

To the Archipeligo of Hölderlin [in submission]

When we set out on this mystical journey
Who would think the whole state was accomplished by others
Then rereading the Greeks we are one with them
Their gods, their ideas, their personality, win us
And we make the voyage of the islands our own.

No need to rehearse ancient battles
Or the beautiful thinking and doing
We accord and our Being is drawn
On the canvas of their statues and temples
As it was in Michaelangelo's time.

Still we admire their justice and fate
Like children with infinite confidence,
Though hope is often extinguished
And the spirit may grind in the night
Somehow their courage enslaves us-- even the sun.

Let Ionia flower till time ends---as it must
Dear Gods and preserve their quality
By a miracle we have received,
This sign will draw us again
Though you are buried in sea and dust.

We peer to the edge of the universe
But the people cannot practise happiness
Even with the Father alone,
All is at Time's overweening mercy
And the fear of death.

Honour our spirit, god of each of us
Let not our contradictions confound us
But in that tension preserve your depths,
Then we too renew hope in the islands
And discover ourselves.

Coming home on a final journey the wide harbour
Seals us in its quiet embrace
Town and hills approach, somebody waves
The sun smiles above in his image
Ithaca gives you her long hoped-for blessing.