

To Hölderlin

what tenderness in your lines
the gods are omnipresent
can we speak to you now, to them now,
can you be the conduit of our woes
intercede among the strings of the universe
transmit our thoughts as gifts
to the divine all seeing absence
plead our cause from this far off world
whose unseeing masses revolve
around your parks and old estates,
O Hölderlin what edge of world
do you now gaze from
where are those lips whose words
sung on german soil before
the horror of our modern time,
that germany who gave us you and Beethoven
the very world of all of us
do not neglect us now
who was so unneglectful in your life,
what right has death depriving us of your love
your word your note calls across the alps
and the land of your fathers still reaps and sows
in spite of the unnumbered corpses lying there,
thank god you were spared it
terrible it would be to see your gaze
across the wrecked and burning land of germany,
but now in peace and prosperity
where rhine and ister and your neckar
renew the life of new gods
questions of life and limb grow ever larger
and your steady hand can exculpate us
from the torment of our numbers
and our way of life
O Hölderlin can one end a poem better
than german poets try to.