

# Introduction

Danilo Manca, Marta Vero

Friedrich Hölderlin is one of the most crucial figures of Post-Kantian German thought. Scholars such as Dieter Henrich and Manfred Frank have amply demonstrated the extent of his contribution to the philosophical debates of the time, insisting on his connection to thinkers such as Fichte, Niethammer, Schiller, Hegel, and Schelling. Assessing the multifaced legacy of Hölderlin's work is no easy task, what is at stake is not only the fact that a significant part of Hölderlin's work is devoted to philosophy, aesthetics as a theory of art, and theology, but also that philosophical reflections underlie his literary works, whether poems, novels or (draft of) tragedies.

Instead of looking at the Post-Kantian constellation to bring out the significance of Hölderlin's fragmented work for the field of aesthetics, in this issue, we decided to focus on the way in which some philosophers and thinkers fostered the so-called "Hölderlin-Renaissance" in the 20th century.

The subject is not new, but this volume sets out to bring together *both* original readings of Hölderlin's explicit influences on twentieth-century thinkers *and* new perspectives on the way in which Hölderlin's thought pervaded 20th-century aesthetic reflection. In some cases, the essays of this volume inquire into the different impacts of Hölderlin's thought on 20th-century thinkers and writers; in other cases, they introduce original discoveries or highlight influences that have not yet been thoroughly investigated.

This approach allows us to demonstrate how rereading Hölderlin through the lens of a 20th-century thinker sheds new light on some of the philosophical problems that run through his work. For instance, in the first essay of the volume, Allen Speight starts from René Girard's suggestion that Hölderlin is "much less haunted by Greece than we have been led to believe", since he has been rather "frightened by the paganism that infused the classicism of his time". This leads Speight to explore some tensions in Hölder-

lin's appropriation of ancient themes and the countervailing modern (post-Kantian) elements of his thought. Speight develops his analysis via an examination of some of the key texts often thought to represent Hölderlin's Hellenism, including *Hyperion* and the revisions of *Death of Empedocles*.

Hölderlin's relationship with ancient Greece is also the starting point of Marta Vero's essay. In this case, however, the issue is read through the lenses of a more general question – the artistic encounter with the “other”, be it an ancient civilization or the peoples from the South. More specifically, Marta Vero discusses Heidegger's and Szondi's interpretations of Hölderlin's first letter to Böhlendorff. Her aim is to show that, although both thinkers initially opposed the thesis of a “Western turn” in Hölderlin's thought, they developed their claims in different directions. According to Vero, Heidegger ended up nurturing a nationalistic and essentialist view of Hölderlin's poetics, in which the encounter with ancient Greece, and with the peoples of the South more in general, is seen as a way of rediscovering human beings' essential relationship with nature, a relationship that modern epoch has lost, while the poet asserts him or herself as the nation's bard. By contrast, with his critical and deconstructive approach to the same question, Szondi speaks in terms of changeable and historically contingent dispositions, attitudes, or modes of feeling, which characterize the way in which people experience their relationship with nature in different times.

Moreover, this comparison allows Vero to question Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin's notion of “appropriation”, by overcoming its nationalistic undertones and opting for a more hermeneutic conception of appropriation as interpretation. Building on the same notion, the essay of Pier Alberto Porceddu Cilione discusses appropriation through an analysis of Agamben's conceptual re-elaboration of the famous Hölderlinian expression “the free use of what is one's own is the most difficult thing”. He finds in the original Greek, i.e. the *idion*, the source for a philosophical understanding of the *idiomatic* dimension of language.

In the third essay, Didier Contadini goes on to oppose, in a similar vein, any reading of Hölderlin's work in a nationalist key. Instead of focusing on the widely debated issue of Hölderlin's influence on Benjamin earlier reflection, Contadini asks about the relevance of Hölderlinian works and concepts for Benjamin's later thought. This leads him to uncover Hölderlin's contribution to the articulation of the ethical perspective that emerges in Benjamin's later reflections on aesthetics and politics. On the one hand, Contadini dwells on the way in which Benjamin contrasts George's use

of symbols with Hölderlin's approach to myth. While the first use ends up fostering a mythological representation of Greekness as bloody and armed, Hölderlin's poetry and use of language reveal the secret of a historical metamorphosis. On the other hand, Con-tadini discusses the way in which Hölderlin's contribution to Benjamin's "dialectics at a standstill" paves the way for Benjamin's own evaluation of Brecht's epic theatre.

The article of Eleonora Caramelli develops along two main lines. The first investigates the way in which Hölderlin's work help us deal with the notions of "the classic" and "the modern". The second one deals with Hölderlin's very pervasive contribution to a philosophical reflection on the concept of nature.

By examining the pivotal, quite unexplored, role that Hölderlin plays in Gadamer's hermeneutics, Caramelli focuses on the fusion of temporal horizons Gadamer sees at play in Hölderlin's poetry: the past is represented by the Greek gods; the present is one with the poet's place in German spiritual world; the future consists in a revival of the ancient dimension, which assigns an authentic and eternal dimension to the poetic word. This leads her to insist on the historicity of the notion of "the classic".

On the other hand, the following two articles explore Hölderlin's influence on 29<sup>th</sup>-century attempts to elaborate a theory of modernity and post-modernism. More precisely, Arthur Cools and Sebastian Müngersdorff analyze the work of Maurice Blanchot, spanning from his early literary article on Hölderlin in 1946 to his later fragmentary writing in *The Writing of the Desastre* (1980). Through this meticulous reconstruction, they show that the notorious question "*Wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit?*" can be interpreted as a way to interiorize and transform the notion of "the sacred", so as to put it at the centre of the reflection on the experience of writing. This approach advocates an aesthetic of estrangement, in which the need of fragmentary writing consolidates itself.

Ashley Woodward conversely focuses on Jean-François Lyotard's references to Hölderlin, mainly found in *Notes on the Oedipus*. Woodward shows how Lyotard draws on Hölderlin's conception of the structure of tragic narrative to defend his depiction of postmodernity as a period of crisis. Woodward develops his argument in contrast with Heidegger's and Adorno's. In fact, while Heidegger deals with art and poetry as a way of opposing modern technology, Lyotard links the postmodern condition to the sublime, and finds in technology new artistic opportunities. At the same time, while Adorno focuses on the formal aspects of Hölderlin's use of language (his paratactic style, in particular), Lyotard interprets Höl-

derlin's use of wording and grammar as a "material" invention. Woodward maintains that the comparison with Lyotard not only brings to light Hölderlin's influence on the postmodern but also the underlying presence of some motifs of postmodern aesthetic in Hölderlin's poetry.

Turning now to the second line of research, we firstly come across Domenico Spinoza's accurate analysis of Ernst Cassirer's essay *Hölderlin und der Deutsche Idealismus* (published between 1917 and 1920). Spinoza discusses Cassirer's interpretation of Hölderlin's philosophy of nature, widely influenced by a reading of Spinoza and Kant. On the one hand, Spinoza focuses on the relationship of mutual influence that Hölderlin entertains with the representatives of German Classical Philosophy (Spinoza dwells on Fichte and Schelling more extensively, but also includes references to Jacobi and Hegel); on the other hand, he investigates Cassirer's interpretation of Hölderlin's ability to outline the poetic capacity as shaped by the artist's sensitivity.

"Does nature have a voice in Celan's and Hölderlin's poetry?", "Does it speak in their work?", "What is the nature of language such that we can say that there is a language of nature that calls on us to be heard?". These are the questions that Rochelle Tobias raises at the beginning of her essay on Paul Celan and Friedrich Hölderlin. Her starting point is Benjamin's observation in his early writing *On Language as Such and on the Language of Man* (1916), according to which everything that exists participates language, insofar as it seeks to communicate what Benjamin calls its "spiritual being [*geistiges Wesen*]". For Benjamin, human knowledge crystallizes in the language of judgment that condemns nature and robs it of its voice. In her study, Tobias juxtaposes Celan and Hölderlin by showing how "muteness" in language drives Hölderlin to forge a new community via poetry, and Celan to elaborate a poetics of mourning, where a scarred language is all that remains after the Shoah. This allows Tobias to argue that history is inscribed in the landscape of Celan's and Hölderlin's works. For Hölderlin, the history of a people is bound up with its relation to the gods – a relation that becomes evident in the stars that guide human beings in their daily life. For Celan, by contrast, the stars bear witness not to divinity but to the absence of the divine.

In the last paper on Hölderlin gathered in the present issue, Danilo Manca focuses on the conception of melancholy that emerges from Hölderlin's poem *Mnemosyne*, and reflects on the extent to which it inspired Samuel Beckett's play *Krapp's Last Tape*. At first, he demonstrates that Hölderlin recasts a view of

the heroic melancholy, according to which the poet inherits from the tragic hero the inability to end mourning, and contrasts this with Beckett's conception of melancholy, rooted in black humour and dianoetic laughter. Secondly, he discusses Dieter Henrich's *Sein oder Nichts*, in which Beckett's reading of Hölderlin is described as an alternative to Heidegger's identification of Hölderlin with a philosopher of being. Beckett, indeed, recognizes in Hölderlin the willingness to explore nothingness. However, Manca contests Henrich's ontological approach insisting on the significance of melancholy as a human disposition, and, in a third section of the paper, evaluates by contrast Adorno's and Benjamin's readings, uncovering the close relationship between melancholy and language. This leads him to compare Hölderlin's paratactic style and Beckett's protocol sentences (devoid of meaning), in order to clarify the two thinkers' underlying dialectics and to locate their divergence in the role they attribute to nature in the modern art.

The project for this volume was born in 2020, on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of Hölderlin's birth. Unfortunately, many events were postponed due to the pandemics, and many others were cancelled, such as a conference on "Hölderlin and the 20th century" that was to be held in Pisa, organized by the two editors of this volume, together with Francesco Rossi. Above all, however, the gestation of this volume has been especially troubled by two unfortunate deaths, which have severely affected the Italian community of scholars of Hölderlin's work and thought. Leonardo Amoroso passed away in January and Luigi Reitani in October 2021. As editors, we would like to dedicate this volume to their memory.

Both Leonardo Amoroso and Luigi Reitani were influential figures for the reception of Hölderlin's works in Italy.

To Amoroso, an expert in philosophical aesthetics and hermeneutics, we owe the Italian translation of Heidegger's *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*. Amoroso's translation, titled *La poesia di Hölderlin* (Adelphi 1988), has allowed Italian readers to access the most famous twentieth-century interpretation of Hölderlin's thought. Besides, Amoroso has demonstrated how Heidegger's depiction of Hölderlin as the "poet of the poetic thought (*Dichtung*)" laid foundation to Heidegger's philosophical reflection on the experience of language and on the very style of philosophical writing. In a way, the present volume is an attempt to cope with the pervasiveness of Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin and its philosophical outcomes, in order to explore alternative directions of research.

Amoroso's work was also fundamental to the philosophical debate on post-Kantian constellations. His translation and commentary of the *Älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus* (*Il più antico programma di sistema dell'idealismo tedesco*, ETS 2007) had the irreplaceable merit of shedding light on a mysterious text. Amoroso emphasized the complex net of personal and philosophical relationships of the post-Kantian horizon, particularly those between Hegel, Schelling, and Hölderlin. By so doing, he consistently contributed to providing Italian readers an exhaustive picture of Hölderlin's philosophical formation.

Luigi Reitani was undoubtedly one of the most important figures of the *Hölderlin-Forschung* and the scene of Italian *Germanistik*. First, we must remember him for his work as Hölderlin-translator and commentator. Reitani published the most complete Italian edition of Hölderlin's works, released for Mondadori in two phases. In 2001, Reitani published the first volume of the "Meridiani" series on Hölderlin, which collected all the poet's lyrics, both in the original and in the Italian translation, together with an extensive critical apparatus. In 2019, the second volume was published, with the title "*Prosa, teatro, lettere*", which completes the work begun almost 20 years before by collecting all the non-lyrical works of Hölderlin and providing them with critical notes.

Reitani is also to be remembered for the international relevance of his research on Hölderlin's letters, especially in relation to his correspondence with Schiller; for his interpretation of poems such as *Elegie*; and for his elucidations of the various poetic forms explored by Hölderlin, with special attention to the form of novel and lyrics.

Marta Vero met Luigi Reitani on several occasions in the field of Hölderlin studies. Although he did not have the pleasure of meeting him in person, Danilo Manca was in contact with him through his role as principal investigator of a project at the Italian Institute for Germanic Studies, of which Reitani acted as vice-president.

Leonardo Amoroso was Marta Vero's supervisor, and Danilo Manca was his collaborator for seven years. Amoroso is the one who taught both editors of this volume how to orient themselves in the field of aesthetics, and in the reflection on the style of philosophy. This is why we wanted to pay tribute to him with a piece of writing, at the end of the volume, dwelling on the contribution that Leonardo Amoroso has made to aesthetics, starting from his Kantian studies. The author is another direct pupil and later collaborator of Leonardo Amoroso: Alberto Siani.

Finally, the editors would like to sincerely thank *Aesthetica Preprint* for its hospitality, in particular its editor in chief Paolo D'Angelo and Lisa Giombini for her constant support and discussion as journal manager. A special thanks to Elena Polledri, spokesperson for the Italian section of Hölderlin Society, for her valuable advice, and Agnese Di Riccio for her help with English style of this introduction and the previous call for papers.