Hölderlin’s Earth- Kir Kuiken

1. **Hölderlin: from the “Death of Nature” to “the Earth”**

Once various scientific societies and associations began to debate the use of the term “Anthropocene” as a geological time period on the same scale as the Holocene, what seemed to register was the paradox of a “shock of the new” that had been long prepared. However one dates the start of this period, it was as if an event had overtaken the “Anthropos” from behind, as if what was “new” in the “Anthropo”- cene (the “cene” deriving from the Greek “kainos” for “new”) had emerged suddenly in the present as a forgotten archaism, making it difficult to say exactly where the catastrophe began, or to anticipate how it might end. This shock has launched a further set of reactions, from “new materialisms” to renewed attention to alternative cosmologies, in an attempt to have thought measure up to the seemingly unprecedented nature of the event we call the Anthropocene, and to mark the ways in which our current coordinates, concepts and concerns are no longer adequate to think it, much less to respond to its exigency. This in turn has proliferated a kind of post-mortem on a whole series of philosophemes or concepts deemed too complicit with the crisis. Latour’s “Politics of Nature,”[[1]](#endnote-1) for instance, argues for a final liquidation of the main concept in its title—Nature— since it has authorized a whole set of power relations grounded on a constitutive exclusion. The notion of a “nature” separate from the “social,” for Latour, underpins a politics without due process for those elements of the collective (non-humans of various kinds, including non-human homo sapiens) whose externality to the *polis* withdraws them from the domain of the political itself.

From Timothy Morton’s notion of the “mesh”[[2]](#endnote-2) to Latour’s conception of “multi-naturalism” or the “pluriverse”[[3]](#endnote-3) (a term he borrows from William James), the concept of the Anthropocene opens up a world of inextricable relation and intertwinement. Just as there is no “human” independent of the various forms of life on which it depends (bacterial or otherwise), so is there no “pure nature” devoid of humanity’s intervention. A new political ecology comes to replace, or at least supercede, political economy. However, it is precisely the question of the nature of the “collectivity” that lies on the hither side of this “death of nature” that I want to interrogate today. The “common world” of which Latour speaks in “Politics of Nature,” (drawing on his conception of actor-network theory) has as its explicit focus the notion that “humans and non-humans are engaged in a history that should render their separation impossible.”[[4]](#endnote-4) The result, for Latour, is a new form of collectivity, one predicated not on the model of the “one,” necessarily, but certainly on the absence of the two, the absence of a unitary border between nature and culture, human and non-human etc.

What must be questioned, however, is exactly how one interprets the “death of nature” upon which Latour’s work is predicated. What exactly one means by it seems to me to alter the kind and nature of the intertwinements, and therefore the contours of the political ecology, that is grounded on it. What if the “death of nature” called for by Latour, Descola[[5]](#endnote-5) and others were an insufficient starting point for articulating the kind of collectivity capable of responding to the event or crisis of the Anthropocene? What if the “mesh,” the “pluriverse” and all the other various names for this collectivity were threatened by something akin to what Nancy, referencing Marx, calls the “equivalence of catastrophes,”[[6]](#endnote-6) where so-called “natural” disasters such as hurricanes and floods can no longer rigorously be distinguished from man-made disasters such as Fukushima. As Nancy insists, that very equivalence, and the totality of interdependences that constitute it, *is* the catastrophe itself, which acts as the limit condition against which any rethinking of collectivity or, to use Nancy’s term, any “communism of nonequivalence” would have to be measured. As Frédéric Neyrat argues in *La Part Inconstructible de la Terre* (“The Inconstructible Part of the Earth”),[[7]](#endnote-7) the “death” of nature is far from a recent event; it has in fact occurred repeatedly in the history of the West. Neyrat names at least four deaths of nature (there are likely more), including the pre-Socratics’ transformation of nature into substance, monotheisms’ conversion of nature into the medium through which God expresses his commandments, the 17th century’s mechanization, quantification and mathematization of nature, and our own current global financialization of nature into a tradeable resource.[[8]](#endnote-8) If “Nature” has been dying for some time now, then its most recent entombment is perhaps more ambiguous than Latour admits, and correlatively, so is the new collectivity that emerges as a result.

One particular form that “death of nature” takes is in the increasing interest in the motif of the “Earth” in late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as both irreducible to the natural world opened up by science, and to the world conceived either as the secular realm distinct from God’s kingdom, or as the arena of Man’s, or humanity’s, self-production. This motif emerges in several different contexts in the period in response to both the development of natural science, and to the progressive reliance on natural right as the cornerstone for a reinvention of the political. It tends to enact a disorganization of the coordinates that define both the natural world “out there” as well as the politics of nature that underwrite social contract theory and other modern conceptions of political sovereignty. The Earth comes to signify something—a basic ground of the political—that remains irreducible to nature, but also to any political theology or cosmology that would reduce it either to a particular place within the human “world,” or to a sublunary natural “human habitat.” “The Earth,” rather, comes to stand in for an exteriority to the nature/culture divide that cannot be appropriated by any politics dependent on that distinction, and begins to call into question the models of sovereignty, of the *polis*, and of nature that depend on it. Of the many Romantic-era writers that explicitly treat “the Earth” as a fundamental theme, it is arguably Friedrich Hölderlin’s who most explicitly places this motif at the heart of his poetics and thought. The motif of “the Earth” materializes in his work at nearly every juncture: when he articulates the structure and aim of poetry itself, when he articulates the specificity of modernity in relation to classical Greece, and when he attempts to articulate the specificity of the “world” that modernity enacts in contrast to the one it purports to leave behind. In each case, as I will argue, what is at stake is the development of a (poetic) political-ecology, one that treats the Earth as the in-appropriable ground of poetry and politics, and thus as an *event* that undermines traditional forms of sovereignty, whether these take the form of the unified lyric voice, or the form of the privileging of the human as the political actor par excellence.

Focus on the question of the role of the Earth in Hölderlin has tended by and large to be filtered through Heidegger’s appropriation of the concept for his own conception of the “fourfold.”[[9]](#endnote-9) Whereas Heidegger positions the Earth in terms of the interplay between revealing and concealing, Hölderlin’s own interest in the motif of the Earth is centered instead on its *irreducibility* to a given world, or a given conception of nature. Heidegger effectively dismisses the notion that Hölderlin’s poetry is concerned with nature. When the word does occur in Hölderlin’s writings, Heidegger almost always emphasizes the extent to which it must be understood in its “original” Greek sense as *physis*:the appearing of what is. Lacoue-Labarthe, by contrast, interprets the motif of the Earth in Hölderlin according to its opposition to (political)-theology, suggesting that its significance has to do with Hölderlin’s renunciation of the divine, and with what he calls the “caesura of the speculative.”[[10]](#endnote-10) Yet what both of these interpretations never quite arrive at is the question of how Hölderlin’s poetry specifically addresses what it means to “dwell poetically on the Earth,” since this “dwelling” is not an origin or birthplace, but a series of different interactions with something that remains irreducible either to “nature” or to phenomenality itself. Heidegger gives this phrase from Hölderlin a specific interpretation that emphasizes the way poetry makes the Earth a “dwelling” and the way language is the “house of Being”; poetry, in his interpretation, is what makes the dwelling a “home.” Hölderlin’s emphasis, however, is on the way “dwelling on the Earth” impacts the relation between poetry and the Earth. In other words, Heidegger’s emphasis on the poetic as the site of dwelling is reversed in Hölderlin; it is “dwelling on the Earth”—exposure to an irreducible, unappropriable externality— that produces the poetics. In short, it is precisely because man “dwells” on the Earth that the variety of different representations of nature and of the Earth itself become possible. Hölderlin’s poetics, in short, does not presume a return to a native land. Instead his poems articulate a *durftiger-zeit* or “between time” that marks a transition between two different forms of dwelling in, on, or with the Earth, developing what Schmitt might call a new “nomos” of the Earth,[[11]](#endnote-11) provided that by that term is not meant a form of law created by the appropriation of land. Hölderlin develops a poetics that is itself “appropriated” by the Earth, that is, exposed to its irreducibility to representation or its being encapsulated within a schema in which it becomes an object or a foundation. We move in Höolderlin from the Earth conceived as the realm of “nature,” to something far stranger: Hölderlin’s Earth articulates a quasi-Latourian “death of nature,” but only by assuming this death as a *fait accompli* rather than as something that must be enacted. One can only call this a “political ecology” on the condition that the “*eco*” derived from “*oikos*” and designating a “home,” “habitat” or “dwelling” is understood in relation to what Frédéric Neyrat calls an “ecology of separation,” (N 237-320/ 133-177), which designates, among other things, the *withdrawal* of the Earth from the status of an object into something more akin to an event or a trajectory. That withdrawal in turn not only destabilizes any sense of “dwelling” predicated on a shared belonging (to Being, say), but also invokes a poetics of the Earth no longer grounded on the nature/ culture divide.

Hölderlin develops the motif of the Earth throughout his oeuvre, but the clearest tie between this motif and his conception of poetry is to be found in his difficult prose texts. These texts at once lay out the structures implicit in his poetics, as well as define how the specificity of those structures relate to key thematics within his poetry, including the motif of the Earth. In “On the Difference of Poetic Modes,” for instance, the notion of the Earth is coupled with Hölderlin’s development of the idea of “alternating poetic tones,” which he claims characterizes not just his own, but all forms of poetic expression. For Hölderlin, what distinguishes different genres are not their external form, but the relationship between what he calls their “underlying tone” (*Grundton* or *Bedeutung*, a work’s significance or meaning) and its mode of presentation or *Darstellung*. This relation varies from work to work, but it also varies *within* each work through an internal oscillation of tone and presentation that never arrives at what one might call their “alignment.” In fact, as anyone reading Hölderlin’s prose can attest, this alternation appears to take the form of an interminable oscillation between two poles of an opposition, in what Lacoue-Labarthe has identified as the quasi-Heideggerian logic of *Ent-Fernung*,*[[12]](#endnote-12)* a kind of hyperbolic logic of excess that takes the form of “the more x it is, the more y it is,” the closer it is, the more distant, the more interior it is, the more exterior and so on.

This logic comes into play, among other places, in his description of the interplay of tone and presentation in poetry, which oscillates between an underlying ‘tone’ or mood and a form of presentation that in the end transforms that mood into its opposite. Regarding lyric poetry, for instance, Hölderlin writes:

In its basic mood (*Grundstimmung*) the lyric poem is the *more sensuous*, in that this [basic mood] contains a unity which lends itself most easily; precisely for that reason does it not strive in the outer appearance for reality, serenity and gracefulness; it evades the sensuous connection and presentation so much (because the pure basic tone (*Grundton*) inclines precisely toward it) that it is rather miraculous in its formations and assembly of these.[[13]](#endnote-13)

The sentence continues, and as it does so, it passes through a series of further oscillations between tone and presentation. Yet the basic principle remains the same throughout its various permutations— the work’s very tendency toward one or another presentation or signification is the very means by which that tendency is refracted or displaced. The crucial aspect of this process is that the “basic mood” or *Grundton* of a given poem is not refracted simply through the medium of its expression, as if tone and presentation were of different orders. Instead, the very “nature” of the “basic mood” overcomes itself, one might say, in a ceaseless oscillation, a continuous departure from itself.

1. **The Earth, The Organic, The Aorgic**

What then, does this oscillation of poetic tones have to do with the Earth? Among the many forms of representation or “art character” that Hölderlin lists as characterizing a poem, one in particular is most pointedly associated with the tragic: what he calls the “idealistic image (idealischen Bilde)” (PW, 889/ 1:83). In fact, it is not the content of a work that determines its genre, but the oscillating interplay of a poem’s tone and presentation. “On the Difference of Poetic Modes” starts by providing a set of definitions:

The lyric, in appearance idealistic poem, is naïve in its significance. It is a continuous metaphor of feeling. The epic, in appearance naïve poem, is heroic in its significance. It is the metaphor of great aspirations. The tragic, in appearance heroic poem, is idealistic in its significance. It is the metaphor of an intellectual intuition. (PW,889/ 1:83).

In each case, a poem’s presentation remains in a certain tension with it “basic mood,” yet the fact that the tragic form *appears* (*Schein*) heroic, but is in fact “idealistic” in its significance (*Bedeutung*), could be said to characterize a fundamental tension in much of Hölderlin’s poetics. That is, what first appears as a lament for the old gods, for a divine that has absconded, and as a reinvigorated desire for the invention of new god(s),[[14]](#endnote-14) in fact turns into something else entirely. This heroic representation instantiates a tragic return to an “Earth” that has begun to slip away from its moorings, its determination by a particular theological or ontological regime. In this moment, the opposition between the Earth and the divine ceases to operate, and a different understanding of the Earth comes to the fore, one predicated on its irreducibility to a given “world.”

Something of this irreducibility is in fact legible in the central tension between Earth and world found in Heidegger’s “Origin of the Work of Art” yet, as we will see, there remains an important divergence between Heidegger and Hölderin’s understanding of the relation between Earth and world. If, for Heidegger, the work of art is the “setting up of a world” (WA,170), this setting up occurs only against the backdrop of an Earth “sheltered” from this formation. Since neither animal nor plant “have” a world,[[15]](#endnote-15) and are therefore deprived of a relation to beings *as such*, Heidegger is compelled to describe the specific “worldlessness” of stone, for example, in manifestly different terms, casting the Earth in the role of “that which comes forth and shelters”: “That into which the work sets itself back and which it causes to come forth in this setting back of itself we call the earth. Earth is that which comes forth and shelters… Upon the Earth and in it, historical man grounds his dwelling in the world” (WA,171-172). Heidegger here makes the Earth that which withdraws itself from the world. If animals are “poor in world,” the stone by contrast remains connected to a world only by its refusal of and by it. The stone’s “worldlessness” therefore pertains to its status as the “unconcealed,” as that which cannot be rendered by any form of measurement or calculation: “If we try to lay hold of the stone’s heaviness in another way, by placing the stone on a balance, we merely bring the heaviness into the form of a calculated weight. This perhaps very precise determination of the stone remains a number, but the weight’s burden has escaped us” (WA,172). The Earth, therefore, “shows itself only when it remains undisclosed and unexplained. Earth thus shatters every attempt to penetrate it” (WA,172). The setting-forth of the Earth by the world is thus figured in Heidegger as a “strife” rather than an outright opposition; a strife that, moreover, functions as a metaphor for the movement of truth itself, the disclosure of the undisclosable in the movement of *aletheia*, the simultaneous revealing and concealing that characterizes the “world” itself.

While Hölderlin’s conception of the relation of Earth and World clearly influenced Heidegger, his own interpretation of this relation nevertheless entails some crucial differences that do not allow the tension between Earth and World to unfold as “the intimacy of a simple belonging to one another” (WA,174). The main aspect of this difference pertains to the way Hölderlin weds the motif of the Earth to the unfolding oscillation of poetic tones. In other words, unlike for Heidegger, for whom poetics is more generally the “founding” of a world in the poetic word, which in turn “sets forth” what remains irreducible to that world (i.e the Earth), for Hölderlin poetry remains caught in the continuous and irresolvable jointure of an oscillation between presentation and signification. This oscillation proves *incapable* of presenting the Earth as its hidden ground, as a single signification that presents itself through its absence, or as that which remains undisclosed “within” a given world, since any underlying signification is eventually overcome by yet another disjunction between presentation and signification without any single, unified sense emerging. In other words, the Earth’s non-disclosure, in Hölderlin, is no longer linked to a given “world” as its constitutive abandonment. Its emergence occurs as a result of an excessive striving for precisely its opposite: for the unearthly, or for the divine. And the Earth “appears” in Hölderlin only as a result of that excess re-merging as the irreducibility of the Earth to the “founding word” of the poet in a way neither the poet nor his poetry can fully account for.

These reflections are necessarily grounded in Hölderlin’s understanding of the relation between the productive capacities of poetry, and those of “nature,” since the latter provides the former with its most acute example of what it means to constitute a “world.” In one of Hölderlin’s earliest treatises, “The Ground for Empedocles,” he expressly takes up the question of the relation between art and nature in order to explain why his early play (*The Death of Empedocles*) is an attempt to overcome the opposition between art and nature as the mark of a genuinely modern form of tragedy. The opening of the treatise prefigures in many ways the “alternation of tones” theory that will become Hölderlin’s more explicit focus in “On the Difference of Poetic Modes,” since he describes his tragedy as proceeding through a variety of “tones” each of which is in tension with the “reflection” or “sensation” meant to depict it. What Hölderlin makes explicit, however, is that even though the “subject matter” of the tragedy is “foreign” to the world of the poet, the poet’s selection of this world as a “vessel” for his own is strictly “analogical.” That is, the poet’s world can only be reflected back to him and to others through the medium of the foreign (in this case, ancient Greek tragedy), because that world is precisely the *converse* of his own. A “modern” tragedy is possible only insofar as it engages Greek forms to articulate an entirely different content.

In other words, something like the opposition between the Greeks and the Hesperians that Hölderlin describes in the December 4, 1801 letter to Böhlendorff appears to be operative here. In order to generate a form of art that is “the free use of one’s own” Hölderlin insists in the letter, requires a relation to the foreign that refuses simple imitation. It must repeat the inimitable disjunction between tone and expression that characterizes all artforms, and that leads the work of art to overcome its own conditions of possibility. Hölderlin insists: “We learn nothing with more difficulty than to freely use the national. And, I believe that it is precisely the clarity of the presentation that is so natural to us as is for the Greek the fire from heaven” (PW,149/ 2:927). In other words, what is “natural” for the Greeks is “fire from heaven,” a sacred or ideal pathos that occurs in connection with the divine. For us, we modern “Hesperians” it is the reverse; what is “inborn” for us is “clarity of presentation” (die Klahrheit der Darstellung). And *because* each is “inborn,” it is precisely the opposite that ends up being “mastered.” The Greeks mastered sobriety or the “clarity of presentation” because what defined their world is “sacred pathos,” whereas for we Hesperians what comes most naturally is *precisely that pathos*, whereas what is most “their own” (the sobriety or the “clarity of presentation”) remains elusive for us.

In short, to return to the problematic central to “Ground for Empedocles,” the world of the modern poet, though heterogenous to the “outward presentations” that define ancient tragedy, must nonetheless be located and seized hold of through an imitation of ancient tragedy. This takes place only by reproducing the *inimitable* disjunction between presentation and tone, between the “clarity of presentation” and “fire from heaven” that defined the Greeks. This must be done, in other words, without strict imitation, without the reproduction of the precise relationship between the two that defined the Greeks.Hence the reason why Hölderlin must turn to that most ancient of questions concerning the relation of art to nature: he’s not simply describing the imitation of nature by art, but a more complicated process—demonstrating the way nature and art are *already intertwined* to the extent that they are both modes of presentation and, as a result, define the contours of a given “world” by the specific way in which those modes of presentation interact. For Hölderlin, there is no nature “over there” (to paraphrase Latour) which must be “represented” by art in order to accomplish itself, in a kind of Aristotelian mimesis. Rather, art and nature form a unity governed by an internal tension similar to the tension inherent in the opposition between representation and tone in poetry. What constitutes a “world” for Hölderlin is not a “decision” about beings that allows them to appear *as* beings of a certain kind. There is only an attempt to encounter (poetically) a set of modes of presentation in tension with each other that make a given world possible, even if the exacerbation of those tensions demonstrates that that world they have formed is in a state of collapse.

Thus, while Hölderlin’s approach appears at first to mirror Aristotle’s conception of the imitation and completion of nature by art, this dialectic is in fact *supplanted* by something close to the internal oscillation described later in “On the Difference of Poetic Modes.” If, as Holderlin puts in in “Ground for Empedocles”: “art is the blossom, the perfection of nature” (Die Kunst ist die Blüte, die Vollendung der Natur) (PW,53/ 2:116), this is so only because two different forms of production and organization come to vie with each other, rather than reproduce one another. They form of “world” in and through their disjunction, a differentiation that both constitutes the relative unity of that “world” *and* its conditions of its dissolution. To grasp this process poetically entails, for Hölderlin, the introduction of an important distinction found throughout his oeuvre: the distinction between “organic” (*organisch*e) and “aorgic” (*aorgischen*) principles. This opposition has given commentators some difficulty, especially since “aorgic” appears to be a Hölderlinian neologism. Veronique Foti asserts that the organic/ aorgic opposition is simply another name for the *physis*/ *techne* distinction, which in turn becomes translated into the nature/culture divide. Yet, this doesn’t always seem to be the case. Though Hölderlin draws on Schelling’s opposition between *organisch* and *anorganisch* principles,[[16]](#endnote-16) his organic/ aorgic distinction implies something more than a divergence between a purely natural and a purely non-natural organism or structure.

In fact, Hölderlin’s “organic” represents a tendency— in works of art as much as in “nature”— towards a more or less stable, but regulated order. The “aorgic,” by contrast, marks a tendency toward dissolution and disorganization; the coming undone of a particular temporary equilibrium. Hölderlin first introduces these terms in “Ground for Empedocles” when he is attempting to describe the specificity of the “world” the titular character of his play—Empedocles— inhabits, claiming that, as with the particular relationship between art and nature that characterizes the Greeks, Empedocles’ world is defined by a precise dynamic between “organic” and “aorgic” principles: “The more organic, artistic man is the blossom of nature, the more aorgic nature, when it is sensed purely, by the purely organized, purely and uniquely formed man, affords him the feeling of perfection” (PW,53/ 2:116-17). The dynamic between these two tendencies characterizes Empedocles’ world, but also signals the overcoming of that world in their mutual antagonism—Hölderlin calls it the “highest hostility” (*der höchsten Feindseligkeit*) which is also their “highest reconciliation” (*die höchste Versöhnung*) (PW,54/ 2:118)— of their relation. He conceives of his own play, in a sense, as nothing but the unfolding of this tension, exemplified by the death of Empedocles.

As with other oppositions in Holderlin, however, the organic/ aorgic opposition that defines Empedocles world exists only to produce a form of “becoming in dissolution” (*Das Weden im Vergehen*)[[17]](#endnote-17) a form of self-overcoming where each side of the opposition transcends into its opposite. To avoid being abstract, in order for the opposition to become real, or “known” according to Hölderlin:

it must present itself by separating itself in the excess of inwardness where the opposed principles interchange so that the organic, which surrendered itself too much to nature, and which forgot its essence, transcends into the extreme of autonomous activity, whereas nature, at least in its effects on reflective man, transcends into the extreme of the aorgic, the incomprehensible, the non-sensuous, the unformed, the unlimited. (PW,53/ 2:117)

In other words, what initially appeared on one side—defined organization and the regulated order of the world known as the organic— precisely in its desire for organization, “interchanges” with the aorgic (Hölderlin is careful not to use terms such as “sublation” that might treat this exchange as a dialectic), and thereby undoes itself and the opposition that defines it at the same time. There is no reconciliation between the organic and the aorgic, only a “uniting moment that dissolves more and more, like a phantasm” and which “reacts against the organic in aorgic manner, distances itself from it” (PW,43/ 2:118). This moment fundamentally characterizes Empedocles’s belonging to his world which is in the process of dissolution. As Hölderlin insists, as a character, Empedocles embodies the *contretemps* between the organic and the aorgic, and so “is a son of his heaven and his time, of his fatherland, a son of tremendous oppositions of nature and art in which the world appeared before his eyes” (PW,54/ 2:118-19). As a result, he becomes the “victim of his time” (*ein Opfer seiner Zeit*) (PW,57/ 2:121). Unable to reconcile the opposition between nature and art that governs the totality of the world to which he belongs, he becomes a necessary “sacrifice” that reveals, in his death, the death of his world: “[the destiny of his epoch] demanded a sacrifice where man in his entirety becomes real and visible as that wherein the destiny of his epoch seems to dissolve, where the extremes seem to unite truly and visibly in one but therefore are united too closely” (PW,56/ 2:121).

The oscillation between the organic and the aorgic functions both as that which defines the plot of *The Death of Empedocles*, and as that which forms Empedocles as a character by making him its archetype or figure. This oscillation also defines Empedocles’s “destiny.” But this form of destiny must be read in a thoroughly *modern* sense since it is not predicated on a particular cosmology—as it might be said to be in Sophocles, for example, in the relation between gods and mortals. Rather, Hölderlin imitates Greek tragedy in order to witness its self-overcoming, to pass through the foreign (the Greeks) and the collapse of “their” world, to the dissolution of our own. Perhaps this is why, once Hölderlin finally abandoned his play after three failed attempts to write it, the ending of the third and final attempt breaks off fragmentarily with the chorus proclaiming a “new world” that is simultaneously contrasted with the Earth:

New World

and it looms, a brazen vault

the sky above us, curse lames

the limbs of humankind, and the nourishing, gladdening

gifts of the earth are like chaff, she

mocks us with her presents, our mother

and all is semblance—[[18]](#endnote-18)

Neue Welt

und es hängt, ein ehern Gewölbe

der Himmel über uns, es lähmt Fluch

die Glieder den Menschen, und die stärkenden, die

erfreuenden

Gaben der Erde sind wie Spreu, es

Spottet unser, mit ihren Geschenken, die Mutter

Und alles ist Schein— (DE,188/ 2:152)

At the end of the play, in the concluding non-reconciliation between organic and aorgic that defines Empedocles’s “sacrifice,” we are left only with a heaven that has become an empty “brazen vault,” and a world that has become nothing but “semblance” (*Schein*). Far from a sacrifice that reconciles mortals with gods, Empedocles’s death merely gestures toward a newly reconfigured Earth, whose gifts “mock” those who remain, along with a world that has fundamentally been dissolved. In fact, Hölderlin’s notes for the continuation of the third version of the play describe Empedocles as “one in and through whom a world dissolves and in the same instant renews itself” (in dem und durch den eine Welt sich zugleich auflöse und erneue) (DE,194 2:154). In other words, *The Death of Empedocles* ends at the moment of the dissolution of a given world (and its concomitant configuration of the Earth), without necessarily gesturing at what follows out of it. This is perhaps why “Ground for Empedocles” makes of the play’s final sacrifice a figure not of the “reconciliation” between opposing forces, but of their fundamental *separation*—a separation figured by Empedocles himself: “He is destiny itself, only with the exception that the contending forces inside him are tied to a consciousness, to a point of separation (Scheidpunkt) which keeps them facing one another in a clear and controlled manner” (PW,61/ 2:127).

1. **Earth and the “Original Separation”**

By the time Hölderlin had abandoned his own attempts to write a tragedy, and had begun the task of attempting to “translate” Sophocles’s *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*, writing his enigmatic prose “notes” to both plays, that “separation” takes on a more distinctive significance. It is removed, first of all, from the context of individual “consciousness,” and transformed into a question not of the “world-forming” capacities of poetry, but of its encounter with a reality for which it has no coordinates, no presentational or performative capacities. This pushes the “point of separation” (*Scheidpunkt*) attested to in *Death of Empedocles* toward an entirely different conception of the relation between world and Earth, this time one that is no longer structured by its association with the divine. The “real separation” (wirkliche Trennung) (PW,86/ 1:893) that emerges as a result is still due to the irreconcilable dynamic of the oscillation between order and dissolution, the organic and the aorgic. Yet, when Hölderlin presents this oscillation again in his description of the “alternation of tones” in “On the Difference of Poetic Modes,” a different conception of the Earth begins to emerge at the juncture of the “separation” or “caesura” that Hölderlin makes central to his reading of Sophocles. It becomes clear that his thinking about classic tragedy is intertwined with his own articulation of the purpose and structure of poetry more generally, insofar as it repeats the hyperbolic logic of inversion found in the organic/ aorgic dynamic. This time, however, the overall problematic concerns not just the conditions for a properly modern tragedy, but the tensions at work in poetry itself, specifically the way tone and expression are repeatedly differentiated and placed into tension. The basic organic/ aorgic distinction is, in a sense, built in to the opposition between tone and expression as well. An epic poem, for example, is initially characterized by a “naïve” expression, whereas its underlying tone is aorgic/ heroic

The epic, in its outer appearance *naïve poem*, in its *basic tone* (*Grundton*) the *more pathetic*, heroic, aorgic one; hence it strives in its art-character not for energy, movement and life, but for precision, calmness and pictorial quality. The opposition between its basic tone and its art-character, between its proper and its improper, metaphorical tone is resolved in the idealistic where it neither loses so much life as in its narrowly delimiting art-character nor as much moderation as in the immediate expression of its basic tone. (PW,83-84/ 1:890).

For Hölderlin, then, every poem progresses through a series of oppositions between tone and expression, by which it strives to define its “unity.” Again, the hyperbolic logic Hölderlin articulates in “Ground for Empedocles” is at work, except that it is not so clear that a “resolution” of that tension is possible, as it appears to be in the *death* of Empedocles. In fact, this striving after some kind of unity between tone and expression leads only to what Hölderlin calls a “real separation” (*wiklichen Trennung*): the poem’s turning away from any attempt to ultimately reconcile its internal oppositions.

It is precisely in this “real separation” that a second, more enigmatic, conception of the Earth materializes. “On the Difference of Poetic Modes” at first connects the “real separation” within the poem with a turning away of the gods:

And here, in the excess of spirit within unity, in its striving for materiality, in the striving of the divisible, more infinite aorgic which must contain all that is more organic…in this striving for separation of the divisible infinite, which in the state of highest unity of everything organic imparts itself to all parts contained by this unity, in this necessary arbitrariness of Zeus there actually lies the ideal beginning of the real separation. (PW,85-6/ 1:892-3)

As in the *Death of Empedocles*, the final “reconciliation” of the organic with the aorgic gives way to something irreducible to either. By calling this the “arbitrariness of Zeus,” Hölderlin is already invoking his difficult and enigmatic reading of Sophocles, in particular *Oedipus Rex*, which focuses on the way that the play stages the “caesura” or turning away from the gods, i.e. a particular conception of the divine, and the concomitant notion of tragic fate, that constitutes that “world.” In the context of his meditation on poetry, what matters is how the “real separation” manifests itself in the poem as the internal tension of the opposed tendencies toward form and dissolution, until that very tension culminates in a return to the “real” or as Hölderlin will later assert, the “original” separation between the organic and the aorgic. The “new unity” that the internal oppositions engender in poetry is merely the “ideal” version of the “real separation.” Yet it prefigures what Hölderlin calls the “striving of the divisible,” by which he means that the initially “ideal” separation between organic and aorgic continues to develop in the poem “until the primordially separating has arrived at its total expression” (bis das ursprünglich Trennende zu seiner völligen Äußerung gekommen ist). (PW,88/ 1:896)

That “total expression” of the “primordially separating” Hölderlin goes on to name, simply, “the Earth.” Hölderlin’s “Notes to Antigone” elaborates the emergence of this motif by framing the “real separation” in terms of a “reversal” that occurs when Kreon and Antigone both simultaneously appeal to Zeus as a principle of divine order lying beyond the world of the living. Beginning with a meditation on the “calculable law” of “Antigone,” which once again entails the “successive modes through which representation, sensation and reason develop according to poetic logic” (PW,109/ 2:452), Hölderlin focuses on the moment in the play that “interrupts” this logic, and introduces something irreducible to the succession of representations. This interruption happens at the moment both characters appeal to the same authority to justify their actions, which effectively makes it the crux of the play for Hölderlin. The appeals by Kreon and Antigone do not involve the same principle, however. In each case, “Zeus” represents something different to each of them, even if structurally the appeal takes the same form insofar as the same “sacred name” (Zeus) is used to designate a “highest,” an ultimate authority or *arche*. For Kreon, “Zeus” represents the traditional form of divine authority. In the case of Antigone, however, Zeus’s divine status is immediately inverted into its opposite and given an earthward turn. Zeus is presented as the “father of time or: father of earth, for it is his character, opposing the eternal tendency, to reverse the striving from this world to the other into a striving from another world to this one” “*Vater der Zeit oder: Vater der Erde, weil sein Charakter ist, der ewigen Tendenz entgegen,* *das Streben aus dieser Welt in die andre* zu kehren *zu einem Streben au seiner andern Welt in diese* (PW,112/ 2:454). In other words, Antigone’s appeal is initially understood in classical terms as a reversal of the striving for transcendence and for a stable organic law (in Hölderlin’s sense), to a reversal that grounds that law in a strictly temporal order, the “golden stream of becoming” (das goldenströmende Werden) (PW,112/ 2:454) to cite Hölderlin’s somewhat odd translation of Sophocles. Zeus, as with the fatal discordance between the organic and the aorgic found in “On the Difference of Poetic Modes,” constitutes here another example of the inversion of extremes at work in Holderlin: the more divine he is, the more terrestrial, and this inversion organizes both the structure of the play, and its denouement:

“Once, that which characterizes the Antitheos, where someone, in the sense of god, acts as if against god and recognizes the spirit of the highest as lawless. Then the pious fear of destiny, thus the praise of god as something preordained. This is the spirit of the two impartially contrasted opposites in the chorus. Antigone acting more in the first sense. Kreon in the second.” (PW,112/ 2:455)

Whereas Kreon relates to Zeus as the representative of the divine and of tragic destiny, Antigone’s appeal to Zeus as an “Antitheos” is in opposition to his divinity, emphasizes instead his “lawlessness.” This presents a stark contrast between Kreon, for whom Zeus is the organizing principle of the world, and Antigone, for whom Zeus represents an aorgic disorder, a divine that has fundamentally absconded and which, as a result, “reverses” the desire for a transcendent order, turning a striving for the beyond into a return to the “Earth.” This “Earth,” in the context of this tragic *agon* of the play, emerges in opposition to the divine as the return to a world deprived of its center, deprived of the “heavenly” opposition that defines it. One could say that Hölderlin’s reading of Sophocles aligns itself here with Vernant’s suggestion that “the tragic universe lies between two worlds,”[[19]](#endnote-19) a past age of myth that was still present, and the values of the new political order that emerge in and through the collapse of the world of myth. “The Earth” would thus appear to be a name for a political order no longer founded on theological structures.

However, in a further development of the motif of the Earth, Hölderlin makes clear that this reversal is not “ours”; it is not *we* who are in the midst of this radical reversal that undoes an entire configuration of the world. The reversal from the divine to the Earth belongs essentially to *the Greeks*— it is what brings about the tragic end of *their* world. For us, by contrast, we “Hesperians” or moderns for whom a “lack of destiny” is our essential attribute, the earthward turn must be understood differently; according to Hölderlin, our “Zeus” is anything but divine, and anything but a higher principle of order or justice:

For us, existing under the more real Zeus who not only stays between this earth and the ferocious world of the dead, but who also forces the eternally anti-human course of nature on its way to another world *more decidedly down onto earth*, and since this greatly changes the essential and patriotic representations, and since our poetry must be patriotic so that its themes are selected according to our world-view and their representations, for us, then, the Greek representations change insofar as it is their chief tendency to comprehend themselves. (PW,113/ 2:456)

Ripped from the opposition between the terrestrial and the heavenly, “our Zeus” abandons any reference to transcendence, to “another world”—even one that has been withdrawn.

This abandonment has a concomitant effect: the “Earth” to which it returns has become decidedly alien since it can no longer be defined in opposition to the divine. Our Zeus is a “god” in name only, who “forces the eternally anti-human course of nature on its way to another world *more decidedly down to Earth*.” Here something other than the ever-present oscillating opposition between the organic and the aorgic comes into view. Having passed through the “foreign” that is ancient Greek tragedy, we arrive at something even more foreign: an Earthward turn that cannot be reduced either to the return to a mundane world separated from the divine, *nor* to a conception of “nature” still dependent on that opposition. As Hölderlin makes clear, “our” Zeus forces nature toward a world even more “Earthly” than this other Earth whose significance still derives from the absence of the gods, and thus remains a withdrawal *internal* to that world. The “world” toward which our Zeus compels nature is a world no longer governed either by any relation to the divine, or by the culture/ nature division. While the translator, Thomas Pfau, uses the term “anti-human” here for *menschenfeindlichen*, this word suggests something that is not just “anti-human” but also “inhuman,” a landscape without Man.[[20]](#endnote-20) Whatever this “world” might be (if it is even still a world), its terrestrial status is certainly not yet a “dwelling,” since the natural world of the Greeks has been fundamentally overturned.

Hölderlin’s use of the term “patriotic” (*vaterländisch*) to characterize the representations that follow from this transformation only heightens the sense of a complete disorientation brought about by his second reference to the Earth, since the *patria*, the sense of home, belonging, or propriety suggested both by the word “patriotic” and the phrase “the more real Zeus” is left fundamentally without an object. Hölderlin simply insists that the second earthward turn of this Zeus necessitates a radical change in “the essential and patriotic representations” and that “our poetry must be patriotic so that its themes are selected according to our world-view and their representations,”(PW 113/ 2:456) without detailing how this actually takes place. His insistence on the possessive “our” serves only to reinforce the fact that “Zeus” and “our world-view” (*unserer Weltansicht*) are themselves taken hold of, appropriated, by this other return to an Earth that leaves us without our bearings, without any sense of a “world” or cosmology through which to make sense of it. Hölderlin’s term “patriotic,” (*vaterlandische*) then, does not refer to a “fatherland” or “native land” in the traditional sense of a geographic or spiritual space in which some collective sense of belonging, an “our” or “we” might materialize. Rather it refers to what remains after the “death” of nature and the extinction of the “world” specific to the Greeks—i.e. it is what characterizes “we Hesperians” only on the condition that the “we” is not understood according to a shared belonging to a given world.

Hölderlin, however, goes on to claim that the “patriotic representations” that follow out of the forcing of “the eternally anti-human course of nature on its way to another world *more decidedly down to Earth*” results in a further development that, in fact, fundamentally unsettles poetry’s ability to “represent” or express “our world.” Whereas the “nature” of the Greeks undergoes a “death” insofar as it is separated from the divine and therefore nature’s animation by otherworldy forces, “our” nature is figured as a complete reversal of *all* forms of representation in what Hölderlin calls a “patriotic reversal” (*ein vaterlandische Umkehr*):

For patriotic reversal is the reversal of all modes and forms of representation. However, an absolute reversal of these, as indeed a complete reversal altogether without any point of rest is forbidden for man as a knowing being. And in patriotic reversal where the entire form of things changes, and where nature and necessity, which always remain, incline toward another form—be it that they transcend into chaos or into a new form—in such a change everything that is necessary favors the change. (PW,114-115/ 2:457)

This “patriotic reversal” does not entail another “representation” of the Earth, but the “reversal of all modes and forms of representation” *tout court*. What we witness, according to Hölderlin, is not just a “death” of nature, but its fundamental transformation into either “chaos” (which the translator offers for *Wildnis* which implies not just formlessness, but rather something not-yet formed)—or simply “another form” (*andern Gestalt*). What this other Earthward turn therefore invokes is not simply a nature already bereft of any relation to the divine or to Man, but one that begins to escape the space of representation altogether, of any pre-given *Gestalt*. The fact that this *other* nature, which “inclines toward another form” even as it threatens to undo every form and representation that attempts to configure it, is at once inhuman and a *process* (it is a *course* of nature—a *Naturgang*), a tendency rather than an object or totality of objects, is not immaterial. It suggests that what characterizes “eternally inhuman nature” for Hölderlin are processes that outstrip each other, where tendencies toward order (the organic) are immediately generative of a disorder (the aorgic) or an entropy that is hardly in any dialectical relation to the stable system it disrupts. To put this in more contemporary terms, one could say that Nature consists of an excess to the various systems—technological, agricultural, scientific, moral, political and so on—that attempt to delimit it and that by doing so unwittingly generate the very “aorgic” disorder found within it. Hölderlin’s Earth is, put simply, without any exteriority, while simultaneously an excess of potentialities that no system, technical or living, artificial or organic, can contain.

1. **Hölderlinian “Homelessness,” World and Earth**

Examining the extent to which Hölderlin’s conceptualization of the Earth shapes his poetics would require a longer discussion of the way his late hymns and river poems (*Der Rhine*, *Germania* and *Der Ister* in particular) take up the organic/ aorgic divide and the “patriotic reversal” that his prose works describe. Hölderlin’s assertion that a “complete reversal altogether without any point of rest is forbidden for man as a knowing being,” suggests that, despite its complete reversal of “all modes and forms of representation,” poetry does in fact bears witness to the “real separation” between Earth and world. The question, of course, is how. Heidegger’s seminars on Hölderlin’s hymns[[21]](#endnote-21) tend to foreground claims that these poems are not only about poetic production, but also historicity, the “becoming historical” of a people, and the way in which the “fatherland” comes to be interpreted as “Beyng itself,” out of which the “fundamental orientation towards beings as a whole arises and attains its configuration.”[[22]](#endnote-22) In other words, Heidegger repeatedly insists on the extent to which Hölderlin’s “patriotic reversal” entails a *reconfiguration* of world and Earth, between the “orientation towards beings as a whole” that defines the world, and the Earth’s self-concealment. While it is certainly the case that Hölderlin’s late hymns articulate, as Heidegger insists, a form of “poetic dwelling”[[23]](#endnote-23) it is not clear that anything like *Dasein* is involved, or its “world-forming” capacities. The river poems treat the earthward turn described in Hölderlin’s prose works by following his theory of the alternation of tones, identifying that alternation with the movement of the river itself. The fact that his poems repeat something like the “real separation” Hölderlin discusses in his prose works should problematize any claims that his poetry concerns itself primarily with the withdrawal of the divine. Put another way, whereas Heidegger identifies the rivers *with the poet* as a “demi-god” situated in the time between the absence of the old gods and the arrival of the new, Hölderlin’s poetics actually articulates instead a fundamental *break* between the poet and the river, marking each as subject to a completely different temporality. Whereas Hölderlin identifies his poetry initially with a backward glance toward a conception of the Earth in mourning for a world that no longer exists, the river’s silence and forward movement in fact denotes a disjunction between that conception and its own itinerary, which constitutes a reversal of the “forms and representations” that make up that world. And yet, since a “complete reversal” of those “modes and forms or representation” is impossible, the poem nonetheless bears witness to this break *in and through the language of that world*.

While a full analysis of the relation between Hölderlin’s longer hymns and his conception of the Earth is not possible here, a quick perusal of one of his early odes— *Der Main*—provides a sense of what is stake. Like his later hymns, *Der Main* invokes a historical and geographical “journeying” on the Earth. It opens in what Hölderlin calls the “naïve” mood, where the speaker identifies his “song” with a longing for immediacy, in this case for an encounter with “other lands” that remain explicitly idealized:

True, on this living earth there are many lands

I long to see, and over the hills at times

My heart runs off, my wishes wander

Seaward, and on to those shores which more than

All others that I know have been glorified[[24]](#endnote-24)

Wohl manches Land der lebenden Erde möcht

Ich sehn, und öfters über die Berg entheilt

Das Herz mir, und die Wünsche wandern

Über das Meer, zu den Ufern, die mir

Vor andern, so ich kenne, gepriesen sind

By the third stanza, this longing has singled out a specific locale—ancient Greece—as its focus:

O once I long to land there, on Sunium’s coast,

Once ask my way to your columns, Olympion,

Ach! Einmal dort an Suniums Küste möcht

Ich landen, deine Säulen, Olympion! (M, 9-10)

Yet the poem thereby immediately shifts into the heroic tone once it recognizes the bygone status of this ancient world. Desiring to “land” at Sunium, which features several ruined temples, including the temple of Zeus (the “Olympion”) the speaker wishes to witness its “columns” before it too is consigned to oblivion:

And soon, before the northern gale can

Bury you too in the scattered rubble

Of temples Athens raised, and their imaged gods

For long now desolate you have you stood, O pride

Of worlds that are no more!

Erfragen, dort, noch eh der Nordsturm

Hin in den Schutt der Athenertempel

Und ihrer Götterbilder auch dich begräbt;

Den lang schon einsam stehst du, o Stolz der Welt

Die nicht mer ist!— (M, 11-15)

As the poem goes on to intimate, this very destruction of the “world” represented by the Greek temple is the condition for the emergence of the Earth, an even more radical “stranger” (*Fremden*) in relation to the poet than the Greeks. The encounter with the “unbounded” Earth in the rubble of the divine leads the speaker to declare his own “homelessness”:

To you, perhaps, you islands, yet one day shall

A homeless singer come; for he’s driven on

From stranger still to stranger, and the

Earth, the unbounded, alas, must serve him

In place of home and nation his whole life long

Zu euch vielleicht, ihr Inseln! geräth noch einst

Ein heimatloser Sänger; den wander Muß

Von Fremden er zu Fremden, und die

Erde, die freie, sie muß ja leider!

Statt Vaterlands ihm dienen, so lang er lebt (M, 25-29).

The oscillation of tones, and the abrupt shift away from the poet’s focus on the gods as the object and source of his song, gradually destabilizes the ground beneath the speaker, disrupting any clear opposition between *heim* and *fremde*, home and the strange (or foreign). Faced with the destruction of the temple of Zeus and the collapse of the world to which it belonged, the speaker is instead “driven on” from stranger to stranger, toward an Earth freed (“*Erde, die freie*”) from its determination by that world, prior to its constitution in relation to another.

This “unbounded Earth,” however is in no way another world or “homeland,” since, as the passage makes clear, it “serves” the speaker *in place of* home and nation. Instead, the ode ends by addressing itself to the river, but only once there is another tonal shift after the caesura in the 8th stanza separating the death of the homeless singer from the river:

And when he dies—but never, delightful Main,

Shall I forget you or your banks, the

Variously blessed, on my farthest travels.

Hospitably, though proud, you admitted me,

And, smoothly flowing, brightened the stranger’s eye

And, taught me gently gliding songs, and

Taught me the strength that’s alive in silence.

Und wenn er stirbt—doch nimmer vergeßt ich dich,

So fern ich wandre, schöner Main! und

Deine Gestade, die vielbeglükten

Gastfreundlich nahmst du Stolzer! bei dir mich auf

Und heitertest das Auge dem Fremdlinge,

Und still hingleitende Gesänge

Lehrtest du mich und geräuschlos Leben. (M 31-36)

The river, as intermediary between the “boundless” Earth and the poet, is both the condition of possibility for his song (it teaches “gently gliding songs”) and that which remains unspoken, unpresentable, irreducible to the song it makes possible, since the river also teaches “the strength that’s alive in silence.” If the “unbounded” Earth has overturned or eluded every “form and representation,” the alternation of tones, the oscillation between the death of one nature, and the promise or birth of another, testifies in Hölderlin to an “Earth” that figures something other than a region of beings, or an objectivity and that remains wholly other to human representation, as alien as another planet. What remains, in Hölderlin, is a relation of non-equivalence, a collectivity predicated not simply on intertwinement, but on differentiations that allow for no common foundation or starting point. Hölderlin’s poetic ecology is, to use Frédéric Neyrat’s formulation, “an ecology of separation” that does not attempt to revive the old gods of nature, who in fact died some time ago. Instead, it encounters something far more strange and disorienting in and through what might be called its “geopoetics”: the bringing-to-language of an Earth that has twisted free from any concept of nature, from any “world” of Man or humans. Hölderlin’s Earth: a fully deterritorialized[[25]](#endnote-25) landscape without Man that is at the same time the very ground we walk on.

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1. Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature* (trans. Catherine Porter) Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. For a full development of this term, see Timothy Morton, “Thinking Big” in *The Ecological Thought*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010, 20-58. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Though this term is used in various places in Latour, he develops it in the most detail in the first chapter of *Philosophy of Nature*, (titled “Why Political Ecology Has to Let Go of Nature”), 9-52. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Bruno Latour, “The Promise of Constructivism” in *Chasing Technoscience, Matrix for Materiality* (ed. Don Ihde & Evan Selinger) Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003: 39. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Phillipe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture* (trans. Janet Lloyd) Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Jean-Luc Nancy, *After Fukushima* (trans. Charlotte Mandell) New York: Fordham University Press, 2015. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Frédéric Neyrat, *La Part Inconstructible de la Terre,* Paris: Seuil, 2016. This text was recently translated as Frédéric Neyrat, *The Unconstructible Earth* (trans. Drew S. Burk) New York: Fordham University Press, 2019. Henceforth Cited in text as (N, followed by French and then English pagination. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Neyrat, *La Part Inconstructible de la Terre*, “La Pulsion Anaturaliste et les Quatre Morts de la Nature/ The Anaturalist Drive and the Four Deaths of Nature”: 197-204/ 108-112. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. One of the first articulations of this distinction is to be found in Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art” in *Off the Beaten Track* (ed. Julian Young & Kenneth Haynes) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002: 1-56. Henceforth cited in text as (WA) followed by the English translation). This initially bipartite division is then later developed by Heidegger into the notion of the “fourfold,” the play of revealing/concealing between Earth, world, divinities and mortals. For a close and detailed reading of this development in Heidegger, see Andrew Mitchell, *The Fourfold*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe, “The Caesura of the Speculative” in *Typography* (trans. Christopher Fynsk) Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998: 208-235. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth* (trans. G.L. Ulmen) New York: Telos Press, 2006. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Lacoue-Labarthe “Caesura of the Speculative,”231. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Essays and Letter on Theory* (trans. Thomas Pfau) Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988: 83. See also Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe Volume 1-2*, Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1970, 889. Prose texts by Hölderlin will henceforth be cited in text from this edition as (PW) with English pagination, followed by German volume number and pagination. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Martin Heidegger, “Only a God Can Save Us” in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker* (ed. Thomas Sheehan) London: Routledge University Press, 2017, 45-68. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. For a discussion of this dynamic, see Heidegger broader discussion of the different relations to world between Dasein, animal and plant in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (trans. William McNeill & Nicholas Walker) Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, 176-200. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. This distinction is found throughout Schelling’s works on nature. For a particularly focused discussion of it, see F.W.J. Schelling, “Introduction” in *Idea for a Philosophy of Nature* (trans. Errol E. Harris & Peter Heath) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 9-42. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. This is also the title of an important essay by Hölderlin, “Becoming in Dissolution” (PW 96-100/ 1:900-905). [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Friedrich Hölderlin, *The Death of Empedocles* (trans. David Farell Krell) Albany, State University of New York Press, 2008, 188. All citations to this work will henceforth be cited in text as (DE) followed by English pagination, then German volume and pagination. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Jean-Pierre Vernant & Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece, Vol 1* (trans. Janet Lloyd) New York: Zone Books, 1990, 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Derrida, in the “Ends of Man” describes this problematic as a “change of terrain.” See Jacques Derrida, “The Ends of Man” in *Margins of Philosophy* (trans Alan Bass) Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, 135. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Heidegger taught several seminars on Hölderlin, each one focused on a reading of a river poem. See Martin Heidegger, *H*ö*lderlin’s Hymn “Germania” and “The Rhine”* (trans. William McNeill & Julia Ireland) Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014;Martin Heidegger, *H*ö*lderlin’s Hymn “Remembrance”* (trans. William McNeill & Julia Ireland) Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019; and Martin Heidegger, *H*ö*lderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”* (trans. William McNeill & Julia Davis) Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Heidegger, *H*ö*lderlin’s Hymn “Germania” and “The Rhine,”* p.109. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Martin Heidegger, “Poetically Man Dwells” in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (trans. Albert Hofstadter) New York: Harper and Row, 1971, 215. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Friedrich Hölderlin, “*Der Main/ The River Main”* in *Poems and Fragments* (trans. Michael Hamburger) London: Anvil Press, 2005, 137; Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe Volume* 1, 239-40). The poem will henceforth be cited in text as (M) followed by line numbers). [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. I borrow this term from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. While it is found at work throughout their corpus, a particularly focused description of it can be found in the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*; see Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, “Introduction- The Rhizome” in *A Thousand Plateaus* (trans. Brian Massumi) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, 9-10. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)