

**“The eloquence of something that
has no language”:**

Adorno on Hölderlin’s Late Poetry

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Abstract

This article focuses on the importance of Hölderlin for Adorno’s comprehension of the art–nature relationship. Adorno’s most detailed discussion of Hölderlin appears in the essay, “Parataxis: On Hölderlin’s Late Poetry.” Adorno has been accused of projecting his own philosophical beliefs on Hölderlin. However, I will show that there is valid support in Hölderlin’s poetry as well as in his philosophical and poetological writings to reinforce Adorno’s claim that Hölderlin’s late poetry is striving to give voice to what is traditionally thought to be art’s opposite: nature. The ability of art to mediate nature, and specifically natural beauty, is also of central importance in Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory*, and many of the claims of the “Parataxis” essay re-emerge in this later work.

Keywords

Theodor W. Adorno; Friedrich Hölderlin; poetry and philosophy; art; aesthetics; *Aesthetic Theory*; nature

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I. Introduction

ADORNO's most elaborate analysis of Hölderlin appears in the essay "Parataxis: On Hölderlin's Late Poetry," first published in *Die Neue Rundschau* in 1964 and later in *Notes to Literature*.¹ I want to make clear from the outset that my focus here is not Adorno's critique of Heidegger, but instead on another central aspect of Adorno's Hölderlin-interpretation, namely his contributions on the art-nature relation.² As a consequence of this primary focus, I will examine the issue of parataxis solely in connection to this

¹ See Theodor W. Adorno, "Parataxis: On Hölderlin's Late Poetry," in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 2, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), xii ("Editorial Remarks"); "Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins," in *Noten zur Literatur* (1958–74), *Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 11, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003, hereafter *GS*), 699 ("Editorische Nachbemerkung"). The essay is a revised version of a paper originally delivered on the annual gathering of the Hölderlin Society in Berlin in 1963; a paper which caused a "minor scandal," as Robert Savage describes it in his book *Hölderlin after the Catastrophe: Heidegger—Adorno—Brecht* (Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2008), 97. In his paper Adorno delivers a sharp critique of Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin. Heidegger had been invited four years earlier to the Society as a first attempt of opening up a dialogue between philologists and philosophers. Adorno's criticism pretty much ended the hopes for such an exchange. On the implications of this "scandal," see Savage, *Hölderlin after the Catastrophe*, 96–99.

² For discussion of Adorno's critique of Heidegger's Hölderlin interpretation, see e.g. Hermann Mörchen, *Adorno und Heidegger: Untersuchungen einer philosophischen Kommunikationsverweigerung* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), 173–75; Gerhard van den Bergh, *Adornos philosophische Deuten von Dichtung: Ästhetische Theorie und Praxis der Interpretation. Der Hölderlin-Essay als Modell* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1989), 158–63; Johann Kreuzer, "Adornos und Heideggers Hölderlin," in *Adorno im Widerstreit: Zur Präsenz seines Denkens*, eds. Wolfram Ette, and others (Karl Alber: Freiburg/Munich, 2004), 363–93; Savage, *Hölderlin after the Catastrophe*, 96–149, and "The Polemic of the Late Work: Adorno's Hölderlin," in *Language Without Soil: Adorno and Late Philosophical Modernity*, ed. Gerhard Richter (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 172–94.

relationship.³ Focusing on art and nature will reveal the importance of Hölderlin for Adorno's own comprehension of this central relation.

The notion of nature, which Adorno argues is expressed in Hölderlin's late poetry, is very much in line with Adorno's own. This could be a case of Adorno projecting his own philosophical views on Hölderlin,⁴ but I will show that regarding nature and the relationship between nature and art, there are deep affinities between their views. Furthermore, many of the ideas on this crucial relationship discussed in *Aesthetic Theory* are already prefigured in the "Parataxis" essay.

³ Adorno's own style of writing, especially in *Aesthetic Theory*, which deliberately attempts to avoid the usual hierarchic way of arranging sentences, has been influenced by Hölderlin's paratactical "method," which Adorno discusses in this essay, see "Editors' Afterword," in Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, eds. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), 364; *Ästhetische Theorie*, "Editorisches Nachwort," in *GS* vol. 7, 541. For a more detailed analysis of Adorno's interpretation of parataxis, see van den Bergh, *Adornos philosophische Deuten von Dichtung*, 170–95.

⁴ Projecting his own philosophical views on Hölderlin is something Adorno in his turn accuses Heidegger of doing, and the aim of several scholars has been to redirect this charge against Adorno himself, see Peter Fenves, "Measure for Measure: Hölderlin and the Place of Philosophy," in *The Solid Letter: Readings of Friedrich Hölderlin*, ed. Aris Fioretos (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 25–43. See also Dieter Henrich, *The Course of Remembrance and Other Essays on Hölderlin*, ed. Eckhart Förster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 300–01 (note 139). A recent example is Achim Vesper, "Kunst als Erschütterung der Kategorie des Sinns? Adornos Ästhetik und Hölderlin," in *Hölderlin in der Moderne: Kolloquium für Dieter Henrich zum 85. Geburtstag*, ed. Friedrich Vollhardt (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2014), 195–209, see esp. 206–09. However, in neither case is the relationship between art and nature analysed. Hölderlin scholars with an interest in this relationship are generally more approving of Adorno's interpretation. See e.g. Young-Ki Lee, *Friedrich Hölderlins Mythopoesie als Neue Mythologie* (Munich: Martin Meidenbauer, 2007), 115, 134; David Farrell Krell, "Twelve Anacoluthic Theses on 'Parataxis: On Hölderlin's Late Poetry'," in *Language Without Soil: Adorno and Late Philosophical Modernity*, ed. Gerhard Richter (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 192–205.

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While Adorno is not interested in reconstructing the author's intention—he is critical of, in his view, a standard procedure of the philological method⁵—he does read Hölderlin in the light of the philosophical context that the latter was a part of: German Idealism and early German Romanticism.⁶ Adorno also draws on Hölderlin's theoretical Homburg-fragments (written 1798–99) to support his interpretation.⁷ This seems an uncontroversial move, because when it comes to Hölderlin, as well as to the other philosopher poets of the Idealist and Romanticist circles, there are no sharp borders between the different literary outputs.⁸

⁵ Adorno, "Parataxis," 109–10; "Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins," 447–48. As Gerhard van den Bergh notes, asking for the author's subjective intention is a falsely put question for Adorno, because it is undialectical. The subjective intention is very much mediated and only one element in the artistic process, see van den Bergh, *Adornos philosophische Deuten von Dichtung*, 150–51.

⁶ Regarding the attempts to place Hölderlin in either camp, Alison Stone contends that it is right to claim Hölderlin as a Romantic because of his endorsement of "an organic metaphysics." See Alison Stone, "Hölderlin and Human–Nature Relations," in *Human–Environment Relations: Transformative Values in Theory and Practice*, eds. Emily Brady and Pauline Phemister (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012), 56 (note 1). Stone explicitly argues against Dieter Henrich, who holds that "Hölderlin was never a Romantic," since he did not support the Romantic theory of fragmentary literature, see Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, ed. David S. Pacini (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 227. For a recent and illuminating discussion of the differing interpretations of philosophical Romanticism, see Dalia Nassar, introduction to *The Romantic Absolute: Being and Knowing in Early German Romantic Philosophy 1795–1804* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014), 1–18.

⁷ Peter-André Alt also makes this observation in "Das Problem der inneren Form: Zur Hölderlin-Rezeption Benjamins und Adornos," *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift* 61, no. 3 (1987): 531.

⁸ See e.g. Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism 1781–1801* (Cambridge, MA & London, England: Harvard University Press, 2002), 377: "There is no better proof of the importance of philosophy for Hölderlin [...] than the role it plays in his own literary work. The early hymns are essentially didactic poems expounding Platonic and Schillerian themes; *Hyperion* is quintessentially the 'philosophical novel'; and *Empedokles* is a philosophical drama."

Regarding the notion of nature, one of Hölderlin's poems is given special attention by Adorno, namely, "Der Winkel von Hahrdt" ("The Shelter at Hahrdt" in Richard Sieburth's translation).⁹ Adorno discusses this poem in several works and claims it is central for understanding the dialectic between nature and history. In the poem, nature is described as "nicht gar unmündig"¹⁰ ("far from mute" in Sieburth's translation),¹¹ and this suggests a notion of nature beyond a mere static, inert, heteronomous object (or the sum total of such objects) governed by timeless laws. Such a changed conception of nature, which is developed through a criticism of Kant's (at least the Kant of the First Critique) and Fichte's views on nature, is present both in Hölderlin's philosophical and literary writings and bears a strong resemblance to Adorno's own dialectical conception of nature.

Both Hölderlin and Adorno criticize the modern, disenchanted conception of nature that has transformed nature into an external object completely devoid of (intrinsic) value and that regards it as entirely explainable by the methods of natural science.¹² This separation of ourselves from

⁹ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke: Grosse Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, eds. Friedrich Beissner and Adolf Beck (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1943–85, hereafter: *StA*), vol. 2:1, *Gedichte nach 1800*, 116; Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hymns and Fragments*, trans. Richard Sieburth (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 49.

¹⁰ Hölderlin, *StA* vol. 2:1, *Gedichte nach 1800*, 116.

¹¹ From *HYMNS AND FRAGMENTS* by Friedrich Hölderlin, translated and introduced by Richard Sieburth. Copyright © 1984 by Princeton University Press. Reprinted by permission. (Hölderlin, *Hymns and Fragments*, 49.)

¹² For a more detailed discussion of Hölderlin's conception of nature, see e.g. Stefan Büttner, "Natur—Ein Grundwort Hölderlins," *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 26 (1988–9): 224–47; Beiser, *German Idealism*, 397–401; Lee, *Friedrich Hölderlins Mythopoesie als Neue Mythologie*, 113–36; Stone, "Hölderlin and Human–Nature Relations." And for accounts of Adorno's conception of nature, see e.g. J. M. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

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nature has involved the metaphysical conception of nature as a thing to be mastered, and has allowed for an increasing destruction of the environment that constitutes the concrete condition of possibility for humankind and other species as well.¹³ But the separation is not total, and for both Hölderlin and Adorno, aesthetics is crucial for thinking the relationship between nature and humankind anew, and this involves developing a conception of nature as something more than a mere object to be incorporated under a general law.

Drawing on Kant's effort, in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, to reconcile the spheres of law-governed (objective) nature and subjective freedom, which his two previous Critiques had separated, the Romantics and Idealists emphasized the importance of the mediating role of aesthetic

Press, 2001), 188–234; Alison Stone, "Adorno and the Disenchantment of Nature," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 32 (2006): 231–53; Deborah Cook, *Adorno on Nature* (Durham: Acumen, 2011); Andrew Bowie, *Adorno and the Ends of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), Chap. 4.

¹³ Recent accounts that emphasize the importance of Adorno's thinking for a critical engagement with the contemporary environmental crisis include e.g. Andrew Biro, "Adorno and Ecological Politics," in *Adorno and the Need in Thinking: New Critical Essays*, eds. Donald A. Burke, and others (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2007), 345–61; Eric S. Nelson, "Revisiting the Dialectic of Environment: Nature as Ideology and Ethics in Adorno and the Frankfurt School," *Telos* 155 (Summer 2011): 105–26. For discussions highlighting Adorno's ideas on the importance of art and aesthetics in connection to our need for a transformed relationship with nature, see e.g. Eric S. Nelson, "Aesthetics, Ethics and Nature in Adorno," in *Aesthetics and Modernity from Schiller to the Frankfurt School*, eds. Giles Jerome and Maike Oergel (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011), 319–41; Camilla Flodin, "Of Mice and Men: Adorno on Art and the Suffering of Animals," *Estetika: The Central European Journal of Aesthetics*, no 2 (2011): 139–56 and "The Wor(l)d of the Animal: Adorno on Art's Expression of Suffering," *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, no 3 (2011): DOI: 10.3402/jac.v3i0.7987.

experience for the possibility of overcoming this divide.¹⁴ Kant had, according to his Romantic and Idealist critics, only managed to surpass the dualism in a symbolic manner, and after him Fichte had widened the gulf between nature and freedom further. For Fichte, nature was nothing but inert matter for spontaneous and free reason to act upon as it pleased. As Christoph Jamme points out, it was primarily the "implicated logic of domination" in Fichte's description of nature that the Idealists and Romantics reacted against.¹⁵ Hölderlin and his generation attempted to understand nature and freedom as mediated through each other, instead of regarding them as complete opposites. Art and aesthetic experience were fundamental for reaching a different approach toward nature.

However, Hölderlin's view of nature, as well as his conception of the mediatory role of aesthetic experience and art, undergoes a development. In the preface to the unfinished penultimate version of the epistolary novel *Hyperion*, written during the second half of 1795, Hölderlin claims that the reconciliation between humanity and nature "is present—as beauty."¹⁶ Hölderlin's more mature conception, which is the focus of Adorno's interpretation and consequently also the focus of my paper, instead emphasizes the transience of

¹⁴ This is also stressed by Andrew Bowie in *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*, 2nd ed. (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 16.

¹⁵ Christoph Jamme, "'Entwilderung der Natur': Zu den Begründungsformen einer Kulturgeschichte der Natur bei Schiller, Hölderlin und Novalis," in *Evolution des Geistes: Jena um 1800*, ed. Friedrich Strack (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994), 582.

¹⁶ Hölderlin, *StA* vol. 3, *Hyperion*, 237: "ist vorhanden—als schönheit." Büttner also emphasizes this in "Natur—Ein Grundwort Hölderlins," 226.

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beauty. As we will see, this conception bears strong resemblances to Adorno's own notion of nature.

Like Hölderlin, Adorno also engages critically with Kant in an effort to reach an improved understanding of nature.¹⁷ I want to claim that Adorno's own conception of the art–nature relationship has deep affinities with Hölderlin's, and is developed in part through his reading of Hölderlin's work, (rather than Adorno already having a fixed notion of nature that he projects onto Hölderlin). There is valid textual evidence that supports Adorno's interpretation of how the art–nature relation is expressed in Hölderlin's poetry, and in the following I attempt to increase the weight of his argument by drawing on writings by Hölderlin that Adorno does not discuss, or which he does not elaborate on in the essay or elsewhere.

II. The Transience of Nature

Apart from “Parataxis,” Adorno also discusses Hölderlin's poem “The Shelter at Hahrtdt” in his lectures on history and freedom from 1964–65, and in *Aesthetic Theory*. In “The Shelter at Hahrtdt” — from the collection *Nightsongs*

¹⁷ Important here is of course Adorno's discussion of natural beauty. And in this discussion Hegel's dismissal of natural beauty from aesthetics is obviously also crucial. For instructive analyses of Adorno's conception of natural beauty which focus on the relation to Kant's and Hegel's aesthetics, see e.g. Günter Figal, *Theodor W. Adorno: Das Naturschöne als spekulative Gedankenfigur. Zur Interpretation der “Ästhetischen Theorie” im Kontext philosophischer Ästhetik* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1977); Heinz Paetzold, “Adorno's notion of Natural Beauty: A Reconsideration,” in *The Semblance of Subjectivity: Essays in Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Tom Huhn and Lambert Zuidervaart (Cambridge, Mass. & London, England: The MIT Press, 1997), 213–35; Rodolphe Gasché, “The Theory of Natural Beauty and its Evil Star: Kant, Hegel, Adorno,” *Research in Phenomenology* 32 (2002): 103–22; Espen Hammer, *Adorno's Modernism: Art, Experience, and Catastrophe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), Chapter 2.

(*Nachtgesänge*, probably written late 1802 or 1803, but published in 1805) — Hölderlin describes nature as “[n]icht gar unmündig,”¹⁸ which literally means “not at all immature/minor” and is translated by Richard Sieburth as “far from mute,” (which is actually a very pertinent translation—I will come back to this).¹⁹

In Hölderlin's poem, nature carries the mark of the past as it bears witness to a historical event: According to local legend, Duke Ulrich of Württemberg hid from his enemies at this shelter, composed of two large blocks of sandstone leaning against each other, near the village of Hardt (with modernized spelling), in 1519. Thus, nature speaks in Hölderlin's poem.

In his lectures on history and freedom, Adorno claims that “The Shelter at Hahrtdt” is the best model available for understanding what he himself means by the concept of “natural history.”²⁰ Through Hölderlin's poem we become aware of nature as historical, and according to Adorno, the poem offers a critique of the notion of nature as something static and antithetical to human history. Adorno perceives “The Shelter at Hahrtdt” as revealing the dynamic entwinement of nature and history. This is also Adorno's focus in his discussion of the poem in “Parataxis.” The poem reads thus:

¹⁸ Hölderlin, *StA* vol. 2:1, *Gedichte nach 1800*, 116.

¹⁹ From *HYMNS AND FRAGMENTS* by Friedrich Hölderlin, translated and introduced by Richard Sieburth. Copyright © 1984 by Princeton University Press. Reprinted by permission. (Hölderlin, *Hymns and Fragments*, 49.)

²⁰ Theodor W. Adorno, *History and Freedom: Lectures 1964–1965*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), 135; *Zur Lehre von der Geschichte und von der Freiheit (1964/65)*, in *Nachgelassene Schriften: Vorlesungen*, vol. 13, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 190. Adorno refers his students to his earlier discussion of Hölderlin's poem, even if he does not mention the “Parataxis” essay by name in the lecture.

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Der Winkel von Hahrdt
Hinunter sinket der Wald,
Und Knospen ähnlich, hängen
Einwärts die Blätter, denen
Blüht unten auf ein Grund,
Nicht gar unmündig.
Da nemlich ist Ulrich
Gegangen; oft sinnt, über den Fußtritt
Ein groß Schicksaal
Bereit, an übrigem Orte.²¹

[*The Shelter at Hahrdt*
The forest sinks off
And like buds, the leaves
Hang inward, to which
The valley floor below
Flowers up, far from mute,
For Ulrich passed through
These parts; a great destiny
Often broods over his footprint,
Ready, among the remains.]²²

When Adorno discusses the dialectical mediation of nature and history in his lecture series on history and freedom, he asks his students to read precisely this poem in order for them to understand the complicated relationship between nature and history.²³

²¹ Hölderlin, *StA*, vol. 2:1, *Gedichte nach 1800*, 116.

²² From HYMNS AND FRAGMENTS by Friedrich Hölderlin, translated and introduced by Richard Sieburth. Copyright © 1984 by Princeton University Press. Reprinted by permission. (*Hymns and Fragments*, 49.)

²³ Adorno, *History and Freedom*, 135; *Zur Lehre von der Geschichte und von der Freiheit* (1964/65), 190.

Why does Adorno attach such weight to Hölderlin's "The Shelter at Hahrdt"? When he discusses this poem it is with the help of concepts also used in the early lecture "The Idea of Natural-History" ("Die Idee der Naturgeschichte," 1932), namely transience (*Vergängnis*), allegory and expression. These are, in their turn, concepts that are important when Adorno investigates the relationship between natural beauty and art beauty in his lectures on aesthetics and in *Aesthetic Theory*, and also in his interpretation of Hölderlin's late poetry in "Parataxis."

Adorno points out in "Parataxis," that in order to understand the meaning of the poem, you have to know that this shelter, of which Hölderlin writes, is the allegorical place where Duke Ulrich of Württemberg was claimed to be hiding when he was on the run. (He was exiled by emperor Charles V in 1519).²⁴ The place speaks of this event. History has here turned into nature: the traces of Ulrich's stay at this shelter are long since covered with vegetation. But the poem's rendering of this, is also a way in which nature is allowed to express itself, a way in which nature becomes eloquent. In the lectures on *History and Freedom*, Adorno emphasizes that "only because these pragmatic [historical] elements have disappeared, only because the poem has acquired this enigmatic character, has it succeeded in assuming the expression of transience that points beyond itself and constitutes its greatness."²⁵

²⁴ Adorno, "Parataxis," 111; "Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins," 449. See also Adorno, *History and Freedom*, 135; *Zur Lehre von der Geschichte und von der Freiheit* (1964/65), 190.

²⁵ Adorno, *History and Freedom*, 135; *Zur Lehre von der Geschichte und von der Freiheit* (1964/65), 190: "[N]ur dadurch, daß diese pragmatischen Momente verschwunden sind, nur dadurch, daß das Gedicht selber jenen rätselhaften Charakter hat, nur dadurch gewinnt es ganz jenen Ausdruck von Vergängnis, der über sich hinausweist, der die Größe des Gedichts ausmacht."

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In Hölderlin's poem, nature thus appears as historical, transitory, and fleeting. In "The Idea of Natural History" Adorno claims that "[n]ature itself is transitory. Thus, it includes the element of history. Whenever a historical element appears, it refers back to the natural element that passes away within it."²⁶ Nature is thus entwined with history; nature is more than what we humans make of it when we regard nature as our opposite and as the opposite of our making of history. It is the domination of nature that has turned it into something merely static and unchangeable: nature perceived as a continuous repetition of the same events. What can be predicted can be manipulated for one's own benefit.

But in Hölderlin's poem external nature appears as historical, transient, and more than what humanity's domination of it has made it into. Domination of nature is a real historical process for Adorno, and it "presupposes something that is to be dominated and—more noteworthy—something beyond and other than that domination, which

²⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, "The Idea of Natural-History," trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, in Robert Hullot-Kentor, *Things Beyond Resemblance: Collected Essays on Theodor W. Adorno* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 264; "Die Idee der Naturgeschichte," in *GS* vol. 1, 359: "Natur selbst ist vergänglich. So hat sie aber das Moment der Geschichte in sich. Wann immer Geschichtliches auftritt, weist das Geschichtliche zurück auf das Natürliche, das in ihm vergeht." I cannot here address the influence of Walter Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* and Georg Lukács *Theory of the Novel* on Adorno's concept of natural history, for discussion, see e.g. Mattias Martinson, *Perseverance without Doctrine: Adorno, Self-Critique, and the Ends of Academic Theology* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), 115–27; Max Pensky, "Natural History: The Life and Afterlife of a Concept in Adorno," *Critical Horizons* 5 (2004): 227–58. It should also be mentioned that Benjamin's early essay "Two Poems by Friedrich Hölderlin" influenced Adorno's interpretation of Hölderlin. Again, this is something that I cannot analyse further here, for discussion see e.g. Peter-André Alt, "Das Problem der inneren Form," and Thomas Schröder, "Eschatologie und Parataxis: Adornos naturgeschichtliches Motiv," *Frankfurter Adorno Blätter* 4 (1995): 78–92.

resists, escapes, interrupts, and potentially challenges such domination" as Eric S. Nelson correctly points out.²⁷ 'Nature' is not a 'first' that can be appealed to, but neither is it a complete construction. An artwork, (itself a construction), such as Hölderlin's "Der Winkel von Hahrtdt" can make us aware of nature's non-identity with its reified image. Art's second reflection reveals a crack in the cultural construction of nature, and through that crack we may glimpse the possibility of a nature beyond this construction.²⁸

With the idea of transience Adorno thus wants to emphasize the potential for a changed relationship between history and nature, and between humanity and nature. Transience is central to the idea of natural history: "The deepest point where history and nature converge lies precisely in this element of transience," Adorno claims in "The Idea of Natural-History."²⁹ Transience observes the material, physical element in objects or things; their non-identity with concepts and it also demonstrates the concepts' dependence on these elements. Transience or fleetingness is also a characteristic part of natural beauty and the "more" of natural beauty that points beyond the given. In his reflections on "World Spirit and Natural History" and the metacritique of metaphysics in

²⁷ Nelson, "Aesthetics, Ethics and Nature in Adorno," 322–23.

²⁸ When discussing Adorno's critical engagement with Marx's understanding of nature, Simon Jarvis writes: "we are given glimpses of what nature might be at the point where Marx's critical thinking breaks through the illusion of the self-sufficingness of human productivity." Simon Jarvis, "Adorno, Marx, Materialism," in *Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, ed. Tom Huhn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 92. For further discussions of the importance of Marx's concept of nature for Adorno's own understanding of nature, see also Cook, *Adorno on Nature*, esp. 7–61.

²⁹ Adorno, "The Idea of Natural History," 262; "Die Idee der Naturgeschichte," in *GS* vol. 1, 357–58: "Der tiefste Punkt, in dem Geschichte und Natur konvergieren, ist eben in jenem Moment der Vergänglichkeit gelegen."

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Negative Dialectics, where he quotes and develops arguments from the earlier essay on natural history, Adorno argues: “No remembrance [*Eingedenken*] of transcendence is possible any more except by way of transience.”³⁰ This kind of remembrance has, as Gunzelin Schmid Noerr emphasizes, “a twofold meaning: first, a critique of the socio-historical reality as a collective-unconscious praxis of a produced ‘natural history,’ second the tracing of the claim of living nature, through the one ravaged and repressed by this praxis.”³¹ It is such a remembrance of nature beyond its socio-historical disfigurement that Adorno also has in mind in the passage quoted from *Negative Dialectics*. It should be emphasized that this remembrance is not of a nature that has existed—it is not some kind of ‘original’ nature Adorno implies—but rather as he states about remembrance in *Aesthetic Theory*, when connecting art’s longing for “the reality of what is not” to Plato’s idea of *anamnesis*: “Ever since Plato’s doctrine of *anamnesis* the not-yet-existing has been dreamed of in remembrance, which alone concretizes utopia without betraying it to existence. Remembrance remains bound up with semblance: for even in the past the dream was not reality.”³² I will come back to this attempt of Adorno’s to trace

³⁰ Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (Routledge: London and New York, 1990), 360 [trans. modified]; *Negative Dialektik*, 353: “Kein Eingedenken an Transzendenz ist mehr möglich als kraft der Vergängnis.” Lambert Zuidervaart also calls attention to this sentence in *Social Philosophy after Adorno* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 51.

³¹ Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, *Das Eingedenken der Natur im Subjekt: zur Dialektik von Vernunft und Natur in der Kritischen Theorie Horkheimers, Adornos und Marcuses* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990), ix.

³² Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 132; *Ästhetische Theorie*, 200: “die Wirklichkeit dessen, was nicht ist”; “Seit der Platonischen Anamnesis ist vom noch nicht Seienden im Eingedenken geträumt worden, das allein Utopie konkretisiert, ohne sie an Dasein zu verraten. Dem bleibt der Schein gesellt: auch damals ist es nie gewesen.”

the possible nature beyond its present distortion through precisely this distortion, in connection to Hölderlin’s concept of nature.

Adorno’s emphasis on the transience of natural beauty is in fact in accordance with Hölderlin’s more mature conception of beauty, which comes to the fore in the final version of *Hyperion*, where Hyperion’s beloved Diotima dies and Hyperion admits that “all the transformations of pure Nature are part of her beauty too.”³³ In the words of Stefan Büttner, “[b]eauty becomes tragic beauty” in Hölderlin’s writings during the Homburg years.³⁴

In his lectures on history and freedom Adorno claims interpretation to be “criticism of phenomena that have been brought to a standstill.”³⁵ Our nature-dominating society has congealed into second nature, but through philosophical interpretation it can be exposed as something man-made that has come into being historically, and thus possible to transform. Likewise, the dominant notion of nature as something existing for our sake has developed historically and is not a timeless truth, which means that it is possible to revise. Hölderlin’s poem is able to give us a change of

³³ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hyperion*, trans. Willard A. Trask, adapted by David Schwarz, in *Hyperion and Selected Poems*, ed. Eric L. Santner (New York: Continuum, 1990), 84; Hölderlin, *StA* vol. 3, 103: “alle Verwandlungen der reinen Natur auch mit zu ihrer Schöne gehören.”

³⁴ Büttner, “Natur—Ein Grundwort Hölderlins,” 232. This new direction towards acknowledging the finitude of concrete existence can, as Johann Kreuzer has emphasized, be traced already in the Frankfurt period (preceding Hölderlin’s move to Homburg) beginning in 1796. See Johann Kreuzer, “Hölderlin im Gespräch mit Hegel und Schelling,” *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* 31 (1998–99): 51–72, esp. 65–72.

³⁵ Adorno, *History and Freedom*, 135; *Zur Lehre von der Geschichte und von der Freiheit* (1964/65), 190.

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perspective on nature. In “The Shelter at Hahrtd,” nature indirectly appears as more than subjectively defined. Through a man-made imitation of natural beauty—“art is not the imitation of nature but the imitation of natural beauty”³⁶—Hölderlin’s poem manages to give voice to speechless, but not therefore completely mute, nature. In what follows I will attempt to explain how this is possible.

“[F]ar from mute” is Sieburth’s translation of “Nicht gar unmündig,” which literally means “not at all immature/under-age/minor.” Sieburth’s translation captures the spirit of “Nicht gar unmündig” very well. Becoming of age, reaching adulthood, means learning to speak for yourself, out of your own mouth (*Mund*).³⁷ Reaching adulthood also means not staying quiet, mute, minor, but becoming eloquent, reaching majority. I want to emphasize that in order to fully grasp the meaning of this line we need to read it with Kant’s description of enlightenment in mind: “*Enlightenment is the human being’s emergence from his self-incurred minority [Unmündigkeit]. Minority is inability to make use of one’s own understanding without direction from another.*”³⁸

³⁶ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 71; *Ästhetische Theorie*, 111: “anstatt Nachahmung der Natur, [Kunst ist] Nachahmung der Naturschönen.”

³⁷ David Farrell Krell also draws attention to the importance of Kant’s “What is Enlightenment?” and its conception of “Mündigkeit” as “earn[ing] the right to speak out of its [referring here to Hölderlin’s homeland, Swabia] own mouth” for Hölderlin, see Krell, “Hölderlin: A Brief Chronology,” in Friedrich Hölderlin, *The Death of Empedocles: A Mourning-Play*, trans. David Farrell Krell (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2008), xvii.

³⁸ Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?,” in Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17 [*Akademie Ausgabe*, vol. 8, 35]).

For Kant, humans have the potential to become independent, autonomous, and follow their own understanding—our inability to accomplish this in a satisfactory degree is due to “laziness and cowardice,” Kant claims.³⁹ That nature should somehow come of age, or be able to express itself, is, at least in the perspective of the Kant of the first Critique, impossible. In *Critique of Pure Reason*, sensibility and understanding stipulate the laws for how natural objects are perceived.⁴⁰

Hölderlin’s poem is an indirect critique of such a notion of nature. The poem objects to the image of nature as a speechless minor, as something opposite of humankind *qua* sole creator of history; human being is self-determining and autonomous while nature is dependent, static and heteronomous. Nature as what must be escaped in order to become of age, to become civilized.⁴¹ This is the view of nature by an Enlightenment not yet enlightened enough. I will come back to Hölderlin’s and Adorno’s belief—for they are in agreement here—that such a dichotomized view of the

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1998), 236 [A 114]; 241–43 [A 125–8]; 262–63 [B 163–4]; 320 [A 216/B 263].

⁴¹ This is something I discuss also in “Naturen som ‘alls icke omyndig’ vs. ‘Det finns ingen natur längre.’” [Nature as “nicht gar unmündig” vs. “There’s no more nature”], *Linköping Electronic Conference Proceedings No 42* (Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press, 2009), 105–113. Full document available at: <http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp/042/009/index.html>. Johann Kreuzer also emphasizes that “Maturity [*Mündigkeit*] and nature are not opposites [*Gegenbegriffe*]” when discussing Adorno’s interpretation of “The Shelter at Hahrtd,” see Kreuzer, “Hölderlin: Parataxis,” in *Adorno Handbuch: Leben—Werk—Wirkung*, ed. by Richard Klein, Johann Kreuzer and Stefan Müller-Doohm (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2011), 186.

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relationship between humanity and nature hinders true enlightenment.

When Adorno discusses “The Shelter at Hahrdt” in “Parataxis,” he elaborates on the possibility of nature expressing itself:

Two slabs of rock form the shelter in which the duke hid. The event that, according to the legend, took place there is supposed to *speak with the voice of nature*, which is therefore called “nicht gar unmündig,” “far from mute.” Surviving, nature becomes an allegory for the destiny that once manifested itself on that spot. Beissner’s explanation of the mention of something “übrig,” “left over,” as the place that remained is illuminating.⁴²

The editor of Hölderlin’s collected works, Friedrich Beissner, has given important information on the material of the poem. This philological approach, however, is not enough for the interpretation of the poem according to Adorno, who claims that “the idea of an allegorical history of nature, an idea that appears here and that dominates Hölderlin’s late work as a whole, would require philosophical derivation.”⁴³

Adorno claims that even after Beissner’s elucidations, the poem still maintains its enigmatic quality, and that only the person who has knowledge of the material of the poem, but who “continues to feel the shock of the unexpected name

⁴² Adorno, “Parataxis,” 111; “Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins,” 449: “Zwei Felsplatten bilden den ‘Winkel,’ den Spalt, in dem jener sich versteckte. Das Ereignis, das der Sage nach dort sich zutrug, soll *aus der Natur sprechen*, die darum ‘nicht gar unmündig’ genannt wird. Nachlebende Natur wird zur Allegorie des Schicksals, das an der Stelle einmal stattfand: einleuchtend Beissners Erklärung der Rede vom ‘übrigen’ als dem übrig gebliebenen Ort.” [My italics.]

⁴³ Ibid.: “Die Idee einer allegorischen Naturgeschichte jedoch, die hier aufblitzt und das gesamte Spätwerk Hölderlins durchherrscht, bedürfte selbst, als philosophische, ihrer philosophischen Herstellung.”

Ulrich, someone who will be troubled by the ‘nicht gar unmündig,’ which acquires meaning only in the conception of a natural history, and similarly by the construction ‘Ein groß Schicksal / Bereit an übrigem Orte’ [‘a great destiny, ready, among the remains’],” can approach the poem in the right way.⁴⁴ For this, Beissner’s philological interpretation is inadequate. Adorno claims that it is the obscure moment in the poem, and not what is thought in it, that calls for philosophy.⁴⁵ The poem is a work of art and thus not reducible to a historical artifact; it still manages to bewilder us.

Regarding the enigmatic character of the poem, Adorno claims that Hölderlin’s strange sentence constructions are not deliberate attempts to estrange the reader, but “stems from something objective, the demise of its basic content in expression, *the eloquence of something that has no language*.”⁴⁶ The poem is *more* than the sum of its parts. That is to say it is more than the material or content and the linguistic elements added together. It has an expressive quality and this is also what, according to Adorno, enables the poem to let nature speak through it.

Without the parts (the material, the linguistic elements, *et cetera*) the truth of the poem does not exist, but Adorno claims that at the same time, the truth of the poem is “something that transcends this structure, as a structure of

⁴⁴ Ibid.; 450: “stets noch den Schock des unvermuteten Namens Ulrich fühlt; wer sich ärgert an dem ‘nicht gar unmündig,’ das überhaupt erst aus der naturgeschichtlichen Konstruktion Sinn empfängt, und ähnlich an dem Gefüge ‘Ein groß Schicksal / Bereit, an übrigem Orte.’” Adorno quotes from the *kleiner Stuttgarter Ausgabe* of Hölderlin’s works, where the spelling has been modernized.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 112; 450.

⁴⁶ Ibid. [My italics.]: “rührt von einem Objektiven her, dem Untergang der tragenden Sachgehalte im Ausdruck, der Beredtheit eines Sprachlosen.”

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aesthetic semblance: not from outside through a stated philosophical content, but by virtue of *the configuration of elements that taken together signify more than the structure intends*.⁴⁷

In this way, the language of the poem is something other than subjective intention: it can point at something more; the poem manages to show that nature is more than dependent and heteronomous. In *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno formulates it thus: “Art attempts to imitate an expression that would not be interpolated human intention.”⁴⁸ I will come back to and elaborate on how it is possible for language to, so to speak, overcome itself (as subjective expression) from the inside. But first I will say a few words about what Adorno means by the “more” of nature.

The reference to nature as more than subjectively determined does not take place directly. If you approach “The Shelter at Hahrdt” the same way as you approach a propositional statement you will fail to appreciate the poem as an artwork and consequently you will also fail to grasp what is important in it. In Hölderlin’s poetry the critique of reality is achieved indirectly and not through any direct appeal to another or better reality. “The Shelter at Hahrdt” does not state that nature is more than an object, or even that it *should* be; the poem only speaks of the possible change indirectly through describing the individual natural object, in this case

⁴⁷ Ibid., 112–13 [my italics, trans. modified]; 451: “[die Wahrheit] ist aber zugleich, was dies Gefüge, als eines von ästhetischem Schein, übersteigt: nicht von außen her, durch gesagten philosophischen Inhalt, sondern vermöge der Konfiguration der Momente, die, zusammengenommen, mehr bedeuten, als das Gefüge meint.”

⁴⁸ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 78; *Ästhetische Theorie*, 121: “Kunst versucht, einen Ausdruck nachzuahmen, der nicht eingelegte menschliche Intention wäre.”

the ground beneath the trees, as “far from mute.”⁴⁹ It is thus only implicitly that Hölderlin’s poem criticizes Kant’s dualism between human being and nature, where mature, expressive humanity, stands against the backdrop of a mute, eternally immature nature.

In the section on natural beauty in *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno also discusses “The Shelter at Hahrdt”: “In this poem, a stand of trees becomes perceived as beautiful, as more beautiful than the others, because it bears, however vaguely, the mark of a past event.”⁵⁰ Here as well it is the connection between transience and beauty that is emphasized by Adorno. The stand of trees (or the ground beneath them, from which they emerge), is expressive because it is ready and waiting to be interpreted as a sign of a historical event: “For Ulrich passed through / These parts.” But it is expressive also because the natural shelter constitutes the very ground, the concrete condition of possibility, for this event. These two ‘grounds’ cannot be neatly separated, there is no ‘pure’ nature beyond history and no ‘pure’ history apart from nature: “In natural beauty, natural and historical elements interact in a musical and kaleidoscopically changing fashion.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ This is as eloquent as it gets. It is worth mentioning that in Michael Hamburger’s translation of “Der Winkel von Hahrdt” (which in his rendition is called “The Nook at Hardt”—with the modernized spelling of the name of the village), “Nicht gar unmündig” is translated as “Quite able to speak for itself,” which turns nature’s elusive eloquence into a positive fact, which is quite far from the original subtlety of Hölderlin’s line. See Friedrich Hölderlin, *Poems and Fragments*, 4th ed., trans. Michael Hamburger (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2013), 459.

⁵⁰ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 71; *Ästhetische Theorie*, 111: “Eine Baumgruppe löst dort als schön—schöner als andere— sich ab, wo sie wie immer auch vag Mal eines vergangenen Vorgangs dünkt.”

⁵¹ Ibid.: “Im Naturschönen spielen, musikähnlich und kaleidoskopisch wechselnd, naturhafte und geschichtliche Elemente ineinander.”

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The indirectness of Hölderlin's poetry also indicates a resistance towards the traditional Idealist idea that beautiful art in itself constitutes the reconciliation between humanity and nature. Idealism and classicism share the idea of beauty as a unified seamless whole, often compared to the self-sufficient natural organism. This conception is also a way of perceiving art's reconciliatory power through mimesis: humans create artworks that are similar to the organisms that nature creates, so art mimics nature's creativity (and not primarily her creations).⁵² While Adorno in *Aesthetic Theory* expresses a certain agreement with this view of organic unity,⁵³ he nevertheless believes that modern art needs to reflect on and problematize this ability in order to avoid deceiving us into thinking that reconciliation is achieved, if only in art. That is why Adorno pushes the idea of fracture, brokenness, or reflection as necessary for art's truth content. And in "Parataxis," he claims that Hölderlin's poetry is characterized precisely by such an element of brokenness:

⁵² It can be argued that already Aristotle's likening of a well-composed plot to "a single whole animal [ζῷον ἐν ὅλῳ]" is in line with such a notion of mimetic art. See Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. and ed. by Stephen Halliwell, in *Aristotle, "Poetics," Longinus, "On the Sublime," Demetrius, "On Style,"* Loeb Classical Library 199 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 1459a20. This "organic analogy," to speak with Malcolm Heath, in its turn bears resemblances with Plato's earlier claim about discourse/text (*logos*), which he states (through Socrates), in *Phaedrus*, "must be organised, like a living being [ζῷον], with a body of its own, as it were, so as not to be headless and footless, but to have a middle and members, composed in fitting relation to each other and the whole [τῷ ὅλῳ]." Plato, *Phaedrus*, in *Plato I: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, trans. Harold North Fowler, Loeb Classical Library 36 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 264c. See also Malcolm Heath, *Ancient Philosophical Poetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 84.

⁵³ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 134; *Ästhetische Theorie*, 202. See also Adorno's discussion of dissonance and harmony in *ibid.*, 109–110; 167–68.

By shattering the symbolic unity of the work of art, he [Hölderlin] pointed up the untruth in any reconciliation of the general and the particular within an unreconciled reality: the material concreteness [*Gegenständlichkeit*] of classicism, which was also that of Hegelian objective idealism, clings in vain to the physical proximity of something that has been estranged.⁵⁴

According to Adorno, art is only the plenipotentiary of such reconciliation between universal and particular, subject and object, humanity and nature. Art can neither in itself constitute this reconciliation, nor be a stage in it, as is the case in Hegel's aesthetics.⁵⁵ In Hölderlin's poetry the critique of the classicist conception of beauty as a seamless unity *qua* identity is achieved mainly through the use of paratactic construction, according to Adorno.

III. Art and Nature

Adorno claims that Hölderlin manages to give voice to nature through his self-reflexive wrestling with language and with the inescapable unifying tendency of artworks. It is Hölderlin's use of parataxis that Adorno focuses on. He quotes from Hölderlin's "Reflection" (probably written in Spring

⁵⁴ Adorno, "Parataxis," 127; "Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins," 467–68: "Daß er [Hölderlin] die symbolische Einheit des Kunstwerks zerschmetterte, mahnt an das Unwahre der Versöhnung von Allgemeinem und Besonderem inmitten des Unversöhnten: die klassizistische Gegenständlichkeit, welche auch die des objektiven Hegelschen Idealismus war, klammert sich vergebens an die leibhafte Nähe des Entfremdeten."

⁵⁵ See G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 1, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 99–103.

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1799), which Adorno claims, “sheds full light on the poetic function of parataxis.”⁵⁶ Here Hölderlin writes:

There are inversions of words within a period. Greater and more effective, then, must be the inversion of the periods themselves. The logical position of the periods, where the ground (the ground period) is followed by the becoming, the becoming by the goal, the goal by the purpose, and the subordinate clauses are always simply attached at the end of the main clauses to which they most closely relate—is certainly useful to the poet only on the rarest occasions.⁵⁷

Adorno argues that Hölderlin here “rejects syntactic periodicity à la Cicero as unusable in poetry.”⁵⁸ Syntactic periodicity is, in rhetoric, the counterpart to a shorter strophe. In the words of Harold C. Gotoff it is “the fashioning of extended, complex sentences in such a way that content and syntax are resolved simultaneously in the end,” and it constitutes the “hallmark of Cicero’s prose style.”⁵⁹ Syntactic periodicity with its hypotactic construction (in other words, its use of subordinate clauses) creates a closed and causally structured unity—“the ground

(the grounding period) is followed by becoming, becoming by the goal, the goal by the purpose”—and is antithetical to paratactic construction, which instead juxtaposes the elements in a sentence, or places them next to each other without specifying their relationship to each other.⁶⁰

Adorno argues that it is not simply a “poetic aversion to the prosaic” that motivates Hölderlin’s aphorism on periodicity, but that the “keyword is ‘Zweck’ [purpose].”⁶¹ *Zweck* “names the complicity between the logic of an ordering and manipulating consciousness and the practical”—and Hölderlin’s poetry negates this nature-dominating logic: “Linguistic synthesis contradicts what Hölderlin wants to express in language.”⁶² What Hölderlin wants to attain by using language against language, through his “paratactic revolt against synthesis,” as Adorno calls it, is “a synthesis of a different kind, language’s crucial self-reflection,” not by completely destroying the unity of language because such “violence” would only echo the violence “that unity perpetrates.”⁶³ Instead,

Hölderlin so transmutes the form of unity that not only is multiplicity reflected in it – that is possible within traditional synthetic language as well – but in addition the unity indicates that it knows itself to be inconclusive. Without unity there would be

⁵⁶ Adorno, “Parataxis,” 135; “Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins,” 476: “über die poetische Funktion des parataktischen Verfahrens das vollste Licht verbreitet.”

⁵⁷ Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, trans. and ed. by Jeremy Adler and Charlie Louth (London: Penguin, 2009), 240; *StA*, vol. 4:1, *Der Tod des Empedokles. Aufsätze*, 233: “Man hat Inversionen der Worte in der Periode. Größer und wirksamer muß aber dann auch die Inversion der Perioden selbst seyn. Die logische Stellung der Perioden, wo dem Grunde (der Grundperiode) das Werden, dem Werden das Ziel, dem Ziele der Zweck folgt, und die Nebensätze immer nur hinten an gehängt sind an die Hauptsätze worauf sie sich zunächst beziehen,—ist dem Dichter gewiß nur höchst selten brauchbar.”

⁵⁸ Adorno, “Parataxis,” 135; “Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins,” 476: “verwirft [...] die syntaktische Periodizität Ciceronischen Wesens als unbrauchbar für die Dichtung.”

⁵⁹ Harold C. Gotoff, introduction in *Cicero’s Caesarian Speeches: A Stylistic Commentary* (Chapel Hill, NJ: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), xli.

⁶⁰ See James Jasinski, *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001), 539–40.

⁶¹ Adorno, “Parataxis,” 135; “Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins,” 476: “Das Stichwort lautet ‘Zweck’.”

⁶² *Ibid.*: “nennt die Komplizität der Logik ordnenden und verfügenden Bewußtseins mit jenem Praktischen”; “Sprachliche Synthesis widerspricht dem, was er zum Sprechen bringen will.”

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 136; 476: “Die parataktische Auflehnung wider die Synthesis”; “Synthesis von anderem Typus, deren sprachkritische Selbstreflexion”; “welche die Einheit verübt.”

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nothing in language but nature in diffuse form; absolute unity was a reflection on this. In contrast, Hölderlin delineates for the first time what culture would be: received nature [*empfangene Natur*].⁶⁴

Christoph Jamme has also noted the importance of Hölderlin's principle of receptivity (*Rezeptivität/Empfänglichkeit*), which Jamme interprets, rightly I believe, as a critique of Fichte's principle of the Absolute I/Absolute Ego for which nature is but inert matter to form as the I/Ego sees fit.⁶⁵ In the essay "When the poet is once in command of the spirit..." (written in 1800) Hölderlin writes about the importance for the spirit to be "RECEPTIVE [*r e c e p t i v*]" in order to create the highest form of poetry.⁶⁶ In the same essay, Hölderlin also

⁶⁴ Ibid., 476–77: "die Gestalt der Einheit wird von Hölderlin so abgewandelt, daß nicht bloß das Mannigfaltige in ihr widerscheint—das ist in der herkömmlichen synthetischen Sprache ebenfalls möglich—, sondern daß die Einheit selbst anzeigt, sie wisse sich als nicht abschlußhaft. Ohne Einheit wäre in der Sprache nichts als diffuse Natur; absolute Einheit war der Reflex darauf. Demgegenüber zeichnet bei Hölderlin sich ab, was erst Kultur wäre: empfangene Natur." Adorno's interpretation is here also in line with Hölderlin's own views. In e.g. the fragment "Hermocrates to Cephalus," Hölderlin argues for the impossibility of a closed system (absolute unity) of knowledge, see Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 233; *StA* vol. 4:1, *Empedokles. Aufsätze*, 213.

⁶⁵ Jamme, "'Entwilderung der Natur,'" 590. Hölderlin's most astute critique of Fichte appears in the fragment "Being Judgement Possibility" where he maintains that the absolute cannot lie in the subject, because the subject needs an object in order to become subject in the first place and thus cannot be absolute. See Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 231–2; *StA* vol. 4:1, *Empedokles. Aufsätze*, 216–17. This fragment, written sometime in 1795, and its importance for the development of German Idealism has been thoroughly analysed by Dieter Henrich in his *Konstellationen: Probleme und Debatten der idealistischen Philosophie (1789–1795)* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991) and *Der Grund im Bewußtsein: Untersuchungen zur Hölderlins Denken (1794–1795)* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992). Beiser challenges Henrich's interpretation of the fragment on several points, see Beiser, *German Idealism*, esp. 387–97.

⁶⁶ Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 284; *StA* vol. 4:1, *Empedokles. Aufsätze*, 248.

characterizes poetic unity as "INFINITE UNITY,"⁶⁷ which is another way to formulate what Adorno describes as a unity that "knows itself to be inconclusive."

The sacrifice of the period implies that meaning is questioned, and according to Adorno, this happens for the first time in the poetic movement with Hölderlin.⁶⁸ The "dual character of language" is thus revealed through Hölderlin's poetry.⁶⁹ The generality of concepts opposes individual expression. Traditionally, poetry fights this, and tries to incorporate subjective expression. And to some extent Hölderlin is inspired by this attempt, Adorno argues. One can see this in his resistance to "linguistic *conventus*."⁷⁰ But Hölderlin also opposes the expressive ideal, because there is more to language than subjectivity: "Without externalizing itself in language, subjective intention would not exist at all. The subject becomes subject only through language," Adorno writes.⁷¹ Language is not purely a creation by subjective *Geist*; it is the prerequisite for *Geist*. We do not have a definite concept of language because we can only attempt such a definition from already inside language, as Andrew Bowie among others recently has emphasized in relation to Adorno.⁷² The expressive quality of language, which poetry explores, cannot be completely translated into discursive phrases—that's why poetry matters: it discloses that language is more than conceptual content. If what poetry attempts to express

⁶⁷ Ibid., 286; 251: "unendlichen Einheit."

⁶⁸ Adorno, "Parataxis," 136; "Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins," 477.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 136–37; 477: "Ohne zur Sprache sich zu entäußern, wäre die subjektive Intention überhaupt nicht. Das Subjekt wird es erst durch Sprache."

⁷² Bowie, *Adorno and the Ends of Contemporary Philosophy*, 16.

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were completely transferrable to discursive content, there would be no need for poetry.

Hölderlin's late poetry achieves more than subjective expression, because it also accomplishes a critique of poetical language from inside poetical language. Hölderlin releases language from conventionality, "by elevating it above the subject through subjective freedom" and manages to show that it is an illusion to believe that language is "consonant with the subject."⁷³ Hölderlin's poetry shows that "the subject, which mistakes itself for something immediate and ultimate, is something utterly mediated."⁷⁴ But Adorno is careful to point out that Hölderlin's critique should be understood historically and not ontologically; language is not simply 'beyond the subject' in some otherworldly realm outside history. Even though "Hölderlin's campaign to allow language itself to speak, his objectivism, is romantic,"⁷⁵ what language speaks of are not eternal truths but the history sedimented in language: in other words, the history of the domination of nature.

However, poetry cannot grant full objectivity, even though it longs to do precisely that. In the contradiction which Hölderlin's poetry lays bare, lies the truth content. Hölderlin's poetry does not attempt to do away with this conflict between subjectivity and objectivity, which it cannot, *qua* poetry, dissolve. At the same time, this self-reflexivity of Hölderlin's

⁷³ Adorno, "Parataxis," 137; "Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins," 478: "aus subjektiver Freiheit sie selbst über das Subjekt erhob"; "dem Subjekt angemessen."

⁷⁴ Ibid.: "Hölderlins Vorgehen legt Rechenschaft davon ab, daß das Subjekt, das sich als Unmittelbares und Letztes verkennt, durchaus ein Vermitteltes sei."

⁷⁵ Ibid.: "Romantisch ist Hölderlins Aktion, Sprache selbst zum Sprechen zu bringen, sein Objektivismus."

poetry, its admittance of being subjective, man-made, *techné*, is a critique of the domination of nature and a remembrance of suppressed nature. "While all poetry protests against the domination of nature with its own devices, in Hölderlin the protest awakens to self-consciousness."⁷⁶

Adorno claims that, "[a]s early as the ode 'Natur und Kunst' ['Nature and Art'], Hölderlin takes the side of fallen nature against a dominating Logos."⁷⁷ In the poem, written around 1800, whose full title is "Natur und Kunst oder Saturn und Jupiter" ("Nature and Art or Saturn and Jupiter"), Hölderlin offers a dialectical presentation of the traditional opposition between *physis* (nature) and *techné* (art). The former corresponds to the mythological Saturn (which the Romans identified with the Greek Titan Chronos), and the latter to the mythological Jupiter (the counterpart of the Greek Olympian Zeus in Roman mythology)—"Saturnus Sohn" (son of Saturn) as he is called in the poem. According to the myth, Zeus defeated his father and enclosed him together with the other Titans in Tartaros (the underworld). Already through portraying the relationship between nature and art in this allegorical way, we understand that it is not a matter of a strict opposition, but of affinity. Adorno seizes upon this dialectical relationship: "The domination of the Logos is not negated abstractly but instead recognized in its connection with what is overthrown; the domination of nature as itself part of nature, with its gaze focused on humanness, which wrested itself from the amorphous and 'barbaric' only through violence—while the

⁷⁶ Ibid., 140; 482: "Erhebt alle Dichtung, mit ihren eigenen Mitteln, Einspruch wider jene [die Naturbeherrschung], so erwacht der Einspruch bei Hölderlin zum Selbstbewußtsein."

⁷⁷ Ibid.: "Schon in der Ode 'Natur und Kunst' wird Partei ergriffen für die gestürzte Natur gegen den herrschaftlichen Logos."

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amorphousness is in fact perpetuated in violence.”⁷⁸ He then quotes the following passage: “Denn, wie aus dem Gewölke dein Bliz, so kömmt / Von ihm, was dein ist, siehe! so zeugt von ihm, / Was du gebeutst, und aus Saturnus / Frieden ist jegliche Macht erwachsen.”⁷⁹ [In Michael Hamburger’s translation: “For as from clouds your lightning, from him has come / What you call yours. And, look, the commands you speak / To him bear witness, and from Saturn’s / Primitive peace every power developed.”]⁸⁰

The poem’s critique of the domination of nature is thus not accomplished through abstract negation but precisely by recognition of humankind as part of nature, not set above nature even in our attempt to dominate it, but instead acknowledging that through violence against nature we are unconsciously perpetuating what we wanted to escape and so remain enmeshed in nature.⁸¹ In order to really break through

⁷⁸ Ibid., 141; 482: “Nicht wird die Herrschaft des Logos abstrakt negiert, sondern in ihrer Beziehung auf das von ihr Gestürzte erkannt; Naturbeherrschung selber als ein Stück Natur, mit dem Blick auf Humanität, die anders nicht als durch Gewalt dem Amorphen, ‘Wilden’ sich entrang, während in der Gewalt das Amorphe sich forterbt.”

⁷⁹ Hölderlin, *StA* vol. 2:1, *Gedichte nach 1800*, 37.

⁸⁰ Hölderlin, *Poems and Fragments*, 223.

⁸¹ This is a familiar line of argument that is most elaborately worked out by Adorno, together with Max Horkheimer, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. As Kreuzer also notes, already in this work there are references to Hölderlin when it is argued that “Novalis’s definition according to which all philosophy is homesickness holds good only if this lining is not dissipated in the phantasm of a lost original state, but homeland, and nature itself, are pictured as something that had first to be wrested from myth. Homeland is a state of having escaped. For this reason the criticism that the Homeric legends ‘withdraw from the earth’ is a warranty of their truth. They ‘turn to men’.” See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 61; *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (1947), in *GS* vol. 3, 97. The quote is from one

mythic nature and become what the idea of culture promises: *received nature* (as mentioned above), we need to remember what we thought we could just leave behind, just like Jupiter/Zeus needs to pay tribute to his precondition: “Und willst du bleiben, diene dem Älteren, / Und gönn’ es ihm, daß ihn vor Allen, / Göttern und Menschen, der Sänger nenne!”⁸² [In Hamburger’s translation: “And if you’ll stay, defer to the older god / And grant him that above all others, / Gods and great mortals, the singer name him!”].⁸³

“Philosophically, the anamnesis of suppressed nature, in which Hölderlin tries to separate the wild from the peaceful, is,” according to Adorno, “the consciousness of non-identity, which transcends the compulsory identity of the Logos.”⁸⁴ Again, this remembrance is not about returning to some claimed origin. Adorno carefully stresses Hölderlin’s critique of first principles (something he shares with other early Romantics like Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel) as well as “his emphasis on mediation.”⁸⁵ This means that nature is not a First, to which we can return, but an Other that we must acknowledge in order not to blindly perpetuate “the

of the last poems of Hölderlin’s, entitled “Autumn” (“Der Herbst”). See also Kreuzer, “Hölderlin: Parataxis,” 183. Jephcott quotes Hamburger’s translation of “Autumn” in an earlier edition of *Poems and Fragments* from 1980, the translation is slightly altered in the fourth edition, see Hölderlin, *Poems and Fragments*, 765. For the original poem, see Hölderlin, *StA* vol. 2:1, *Gedichte nach 1800*, 284.

⁸² Hölderlin, *StA* vol. 2:1, *Gedichte nach 1800*, 37. See also Adorno, “Parataxis,” 140–41; *GS* 11, 482.

⁸³ Hölderlin, *Poems and Fragments*, 223.

⁸⁴ Adorno, “Parataxis,” 141; “Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins,” 482: “Philosophisch ist die Anamnese der unterdrückten Natur, in der Hölderlin bereits das Wilde vom Friedlichen sondern möchte, das Bewußtsein von Nichtidentität, das den Identitätszwang des Logos überflügelt.” Cf. the above discussion of anamnesis and remembrance.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 142; 484.

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amorphous and 'barbaric'" we give the name nature in our attempt to escape it.⁸⁶

Adorno claims that Kant's immediate successors followed him in his ambivalence toward nature: "Speculative thought refused to be tempted to take an unequivocal stand—neither for absolute justification for nature nor for absolute justification of spirit. It is not thesis but the tension between the two moments that is the lifeblood of Hölderlin's work as well."⁸⁷

Kant's ambivalence toward nature is manifest in the strain between his conception of nature in the First Critique, where, as mentioned, sensibility and understanding stipulate the laws for how natural objects are perceived, and the claim of the Third Critique that nature gives rules to art through the artistic genius.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ For a more elaborate discussion of Adorno's critique of origins in relation to "Parataxis," see Kreuzer, "Hölderlin: Parataxis," 185–89.

⁸⁷ Adorno, "Parataxis," 143; "Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins," 484: "Eindeutigkeit ließ die Spekulation sich nicht verleiten, weder zur absoluten Rechtfertigung der Natur noch der des Geistes; beides ist ihr gleich verdächtig als abschlußhaftes Prinzip. Die Spannung beider Momente, keine These, ist das Lebenselement auch des Hölderlinschen Werks." Beiser has recently argued that the Romantics—he includes Hölderlin, Friedrich Schlegel, and Novalis as well as Schelling in this movement—are the founders of absolute Idealism, which aimed at a "de-subjectivization of the Kantian legacy," Beiser, *German Idealism*, 6. Hölderlin attempts throughout his philosophical and poetical work, in the words of Beiser (which indeed echo Adorno's statement almost 40 years before), "to overcome all forms of dualism, whether they completely separate the subject or object or emphasize one at the expense of the other," Beiser, *German Idealism*, 389.

⁸⁸ See also Schmid Noerr, *Das Eingedenken der Natur im Subjekt*, ix; Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, 16. The ambivalence can actually be said to still be present within the third Critique itself, because while nature gives laws to genius, in Kant's theory of the sublime human reason triumphs over nature, see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric

The tension-filled relationship between nature and spirit and its products (such as art) is not resolved to neither of the two's advantage by Hölderlin. As Young-Ki Lee notes, nature and art are for Hölderlin neither hierarchically placed nor diametrically opposed against one another.⁸⁹ Instead Hölderlin conceives of nature and art in a dialectical manner, just as Adorno emphasizes. In a letter to his brother, Karl Gok, on 4 June 1799, Hölderlin expresses this dialectical view of nature when he points out that man should "not think himself the lord and master of nature" but instead should:

in all his arts and activity preserve[...] a modesty and piety towards its [that is, nature's] spirit—the same spirit he carries within him and has all about him and which gives him material and energy. For human art and activity, however much it has already achieved and can achieve, cannot produce life, cannot itself create the raw material it transforms and works on; it can develop creative energy, but the energy itself is eternal and not the work of human hands.⁹⁰

Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 140–8 (§27–8) [*Akademie Ausgabe* vol. 5, 257–64]. Adorno is highly critical of this aspect of the Kantian sublime (even though he also thinks that the tension involved here is a more adequate description of aesthetic experience than the harmony pertaining to the experience of the beautiful), see e.g. *Aesthetic Theory*, 276; *GS* vol.7, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 410. Cf. Flodin, "Of Mice and Men," 143–44.

⁸⁹ Lee, *Friedrich Hölderlins Mythopoesie als Neue Mythologie*, 135.

⁹⁰ Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 137. *StA* vol. 6.1, *Briefe*, 329–30: "er sich nicht als Meister und Herr derselben [d.h. der Natur] dünke"; "sich in aller seiner Kunst und Thätigkeit bescheiden und fromm vor dem Geiste der Natur beuge, den er in sich trägt, den er um sich hat, und der ihm Stoff und Kräfte giebt; denn die Kunst und Thätigkeit der Menschen, so viel sie schon gethan hat und thun kann, kann doch Lebendiges nicht hervorbringen, den Urstoff, den sie umwandelt, bearbeitet, nicht selbst erschaffen, sie kann die schaffende Kraft entwickeln, aber die Kraft selbst ist ewig und nicht der Menschenhände Werk." See also Lee, *Friedrich Hölderlins Mythopoesie als Neue Mythologie*, 135.

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Adorno conceives in Hölderlin's late poetry an unmasking of mankind's arrogance:

For the late hymns, subjectivity is neither the absolute nor the ultimate. Subjectivity commits a violation in setting itself up as absolute when it is in fact immanently compelled to self-positing. This is Hölderlin's construal of hubris. It stems from the sphere of mythic conceptions, that of the equivalence of crime and expiation, but its intent is demythologization, in that it rediscovers myth in man's self-deification. Some lines from "Am Quell der Donau," which are perhaps a variation on the celebrated lines of Sophocles, refer to this.⁹¹

Adorno goes on to quote the following passage:

Denn vieles vermag / Und die Fluth und den Fels und
Feuersgewalt auch / Bezwinget mit Kunst der Mensch / Und
achtet, der Hochgesinnte, das Schwerdt / Nicht, aber es steht / Vor
Göttlichem der Starke niedergeschlagen, / Und gleichet dem Wild
fast.⁹²

[In Sieburth's translation:

For the powers of man / Are many, by his art / Flood, stone and
fire are mastered, / Nor, high-minded, does he shy from / The

⁹¹ Adorno, "Parataxis," 143; "Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins," 485: "Den späten Hymnen ist Subjektivität das Absolute nicht und nicht das Letzte. Jene frevle, wo sie als solches sich aufwirft, während sie doch immanent zur Selbstsetzung genötigt ist. Das ist die Konstruktion der Hybris bei Hölderlin. Sie entstammt dem mythischen Vorstellungskreis, dem der Gleichheit von Verbrechen und Buße, will aber auf Entmythologisierung hinaus, indem sie den Mythos in der Selbstvergottung des Menschen wiederfindet. Verse aus dem 'Quell der Donau,' welche vielleicht die berühmten des Sophokles variieren, beziehen sich darauf."

⁹² Hölderlin, *StA* vol. 2:1, *Gedichte nach 1800*, 127.

sword, yet when faced / With the gods, the strong are laid low, /
Almost like the deer.]⁹³

According to Adorno, Hölderlin uses the mythic conception of hubris in order to unmask mankind's relapse into mythology when claiming to have risen completely above nature. The celebrated lines of Sophocles to which Adorno refers are of course the lines of the "Polla ta deina" chorus from *Antigone* (a play Hölderlin also translated). In the chorus mankind's mastery over nature is described in a very similar way as Hölderlin does in "Am Quell der Donau."⁹⁴ Hölderlin also reminds us that there is one thing we humans cannot escape, namely death. "What serves as a sign of the reconciliation of genius, which is no longer hardened and enclosed within itself [...] is that mortality—as opposed to mythic infinity in the bad sense—is attributed to it."⁹⁵ Adorno does not explicitly address it, but this is yet a way in which Hölderlin's conception of the domination of nature bears affinities with the "Polla ta deina" chorus, where it is claimed that while mankind has mastered everything else, "only against Death shall he call for aid in vain."⁹⁶

⁹³ From *HYMNS AND FRAGMENTS* by Friedrich Hölderlin, translated and introduced by Richard Sieburth. Copyright © 1984 by Princeton University Press. Reprinted by permission. (Hölderlin, *Hymns and Fragments*, 55.)

⁹⁴ See Sophocles, *The Plays and Fragments, Part 3: The Antigone*, 2nd ed., trans. R. C. Jebb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891), Greek, 68–76; trans., 69–77 (lines 332–75).

⁹⁵ "Parataxis," 149; "Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins," 490: "Zum Zeichen der Versöhnung des Genius [...] steht ein, daß ihm, dem nicht länger in sich verhärteten, gegen die mythische schlechte Unendlichkeit Sterblichkeit zugesprochen wird."

⁹⁶ Sophocles, *The Antigone*, 74: "Αἰδα μόνον φεῦξιν οὐκ ἐπάξεται"; trans. 75 (lines 361–62).

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Hölderlin's critique of idealism is not of a simple kind; it does not offer myth in contrast to idealist synthesis (identity), but through remembering suppressed nature his poetry manages to point at the possibility of releasing nature and mankind from imprisonment in myth. This is what Adorno calls Hölderlin's "complicity with enlightenment."⁹⁷ There is no returning to the old myth. But instead of the new myth, in Adorno's words "the idealist rule of the One over the Many," which is only "mythic authority over myths,"⁹⁸ what we glimpse in Hölderlin's poetry is the possibility of true reconciliation: "Reconciliation is that of the One with the Many: That is peace," Adorno claims.⁹⁹ In *Aesthetic Theory*, he explains the concept of articulation in aesthetic practice—resulting in a thoroughly formed artwork—as "the redemption of the many in the one."¹⁰⁰ He elucidates this further by referring to a famous line from the Homburg period: "articulation does not consist of differentiation [*Distinktion*] that serves exclusively as a means for unification; rather, it consists in the realization of that differentiated something [*jenes Unterschiedenen*] that is—as Hölderlin wrote—good.

⁹⁷ Adorno, "Parataxis," 145; "Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins," 487: "Einverständnis mit Aufklärung."

⁹⁸ Ibid.: "mythische Herrschaft über die Mythen, die idealistische des Einen über das Viele."

⁹⁹ Ibid., 146; 487: "Versöhnung ist die des Einen mit dem Vielen. Das ist der Friede." In his lecture series on moral philosophy, Adorno also refers to Hölderlin, giving him credit for the idea that "the true unity was the reconciliation of the many, and not a mere identity which came into existence by riding roughshod over the many of which it is composed." Adorno, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Schröder, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 57; *Probleme der Moralphilosophie in Nachgelassene Schriften: Vorlesungen*, vol. 10, ed. Thomas Schröder (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), 88. Cf. Kreuzer, "Hölderlin: Parataxis," 184.

¹⁰⁰ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 190; *Ästhetische Theorie*, 284: "Artikulation ist die Rettung des Vielen im Einen."

Aesthetic unity gains its dignity through the multiplicitous itself. It does justice to the heterogeneous."¹⁰¹ In another passage in *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno elaborates on art's ability to do justice to the multiplicity of nature without reducing nature to material, which is how nature is regarded by identity-thinking:

Every act of making in art is a singular effort to say what the artifact itself is not and what it does not know: precisely this is art's spirit. This is the locus of the idea of art as the idea of the restoration of nature that has been repressed and drawn into the dynamic of history. Nature, to whose imago art is devoted, does not yet in any way exist; what is true in art is something nonexistent. What does not exist becomes incumbent on art in that other for which identity-positing reason, which reduces it to material, uses the word nature. This other is not unity and concept, but rather a multiplicity [*ein Vieles*].¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 191; *Ästhetische Theorie*, 284–85: "sie [die Artikulation] besteht nicht in der Distinktion als einem Mittel der Einheit allein, sondern in der Realisierung jenes Unterschiedenen, das nach Hölderlins Wort gut ist. Ästhetische Einheit empfängt ihre Dignität durchs Mannigfaltige selbst. Sie läßt dem Heterogenen Gerechtigkeit widerfahren." For Hölderlin's famous line, "Unterschiedenes ist / gut," see Hölderlin, *StA* vol. 2:1, *Gedichte nach 1800*, 327. Sieburth translates it as "Distinctions are / good." From HYMNS AND FRAGMENTS by Friedrich Hölderlin, translated and introduced by Richard Sieburth. Copyright © 1984 by Princeton University Press. Reprinted by permission. (Hölderlin, *Hymns and Fragments*, 231.) Cf. Kreuzer, "Hölderlin: Parataxis," 185.

¹⁰² Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 131 [trans. modified]; *Ästhetische Theorie*, 198: "Alles Machen der Kunst ist eine einzige Anstrengung zu sagen, was nicht das Gemachte selbst wäre und was sie nicht weiß: eben das ist ihr Geist. Hier hat die Idee von Kunst als der Wiederherstellung unterdrückter und in die geschichtliche Dynamik verflochtener Natur ihren Ort. Die Natur, deren imago Kunst nachhängt, ist noch gar nicht; wahr an der Kunst ein Nichtseiendes. Es geht ihr auf an jenem Anderen, für das die identitätssetzende Vernunft, die es zu Material reduzierte, das Wort Natur hat. Dies Andere ist nicht Einheit und Begriff sondern ein Vieles."

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Later on, in the same section (“Enigmaticalness, Truth Content, Metaphysics”), Adorno clarifies that aesthetic unity is reconciliatory precisely because it is able to allow the manifold to come to expression: “The aesthetic unity of the multiplicitous [*Einheit des Mannigfaltigen*] appears as though it had done no violence but had been chosen by the multiplicitous itself. It is thus that unity [...] crosses over into reconciliation.”¹⁰³

Instead of idealist synthesis then, Hölderlin achieves (and advocates) aesthetic synthesis—a unity that is not identity but which does justice to the heterogeneous, the multiplicitous, the sensuous manifold, that is, to what in idealist terms is called nature. In “Parataxis” Adorno claims that “real reconciliation” is reconciliation between “inner and outer,” or “in the language of idealism: reconciliation between genius and nature.”¹⁰⁴

Philosophical Idealism of the mature Hegelian kind did not manage to achieve this. Instead it blindly continued the domination of nature when it regarded nature as spirit's opposite, taking its lead so to speak rather from Kant's conception of the sublime than from his conception of genius.¹⁰⁵ Genius in art is the self-reflection of the Idealistic

¹⁰³ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 134; *Ästhetische Theorie*, 202: “Die ästhetische Einheit des Mannigfaltigen erscheint, als hätte sie diesem keine Gewalt angetan, sondern wäre aus dem Mannigfaltigen selbst erraten. Dadurch spielt Einheit [...] in Versöhnung hinüber.”

¹⁰⁴ Adorno, “Parataxis,” 146; “Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins,” 488: “die reale [Versöhnung] von Innen und Außen”; “in idealistischer Sprache ausgedrückt, die [Versöhnung] von Genius und Natur.”

¹⁰⁵ As Dieter Henrich's works have shown, Hölderlin was crucial for the evolution of German Idealism, and especially for the development of Hegel's philosophy, see e.g. Dieter Henrich, “Hegel und Hölderlin,” in *Hegel im Kontext*

(Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), 9–40, and “Historische Voraussetzungen von Hegels System,” in *ibid.*, 41–72. For an English account that traces the advancement of German Idealism and the role of the early Romantics in this advancement, see Beiser, *German Idealism*. Unlike Henrich (see note 6 above) Beiser considers Hölderlin to be a Romantic. Beiser also emphasizes that “the development of German Idealism consists not in an increasing subjectivism but in the very opposite: a growing realism and naturalism” (*ibid.*, 3) and that the traditional “subjectivist interpretation of German idealism must trace its origins back to Hegel's history of philosophy.” (*ibid.*, 9) Hegel's interpretation of his own system as the fulfilment of German idealism has “had a deep impact upon the historiography of German idealism.” (*ibid.*) In Hölderlin, we do not only find the inauguration of Idealism but his writings, both his philosophical works and his poetry, also point beyond the limits of the Idealist system, which is something Beiser's work shows in an illuminating way, see *ibid.*, 375–406. This is of course the reason why Hölderlin is so important for Adorno. See also Kreuzer, “Adornos und Heideggers Hölderlin,” 371 (note 34).

spirit (the acknowledging of itself as nature) according to Adorno,¹⁰⁶ who further claims that “[g]enius would be consciousness of the nonidentical object. To use one of Hölderlin's favorite terms, the world of genius is ‘das Offene,’ that which is open and as such familiar, that which is no longer dressed and prepared and thereby alienated.”¹⁰⁷ Adorno also calls genius “the spirit of song, in distinction to that of domination” and claims that genius is “spirit itself revealing itself as nature, instead of enchaining nature.”¹⁰⁸ The same line of thought is present in *Aesthetic Theory*: “Art's spirit is the self-recognition of spirit itself as natural.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Adorno, “Parataxis,” 146; “Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins,” 488.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*; 488: “Er [der Genius] wäre das Bewußtsein des nichtidentischen Objekts. Die Welt des Genius ist, mit Hölderlins Lieblingswort, das Offene und als solches das Vertraute, nicht länger Zugerüstete und dadurch Entfremdete.”

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 146–47; 488: “der Geist des Gesangs, zum Unterschied von dem der Herrschaft; Geist selber sich öffnend als Natur, anstatt diese zu fesseln.”

¹⁰⁹ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 196; *Ästhetische Theorie*, 292: “Ihr Geist [der Geist der Kunst] ist Selbstbesinnung auf sein eigenes Naturhaftes.”

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It is this kind of reflection that “divides Hölderlin from both myth and romanticism [in other words, romanticism in the bad sense: irrationalism and regression],” according to Adorno.¹¹⁰ Hölderlin both thinks that reflection is responsible for the separation between nature and spirit (“in accordance with the spirit of his times,” as Adorno writes) but at the same time he “puts his trust in the organon of reflection, language.”¹¹¹ Hölderlin’s self-reflexive use of language in his late poetry shows that the way to reconciliation is not a backward movement: “In Hölderlin the philosophy of history, which conceived origin and reconciliation in simple opposition to reflection as the state of utter sinfulness, is reversed,”¹¹² Adorno claims, and quotes the following lines from “Brod und Wein” (“Bread and Wine”): “So ist der Mensch; wenn da ist das Gut, und es sorget mit Gaaben / Selber ein Gott für ihn, kennet und sieht er es nicht. / Tragen muß er, zuvor; nun aber nennt er sein Liebstes, / Nun, nun müssen dafür Worte, wie Blumen, entstehn.”¹¹³ [In Christopher Middleton’s translation: “Man’s nature is such: when the good is there and a god / Himself is the giver, the gifts are out of sight and of mind. / First he must

learn to endure; but now he names what he loves, / Now, now must the words come into being, like flowers.”]¹¹⁴

In order not to remain in the dark, where “the gifts are out of sight and of mind,” humankind has to reflect on, bring into consciousness, and name what is seen as the opposite of reflection, consciousness, and language, namely, speechless nature.¹¹⁵ Love has to manifest itself in the naming of the Other of Spirit, but this naming is not Logos, the creation *ex nihilo* through naming, instead in this poetic naming that is an act of love, the words must “come into being, like flowers.” That is, they emerge from the mimetic interaction between Spirit and Other, in a way reminiscent of the “The Shelter at Hahrtdt,” where the ground “Flowers up, far from mute.” This is a manner of acknowledging our debt to the Other, the nonidentical; in short, it is a way of recognizing “the eloquence of something that has no language.”

IV. Conclusion

Interpretations of Adorno’s conception of nature often emphasize his description of human history as entwined with the domination of nature, and therefore as a blind

¹¹⁰ Adorno, “Parataxis,” 147; “Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins,” 488: “Die Schwelle Hölderlins gegen Mythik und Romantik gleichermaßen ist Reflexion.”

¹¹¹ Ibid.; 488–49: “im Einklang dem Geist seiner Zeit”; “hat ihrem Organon, dem Wort, sich anvertraut.”

¹¹² Ibid.; 489: “In Hölderlin kehrt die Geschichtsphilosophie sich um, welche Ursprung und Versöhnung in einfachen Gegensatz dachte zur Reflexion als dem Stand der vollendeten Sündhaftigkeit.” Jürgen Link discusses Hölderlin’s conception of nature in relation to Rousseau, and argues that Hölderlin’s *retour à la nature* is of an inventive, i.e. a progressive, and not a regressive kind. See Jürgen Link, *Hölderlin—Rousseau: Inventive Rückkehr* (Opladen/Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1999).

¹¹³ Hölderlin, *StA* vol. 2:1, *Gedichte nach 1800*, 92–93.

¹¹⁴ Friedrich Hölderlin, Eduard Mörike, *Selected Poems*, trans. Christopher Middleton (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1972), 41. I am aware that the last line was “appropriated” (to speak with Anselm Haverkamp) and made famous by Heidegger in *On the Way to Language*, but as previously stated, I cannot here engage in a comparison between Adorno’s and Heidegger’s different interpretations of Hölderlin’s poetry. See Anselm Haverkamp, *Leaves of Mourning: Hölderlin’s Late Work*, trans. Vernon Chadwick (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 4.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Karin Dahlke, *Äußerste Freiheit: Wahnsinn / Sublimierung / Poetik des Tragischen der Moderne. Lektüren zu Hölderlins Grund zum Empedokles und zu den Anmerkungen zum Oedipus und zur Antigone* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008), 234–35.

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continuation of nature *qua* compulsion. This is one side of Adorno's conception, and it is by all means important. But what is indicated by Hölderlin's late poetry and his other writings is the possibility of true reconciliation between humankind and nature. Through analysing Hölderlin's transformation of the form of unity, Adorno finds a real intimation of what a radically changed relationship between humankind and nature would look like, beyond the socio-historical disfigurement of this relationship to one of domination. That is why Adorno repeatedly comes back to Hölderlin's writings, to whose notion and enactment of utopian openness he is very much indebted in his effort to indicate an alternative to the dialectic of enlightenment.

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