of radical departure from a leader and from a political system. Instead, Empedokles formulates a cultural ideal of melancholia and positions himself as its central myth and god, thus thwarting the liberating processes of demarcation and mourning (Mitscherlich). Psychoanalytically, melancholia also takes on the function of a narcissistic surrogate for the impaired capacity to sustain memory, in particular, the memory representing experiences that most essentially pertain to the (impaired) formation of the core identity. On yet another level, melancholia poses as surrogate for a historical consciousness that is coherent in the face of

more than just a selection of facts and remains flexible and viable *vis-à-vis* changing aspects of reality.

To refer to the most notorious personification of the inability to mourn according to Mitscherlich's definition, an utterance of Hitler resembles Empedokles's statement. Hitler was determined "to keep [my] power over the people after I have passed away. [After my death] I shall be the leader they look up to; they shall then go home and speak about him and remember him. My life is not going to end in the mere form of death. It will, on the contrary, really start at this point" (Hitler in Waites 20). Both the literary and the historical figure exhibit signs of a severe narcissistic disorder and a near-psychotic borderline syndrome, and they therefore are not able to grasp the concept of death in any realistic and constructive manner. Both paradoxically imagine their ultimate empowerment through death. In going beyond "the mere form of death" and becoming the "Väter Sage" (Emp.II;746), they fantasize a posthumous transformation into myth, thus covering over intensely threatening memories of their (personal) past and the fundamental fear of death that is deeply buried under this counter-phobic fantasies.

Before I turn to Empedokles's alleged legacy of democratic emancipation, let me for a moment go back to the issue of narcissistic mirror transference and the text's obsession with the specular. We first found this issue with the gaze of Panthea, the epitome of the onlooker. In fact, the text starts out with a dialogue between Panthea and her girlfriend Delia which is really about vision: Panthea asks, "have you never seen him?" ("du / hast ihn nie gesehen?") (Emp.II;197), and when Delia hesitantly and quite discursively asks for the person's name, and then even more discursively recounts the history of his deeds, Panthea insists somewhat hysterically on her mode of vision: "You must see him now! . . .and you must see him yourself, only for one moment", and moment in German is *Augenblick*, the time span of one glance of the eye ("Du mußt ihn jetzt sehn! jetzt! . . .du muß ihn selbst sehn! / einen Augenblick").

Panthea continues: "I personally avoid getting closer, for an all-transforming being is in him" (" . . . ich meid ihn selbst - / ein furchtbar allverwandelnd Wesen ist in ihm") (Emp.II;198). Each contact with the object that surpasses the merely visual realm is such a

threat to the stability of the psyche that Panthea is forced to run away. When Delia, the puzzled foreigner, finally insists, "have you also spoken with him already, Panthea?" ("Hast du mit ihm auch schon / Gesprochen, Panthea?") (EmpII;199), Panthea hastily affirms but then recounts as evidence the event when Empedokles cured her. However, as I demonstrated earlier, in this event nothing in the form of a truly delineated and discursive interaction took place since both participants engaged in a spectacle of visual mirror transference while regressing to the functions of each other's "tender reflection" ("zarter Widerschein") (Emp.II;698).

Empedokles himself reveals a special form of the specular obsession. It is curious that the gods to whom he is constantly referring do not really have anything anthropomorphic about them. They are addressed as "holy light" ("heiliges Licht"), the very medium of the visual, the "holy day" (heiliger Tag), and the famous *Äther*, the quasi atmospheric medium that encompasses and enlightens the entire cosmological space (Emp.II;705). Naturally, the symbiotic relationship with the light is a quite asymmetrical one and lacks any emancipatory potential: "I cling to you, holy light, like a plant and follow you blindly" ("Hieng, wie die Pflanze dir mich anvertrauend, / In frommer Lust dir lange blindlings nach . . . ") (EmpII;705). The follower of the light is really blind ("blindlinks") and completely immobile, firmly rooted and caught in (mother-) earth. I wonder whether this *bright blindness* might not be Hölderlin's ultimate and yet unwitting comment on enlightenment itself, akin to Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

The political implications of this symbiotic secularization become quite apparent if one considers that during his manic phases Empedokles is, of course, not a plant anymore, but becomes the sun itself. His pupil Pausanias exclaims: "and your sublime light falls upon every single piece so that everyone bears your spirit's color" (" . . . der holde Schein / Von dir auf jedes eigen überstrahlt, / Daß alle deines Geistes Farbe tragen") (Emp.II;708)-- a rather totalitarian and a quite burning sun. In the end, Empedokles is burning himself in the volcano, however not without at least imagining a global, all-engulfing outbreak of this volcano.

The motif and fantasy of burning the body and the skin is quite recurrent with Hölderlin. It is more than just a random phenomenon of temporary hysteria. It reveals the particularly physical component of the narcissistic and visual syndrome and will allow us to draw some conclusions about the long-term reorganization of enlightenment's psychosomatic body. Empedokles talks about tender touch when he actually thinks about burning himself: "When the glowing fires gush from the depth of the earth, oh then the all-transforming spirit, ether, touches us tenderly" ("... indeß herauf / Der Erde Glut aus Bergestiefen quillt / Und zärtlich rührt der Allbewegende, / Der Geist, der Äther uns an, o dann!") (Emp.II;735). Hyperion, on the other hand, talks about being the volcano himself which sprays boiling oil onto others (Hyp.II;596). At the same time, Hyperion contrasts this image with the fantasy of being a slave who is wiped by his oppressors. On the sub-textual level of this politically motivated fantasy a hysterized need for skin stimulation appears to express itself.

With the help of Wilhelm Reich, this can be understood as an indication of a "masochist milieu," which is how Reich defines the psychology of fascism (*Charakteranalyse* 305). In terms of object-relations psychoanalysis, this impulse for the stimulation of the skin as the body's border indicates a frantic psychosomatic need to affirm a secure and viable border of the self. Heinz Kohut attributes this disproportional and potentially self-destructive need for physical stimulation to fundamental deficiencies in terms of a truly empathetic body and mind interaction from childhood on (Kohut, *Narzißmus* . . . 172). This need for stimulation gets all the more intense and suicidal the more threatened the psychic self feels. It can paradoxically result in the leap into a volcano, which in self-psychological terms equals the ultimate reconfirmation and dissolution of the borders of the self.

With respect to the division of senses, the realm of skin and touch can be viewed to represent the opposite of the realm of visuality, since the immediate touch is exactly what the gaze cannot or is afraid to achieve and which it therefore replaces anxiously by the image. Within the narcissistic disposition of the modern milieu, most poignantly anticipated in Hölderlin, the overheated skin and the over-stimulated eye go rampant in

their respective domain because they, in the most literal sense, have lost touch with each other and the whole of the self. *Empedokles's* subtext sensitively lends expression to both aspects and contains indications of their possible political ramifications. With regard to the philosophical discussion of the senses in the 18th century it not coincidentally emphasizes the very question whether touch or sight is the most important and most basic of the senses (Utz 19-39) not realizing that what drives this discussion is the fact that the cultural milieu on the whole increasingly loses the successful psychosomatic integration of the senses and the self.

Moreover, the dissociation of the human senses appears to be characterized not only by increased specularization and need for somatic stimulation. In addition an implosion of sorts also takes place on the acoustic level of communication. Words tend to dissolve into sounds. Rather than carrying any discursive meaning, they operate solely on the acoustic level, which registers the tone of a person's voice as quasi-musical. Empedokles exclaims: "Don't you know the voice of the gods? Even before I learned to listen to the parents' language, through my first breath and through my first glance, I already took in this voice and I have always regarded it much higher than the human word" ("Kennt ihr der Götter *Stimme* nicht? Noch eh' / Als ich der Eltern Sprache lauschend lern', / Im ersten Othemzug, im ersten *Blick*/ vernahm ich jene schon und immer hab' / Ich höher sie, denn Menschenwort geachtet") (my emphasis; Emp.II;747).

Already for Panthea it was less the content of the master's words than the tone of his voice which cast the spell over her: "This tone from his bosom! In each syllable all melodies resounded. . .at his feet I want to sit for hours, as his pupil and his child glance into his ether and in jubilee sing up to him" ("Der Ton aus seiner Brust! In jede Silbe / klangen alle Melodien! . . . -zu seinen Füßen / möcht ich sitzen, stundenlang, als seine Schülerin, / sein Kind, in seinen Äther schau'n, und / zu ihm auf frohlocken") (Emp.II;699). The narcissistic merger with the other via acoustic resonance relates to the other/object like the musician relates to the sounding board of her/his instrument. Hölderlin himself, in his *Über den Unterschied der Dichtarten* creates an entire poetology on a theory of sounds. His notion of the change of tones systematizes all forms of literary expression as a

combination of three different *Grundtöne*, basic tones, with the secondary tone of the *Kunstcharakter*. Since in *Empedokles* it does not seem to be considered important to mention anything about what the protagonist actually says in his speeches to the mass gatherings he initiates, we are left with the assumption that the non-verbal and acoustic (i.e. charismatic) was the domineering aspect of these semi-religious and semi-political events.

It is now time to raise the question of what Empedokles's so-called democratic legacy is about and how it relates to what has been said so far. To begin with, his speech seems to continue and expand on the melancholic impulse, in which he placed himself as the center of his own paradisiacal myth about future Sicily:

Then, oh you cheerful *geniuses of the wandering nature* who take from the depths and heights the bliss and bring it from far and foreign areas to the *most limited mortals* just like you bring pain and joy and sun and rain, then you will be invited by *the free people* in the most devoted and hospitable way because the mortal being loves to give from his best if slavery does not oppress him" (my italics)

("Dann o ihr *Genien der wandelnden / Natur!* dann ladet euch, ihr heiteren, / Die ihr aus Tiefen und aus Höhen die Freude nimmt / Und sie wie Müh und Glück und Sonnenschein und Reegen / *Den engbeschränkten Sterblichen* ans Herz / Aus ferner fremder Welt herbeibringt, / Das freie Volk zu seinen Festen ein, / Gastfreundlich! fromm! denn liebend gibt / *Der Sterbliche* vom Besten, schließt und engt / den Busen ihm die Knechtschaft nicht -") (my emphasis; Emp.II;745).

On the level of denotative meaning, this closing sentence of Empedokles's legacy states that the free people in the moment of their arrival in utopia will invite the geniuses or gods to its celebrations and give generous presents to them. However, the grammatical references in this highly over-determined sentence are quite obscure and ambiguous. It is not clear whether or to what extent the "free people" should be identified with the "most limited mortals" and/or with the "geniuses". Under closer examination, the profound ambiguity of this sentence reveals some hidden connotations as well as political

implications. First of all, there is a striking subject-object inversion over the long distance of six lines which, in a quite scrupulous manner, suggests an identity between the free people of Sicily and the divines geniuses. The caution with which this is done has the same psychological reason as Empedokles's profound hesitation to declare himself equal with the gods he adores (and thus emancipate himself). His only attempt to do so threw him into the total depression in which one finds him at the outset of the drama.

Albeit very carefully, through this inversion Empedokles is able to suggest this equality. He can do so only on account of the brief phase of suicidal mania which he experiences before he climbs the volcano and in which he imagines his Christ-like sacrifice and rebirth. In this moment of mania, the people of Sicily with whom he psychologically merged in complete identificatory fusion is automatically elevated to the rank of the "free people" in a superior and god-like position. However, within a narcissistic and therefore always also binary frame of mind, this grandiose projection is bound to create the concept of its opposite, which is the "most limited mortals." The mortals do not seem to have any clear referent but rather appear to be a projection of Empedokles's own emotional situation during a depressive phase which he now momentarily surpasses by an outburst of mania. When the Sicilians reject Empedokles, they suddenly appear mortal to him; this abrupt shift in perception activates his aggression and his unconscious fear of death which is why the Sicilians suddenly appear despicable to him. Once they again decide to follow him, they are instantly elevated to the rank of the "free people" who then, just like Empedokles himself, appear to be almost god-like.

Being totally occupied with the narcissistic predicament of not knowing what is self and other, Empedokles is entirely incapable of having any realistic notion of real existing power, poverty, and enslavement and is not really able to provide help or assistance of any sort. In order to keep up his fragile stability, Empedokles needs to possess the people as parts of himself, as self-object, and feels a tremendous but very ephemeral impulse to save them which, however, only reflects his own psychic predicament and does not at all refer to a real political issue in any concrete sense. Even in the brief moment of the narcissistic fulfillment, the concept of the "mortals" is by no means dissolved. It becomes available as

place-holder for any people other than the Sicilians. While the Sicilians are "free," these other "peoples" are perceived as less free and, therefore, as "most limited mortals" who are deserving of the Sicilians help. What is really going on here, on the level of subtext, is the ennoblement of what Empedokles perceives to be his own people as a privileged people, or master race, before all other people. Granted, this projected master people is supposed to mean well and is willing to give away any help and advice in an evidently socialist manner, but this is how all sorts of master people/entities of the somewhat hysterical history of the bourgeois enlightenment age felt.

In Hölderlin's poem *Germanien*, this tender imposition and subtle messianism appears with more clarity. Rather than a country, Germania is the "priestess, the silent daughter of God" ("Die Priesterin, die stille Tochter Gottes")(Lied. I;273) who is carrying the burden of a "heavy fortune" ("schweres Glück"). As in *Empedokles*, the poem closes with the fulfillment of the utopian dream: "And in these holidays / Germania, you shall be the priestess who without resistance gives advice around to all the kings and peoples" ("Bei den Feiertagen / Germania, wo du Priesterin bist / Und wehrlos Rat gibst rings / Den Königen und den Völkern") (Lied. I;273).

The intention seems very laudable and peaceful. However, one once again wonders what would happen if Germania's or Sicily's advice does not meet with appreciation. One wonders whether Empedokles's wolf of narcissistic revenge would not break out of his peaceful herbal garden again, as he already did once in Hölderlin's text before the author censored this passage. Fantasies about deserted globes or similar entities floating through a lifeless *Äther* could be instantaneously activated again as one reads in the above quoted texts by Adolf Hitler and Thomas Mann as well as in *Empedokles*. Empedokles's resignation speech is really not about emancipation and socialism at least not in any naive sense of the word, as post-war German literary criticism of all sorts would have it, but about the most subtle aspect of a totalitarian approach to power. It is about the desire to achieve personal healing and cultural liberation which, however, fails and betrays its incapacity to find appropriate means as well as its fundamental "Escape from Freedom" (Fromm). What Empedokles does here really is attempting to hand down the legacy of his

personal narcissism to history and to who he claims to be his people in the founding act of a newly and differently narcissistic master race.

With this in mind, it does not come as a surprise that Martin Heidegger would take the poem *Germanien* as the point of departure for his Hölderlin lectures in 1934. With Heidegger, the concept of the free people of Germany is mystically and appreciatively labeled *Gemeinschaft* (community), which he views as strictly opposed to the alienated and alienating *Gesellschaft* (society): ". . .the community *is* through the a priori bond of *each individual* with that which in an elevating manner binds and determines every individual" ("Die Gemeinschaft ist durch die vorgängige Bindung *jedes Einzelnen* an das, was jeden Einzelnen überhöhend bindet und bestimmt") (72). This is a quite circular thought which presumably is inspired by a sensation of narcissistic fusion in a *community* quite similar to the one depicted in Hölderlin's text and put into opposition to the (Hermokratian) sobriety of a mundane and also "mortal" *society*. In Heidegger, the purest and most concrete way this community establishes itself is the "comradeship of the front soldiers" ("Kameradschaft der Frontsoldaten") (73). The comrades are in an elevating manner bound and determined through "the proximity of death [which] as a sacrifice puts everyone into the same nothingness, so that this would be the spring well of unconditional mutuality" (" . . . [weil] die Nähe des Todes als eines Opfers jeden zuvor in die gleiche Nichtigkeit stellte, so daß dies die Quelle des unbedingten Zueinandergehörens wurde") (73).

The close reading of Hölderlin's *Empedokles* demonstrated a certain resonance with this line of thought. Gemeinschaft resembles the "geniuses of the wandering nature" and *Gesellschaft* the "most limited mortals" both of which are blurry and emotionally charged projections which Empedokles in turns imposes on exactly the same social scene, the people of Sicily. One could wonder whether Hölderlin really would have minded this appropriation through Heidegger as a misunderstanding or abuse of his poetry for a more concretely political and revolutionary agenda, in particular, in light of his enthusiasm for the French Revolution; this, of course, is a question of a merely heuristic stature to which any definite answer would be as impossible as uninteresting. The figure Hyperion, for his

part, seemed to appreciate the sense of a "community of front soldiers" so much that he ran from beloved Diotima and initiates a war. Empedokles appreciates the "proximity of death" even more radically and without blinking an eye leaps into the volcano. At the heart of Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin lies the fascination with the artistic expression of a narcissistic cultural milieu, which with Heidegger at least to a certain degree seems to have entailed a fascination for what Susan Sontag called *fascinating fascism* and which I would call *narcissistic Nazism*.

Germania's or Empedokles's violently enlightened and narcissistic hysteria of knowing it all better and cracking down on everyone who does not want to know sounds so familiar. Hölderlin left us texts from which we could have learned much about the dark side of modernity. Yet this legacy has not been recognized as such, neither by the student revolution nor by the highly theoretical discourse analysis nor by the environmentalist movement, let alone by traditional Hölderlin scholarship. Why is this? Maybe neither the legacy of the French Revolution and 20th century totalitarianisms nor the dynamics of the real existing democracy of our days has yet been sufficiently understood by literary critics, and the postmodern version of Empedokles is yet to come.

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### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> This would be one option, especially since Hitler, Goebbels, Himmler and others were quite prolific writers of sorts.

<sup>2</sup> A brief sketch of Hölderlin's reception throughout the 20th century helps to delineate the political scope of these questions about *Empedokles*. Hölderlin was not just one among many German romantics. Anxiously avoided and neglected in his own days, Hölderlin became one, if not the major saint of the scholarly *Germanistik* in the early 20th century. He profoundly influenced philosophers as different as Martin Heidegger, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor Adorno, all of whom held him in great esteem. Notwithstanding the philosophical and humanist interest in Hölderlin, the first edition was prepared by Norbert von Hellingrath, an enthusiastic nationalist and front officer of the first World War, and another completely new edition, the *Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, was produced only in 1943 under the auspices of Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, in spite of major war-related difficulties. The Hölderlin society was founded the same year, and the Nazi party initiated and took part in celebrations of Hölderlin's hundredth birthday or commemorations of his death, putting Hitler's wreath on Hölderlin's grave (Zeller 95). While thousands of World War II soldiers were carrying a special front edition of Hölderlin's poetry and prose with them (Zeller 300), exiled German intellectuals as for instance Bert Brecht used Hölderlin's revolutionary enthusiasm to call for resistance against the Nazi regime (Albert, "Hölderlin im Exil"). During the *Adenauerzeit* of post-war Germany a less (overtly) politically and more humanistic interest resurfaced. In the wake of the 1968 student revolution, and much to the surprise and unease of the traditional academic *Germanistik* of the time, Hölderlin was newly edited and discovered to have been a vehement sympathiser of the French Revolution. He and especially his *Empedokles* were held to be the ultimate heroes of democratic emancipation without any attempt to account for the right wing and Nazi appreciation of Hölderlin. In a similar way, the literary and intellectual resistance in the former GDR appreciated the revolutionary impetus in Hölderlin's writing and an author like Wolf Biermann was particularly fond of Hölderlin and quotes him in his protest song lyrics. In the context of the so-called anti-psychiatry movement of the seventies and early eighties, Hölderlin was seen as the saintly insane who supposedly was much less crazy than the pathogenic environment around him. Schizophrenia was viewed quite romantically as something of a relic of lost true humanness--a view that still resonates with much of post-structuralist theory. Along these lines, some of discourse analysis, still failing to achieve a truly post-romantic position, declared Hölderlin to be the hero of the anti-discourse who would undermine, or at least aspire to undermine the alienation of the all-pervasive hegemonic discourse (J. Link; less so J.Hörisch). The environmental movement appreciated Hölderlin's emphasis on poetic and often mystical depiction of nature. Without necessarily identifying any of these readings as indicating an affinity of its the socio-cultural environment for totalitarian forms of life and politics, but also without just pleading yet another case of complete *misunderstanding* between a fine German poet and his vulgar readers from various political affiliations, the question is: what is the psychological nature of these enthusiastic readings? Which psycho-historical dispositions are at work and what can we learn about this from reading Hölderlin's texts closely and empathically?

<sup>3</sup> With the degree of caution and hesitation which is still characteristic of Hölderlin studies in Germany, Jürgen Wertheimer most recently pointed out the "asoziale Solidarität,"

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“elitäre Selbstexklusion,” and “eine Art . . . spiritueller Selbsterhöhung” of Hypeiron, Diotima, and Alabanda hinting at an inner connection to the vehemently aggressive “Fluchrede and die Deutschen” which appears in *Hyperion*.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Shapiro in a very insightful way has applied narcissism theories to the texts of English Romantics and, among other aspects, analysed the aggressive dynamic of the revolutionary impulse (xi).

<sup>5</sup> The noted socio-cultural and/or aesthetic affects of fusion and dissolution of differentiation, whether appearing in the romantic or classical context, continue to be a preponderant intellectual and artistic issue long after Hölderlin. Authors as different as Thomas Mann, Theodor W. Adorno, Martin Heidegger, Stefan George and Walter Benjamin to name only a few among many other European intellectuals represent a turn-of-the-century tendency which, in drawing either directly from Hölderlin or from other sources within the romantic and classical tradition of motives of inter-subjective fusion, in however modified ways, sensitively expresses the intensification of an increasingly destabilized and violence-prone socio-cultural milieu.

<sup>6</sup>While Freud's thinking about civilization's destructiveness finally ended in the deadlock of the ontological death drive, his views on the dynamic within religious and military groups (Freud "Massenpsychologie . . .") came quite close to what Kohut defined as narcissistic disorder. In putting his thoughts about mass-formation and the military into the context of the identification dilemma of a person depressed over unrequited love, Freud already explored a way to integrate individual psychology and macro-politics. According to Hughes, it is at this point of Freud's psychological thinking that he involuntarily begins to speak about the vicissitudes of *object attachments* rather than about drives and Oedipal struggles (57). Freud failed, however, to continue on this path and examine the possible historical implications of his observations, instead regressing towards ontological constructs. Reich, in an interesting way, is more psychosomatically oriented and conceives of fascism as a masochistic body armor of the individual against a free psychosomatic flow of sensations and emotions.

Alexander Mitscherlich follows Freud along a more socio-psychological part when he makes the monocausal claim that the *fatherless society* was the reason for Germany's susceptibility for fascism. Owing to Mitscherlich, Erik Erikson foregrounds a certain pattern of German fatherhood which, with its unfortunate combination of absence, powerlessness, and authoritarian brutality, generates the particular environment of "German *Pubertät*" (332) and thus represents the psycho-historical roots of Nazism. For all the interesting aspects that the empirical part of Adorno's work on the authoritarian personality contains, he nevertheless also remains deeply entrenched in Freudian Oedipalism. With respect to psychoanalytic theory, he does not advance beyond rather orthodox concepts of sadomasochism and anality. Klaus Theweleit examines *Landserliterature* and thus extends his analysis to the domain of cultural and literary expression. Unfortunately, following a wildly eclectic methodology, Theweleit draws from all sorts of (psychoanalytic) approaches and presents a rather impressionistic patchwork of theoretical references. Much of the psychological theorizing about Nazism/totalitarianism presents Freudian arguments about either the violent and alienating father or about the father's flipside: the double-binding and falsely symbiotic mother (C. Lasch; J. Chaseguet-

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Smirgel). It is feminist psychoanalysis which hints at a reconciliation of this binary argument, stressing once again the usefulness of post-Freudian approaches (J. Benjamin).

<sup>7</sup> Peter Utz and Otto Kleinspehn have done extensive work on the dynamic of the visual in 18th century literature. Weilnböck provided an analysis of the psycho-dynamics of the hyper-visual in Hölderlin's *Hyperion*.

Narcissistic visual regression is already being discussed in the context of the fascism debate. In film philology, it is Thomas Elsaesser who in his work on Rainer Werner Fassbinder develops his fascism formula *to be is to be seen* (50). In his work on Leni Riefenstahl and Ernst Jünger, Russell Berman defines fascist aesthetics (of art and everyday life) as "privileging of sight and visual representation" (100) before all discursive modes of communication. Fredric Jameson described the privileging of sight as the new division of labor in the body of the capital and takes this as the onset of post-modern forms of alienation (67). Paul Virilio, the philosopher of speed and war, writes a book with the title *The Seeing Machine*.

<sup>8</sup> In one of his psychoanalytic case studies, Winnicott gave a wonderful description of this particular and troubled frame of mind where a person lives in a state of "fantasying" between sleep and wakeness (54). This case can be read as a paradigmatic albeit extreme vignette of this aspect of romantic consciousness.

<sup>9</sup> The particular position of the verb *er - schloß* at a line break causes the word division, thus posing a temptation to engage in a Lacanian pun, since in this form the verb encodes both the opening and the shut-down (*schloß*) of the eye and of perception, thus indicating that the narcissistic (and passive) eye-opening into infatuation and mass hysteria really precludes any form of attentive and flexible perception of the object world.