

BEYOND SENSE

In *Beyond Sense*, the incendiary Carmelo Bene enacts the role of the Pythia invoking at the Temple of Apollo the lives of Hölderlin, Baudelaire, Nietzsche, and Artaud as they are in the grips of aphasiac disintegration.

From Hölderlin's cryptic utterance *Pallaksch!* to Baudelaire's single blasphemous statement and mutism, to Nietzsche's childish babbling and Artaud's violent, borborygmic shrieks, after decades of bravura linguistic articulations, the logos in these damned men goes near-silent or berserk.

Through the words of each figure's work, like Prospero willing his visions to life, Bene enters into and opens up a schizoid shamanic relation with them, wherein he both witnesses and at times becomes each figure.

Reading here is no mere passive act of reception; instead, it is an active one of contagion and metamorphosis, whereby life is put at risk through the vital powers of art. Taking in the work of another becomes a form of surrendering one's body to the extremities of their consciousness, a readying of oneself for disruption, to opening oneself to strange, new, and possibly dangerous or threatening realities out of which transfigurations and mutations can occur.

As the logos cracks and bursts asunder in Hölderlin, Baudelaire, Nietzsche, and Artaud, over the intoxicating fissure of the Temple of Apollo, via the vessel of Bene, these writers are made to signal through the flames once again, to burn as vivid stars whose white-hot frequencies sound in our nerves.

ENCOMIUMS

Beyond Sense is one of the most powerful, mysterious prose fugues I have encountered in years. Though I read it a few months ago, it's still with me. Rainer J. Hanshe's book follows a perceptive and receptive young consciousness as it lives through a century of the vivid minds of four great poets at that moment when their works fold into their lives and their lives begin to fold into the urgent clarities their works portray. We move from their minds and souls out into the world, at the same time as the actual presses in upon them with the usual glasses of water, vague visitors, doctors, gaping windows, and there they are, four great poets who seem older than love, older and truer than the death coming for them in a few days or hours. *Beyond Sense* richly investigates, interrogates, the union of poetic vision with the historic actual. Luminous with clarity, rhythmically complex, his writing grips us by how it says as much as by what it says. — Robert Kelly

All the violent effects, the spasms and grotesque transformations, form a *théâtre de la cruauté* of Hanshe's own, very unsettling and *Unheimlich*, but brightly necessary to his extreme explorations: an Ovid-Caravaggio-Artaudian theater, an alchemical "Opera al Nero." If Hanshe's Beauty — and Truth — comes partially from the surrealistic '*Beauté convulsive*,' and ecstasy is mantled in agony and screaming, if his Dionysian great characters vanish in a rush of a suffered *cupio dissolvi*, that becomes at last a revealing self-revealing Nietzschean laughter, re-embodying in its own turn Rabelais' grotesque and Poe's 'spirit of the Odd' in a highly sincere, brightly experimental, and tragically humorous pathos.' — Maura Del Serra

BEYOND SENSE

A PROSE FUGUE

Rainer J. Hanshe

xcrpt

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*To Carmelo Bene,
and other heroes of the earth ~*

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BEYOND SENSE

What springs from great books is schizo-laughter or revolutionary joy, not the anguish of our pathetic narcissism, not the terror of our guilt. Call it the “comedy of the superhuman,” or divine jest. There is always an indescribable joy that springs from great books, even when they speak of ugly, desperate, or terrifying things. The transmutation already takes effect with every great book, and every great book constitutes the health of tomorrow. You cannot help but laugh when you mix up the codes. — Deleuze

... when man goes blind there always remains the question whether his blindness derives from some defect or loss or lies in an abundance and excess. — Heidegger

SEQUENCE I: HÖLDERLIN

For this is what constitutes the tragic for us: that we, completely silenced, deeply internalized, depart from the realm of the living and not that, consumed in flames, we atone for the very flames that we were unable to subdue.

Hölderlin
4 December 1801

Standing before the long since cast down thrones of the gods, the tragic caesura extending, the interval of silence, the black hiatus, the empty interstice, the *nox animae*. For over two thousand years, their temples have been in disorder and decay, their songs mute. If they have not returned, out of them emerged an abyssal interstice. The sign equals zero. Delphi sleeps.

At dusk, following an earthquake, Carmelo Bene mounts the tripod in the Temple of Apollo, its Doric columns, no longer stately but mere rock no different from the surrounding mountains, are unaffected, stand like mute fragments in the landscape.

An infinite array of books, stacked haphazardly like a series of battered stelai, some toppling over, some scattered about like fallen dominoes, extend outward from where Bene is positioned.

In searching through the different volumes, he finds one that contains the writings of Hölderlin, picks it up, and slowly fingers through its pages, musing over the poet's words.

As he enters into each passage, as he begins to be seized by their rhythms, by their *Stimmungen*, by their enigmas, the passages enter into him, begin to alter his blood, to change the composition of his cells.

Looking up at the stone fragments, he mutters to himself what sounds like *the torso, the torso*, then looks back toward the field of books, then back toward the fragments, then back toward the books.

Bene goes to one of the stele of books and, after searching through them and putting some to the left of the tripod and some to its right, he takes up yet one volume after another of the writings of Hölderlin, not merely reading them, but immersing himself in and being taken over by their realities.

Murmuring more lines to himself, he begins ingesting the words like seeds, sounding them out, for they are not merely visual signs, but vital elements to be consumed, acoustic entities to be heard, for the logos is not something only to be understood, it is to be incarnated.

The last visible light of the sun dissipates, and so too its frequencies.....

From the crevice below, fumes rise.....

Overtaken by the gases, overtaken by the word, the book falling from his hand, Bene's face and body slowly begin to morph, take on the shape and sonic characteristics of the aged Hölderlin: tall, broad-shouldered, white-haired, teeth discolored from tobacco, lips tightly compressed, eyes dusky, motionless, and blank, nerves threadbare, ears alert.

The poet turns, gazes about — his sensorium opens to all that is before him, to close and distant dimensions, to earthly and to celestial regions.

As if at both Delphi and in the Tower of Tübingen, Bene-Hölderlin sees pathways through the mountains, maps of the four

quarters of the earth on each of the surrounding walls of his turreted chamber, bridges over abysses, the course where the sun tracks from east to west.

Struck by the desolate landscape, struck by the barren mountains, struck by the empty sky, as if measuring all of space-time, Bene-Hölderlin retrieves the book that fell from his hand and looks up and outward, his eye scanning locales near and far.

He pauses ——

is still, like an animal sensing in the distance something that cannot be seen but only heard or felt.

His entire sensorium palpitates with the apprehension of something.

Turning completely about, he drops the book and declaims to the mountains and sky:

*Cosmic night is upon us,
The Age of Darkness.
We are benighted!
Nothingness gapes all around us like an abyss...*

*Dead is our earth.
Come now, fire!
This is not the climate for poets.
My heart already belongs to the dead!*

His words do not abide, but fall amongst the ruins, are unheard like the oracle, dissipate into the grief of the abandoned archipelago.

Silence persists.

Pivoting on the tripod, the Pythia turns about, slowly whirling in a counter direction, his ear tuning in to other, alien epochs.

Sounds of the terror of the French Revolution, of war, of a possible apocalyptic event, surge through the valleys of Delphi like waves. The vibrations of these ominous rumblings cut like electrical currents into his flesh. A voice sounds in the air:

When the storms of the gods break...

Does this utterance emerge from the books dispersed about, from the body of the poet, or, *from elsewhere?*

The face of the Pythia quivers, its hands make sharp, angular gestures and, as if devoid of bones, it twists its fingers into knots.

“Hölderlin,” a visitor requests, “write us a poem.”

I for one, kind sir, no longer have the same name. From now on I am to be known as Killalusimeno. *The other I does not exist!*

“Write, poet!”

Shrieking loudly, Bene-Killalusimeno blusters to himself, a paroxysm of fury overtaking him as he is riven with convulsions.

Immerzu!! he shouts, *immerzu, immerzu!*

Perplexed, the visitor is silenced, nearly terrified. Where is Hölderlin? Where the author of *Hyperion*? Where the friend of Hegel, Schelling, and Novalis? Where the lover of Diotima? Where the author of *Empedokles*, *Bread & Wine*, and the *Nightsongs*? Where the translator of Sophocles?? Does he now think that to utter a word is to introduce a deficiency? That what is translated into words cannot possibly be said?

Walking to his piano, Bene-X lifts the lid and cuts certain strings from the soundboard, coils them into circles, places them beneath the instrument, then sits before it and firmly presses his fingers deep into the keys, letting each note resonate, their overtones echoing out and extending, him repeating a theme of childish simplicity, playing it again and again and again. Hours and hours pass; days and days and days come and go, and the playing continues, the theme endlessly repeated, monotonously, furiously, as if an incantation, the rate of descent extreme, the tempo prestissimo or greater, but the man of the tower does not relent, his turreted chamber reverberating with crossing frequencies till a wave of spasms seizes him and his hands flutter across and upon the keys with startling speed, his long fingernails clattering on the ivory, a discordant, percussive din shrilling through the landscape, intermingling with the notes emerging from the guts of the piano, a mixture of noise and music, a con-

vergence of sonic differences meeting in a single locus, held together in a tension of violent opposition.

His spirit eventually mellowing, Bene-X lowers his eyes, lifts his head and, with a languishing, fading air, commences to sing in some strange, indiscernible tongue.

Is it Greek, Latin, German? It sounds like a hybridic amalgamation, or array, of various languages. Or is it yet some other indiscernible speech, cut with borborygmic gibberish? Whatever it might be, it is unfathomable.

Turning to his desk, Bene-X strives to concentrate for his poetic prayer, for he, *or the body*, has not forgotten his visitor's request.

To his left and right are stacks and stacks of manuscript books, and innumerable such books are scattered about the chamber, and the clothes-baskets are overflowing with papers, as if Hölderlin-X never stops writing, filling one manuscript book after another, as if every day, hour after hour, minute after minute, second after second, his body is compelled to execute rhythm, like with the piano, like with his endless four to five hour peregrinations, like with his monologues and his pacing, like with his repeated words and phrases, like with his singing, his declamations, his recitations, or his noises, grunts, and groans, or like with the doffing of his hat again and again to children, or his endless bowing, *ja, ja, ja, ja, ja*, even his moments of stillness where he would

refuse to move for five days — such acts of immobility were nothing less than extended fermatas, rests between eons of time, compelling pulsions to also execute rhythm.

An intense silence emerges in the chamber, a silence filling the room like an element or gas whose tactility impacts the body.

All anxiety is evaporating from his dejected forehead, and a quiet joy spreads over it as he begins to emit sub-vocalized humming sounds.

The stillness Bene-X is about to enter in this Augenblick is the stillness of poiesis.

While his guests speak very loudly, and even look over his shoulders, he is not disturbed but remains focused, contained, like a column of bronze unaffected by the restless activities of the external world, or an organic mechanism executing a programmed action, a stone figure seeming to breathe, or move its marble hands as if it were otherwise animated.

Taking up his pen, Bene-X enters into a rapturous state and, like an incessant refrain, repeats a phrase as if it were a formula of exorcism. Again and again, the phrase is heard, chanted aloud with the precision of a metronomic pulse:

Nothing can happen to me...

Nothing can happen to me...

Nothing can happen to me...

Opening one of his manuscript notebooks, he sits down and begins to write.

After producing a few lines, all of which are metrically rhymed, he looks backward toward his visitor, reads the lines, then tears up the paper and casts the pieces to the ground.

Although consistent in their rhythmic form, they were senseless.

His sub-vocalized humming sounds continuing, he begins writing again, not stopping the movement of his pen until the new work is finished.

Tearing the page from his manuscript book, Bene-X says, Here is the poem, Your Holiness, hands it to the visitor, and bows repeatedly.

*The pleasures I once knew have long since left me;
Of all my joys, alas, has time bereft me;
The merry months of springtime have departed,
And I am naught, life-weary, heavy-hearted.*

The visitor sees that it is signed Scardanelli and dated 1648.

Thanking the poet for his work, the visitor asks him if he would like to go for a walk, to which Bene-X objects profusely.

I don't have time, Your Holiness! I am waiting on a visit. They order me to remain here.

Stepping before his window, Bene-Scardanelli — or whoever, or *whatever*, he might be, for it is not truly known — picks up a bow and arrow and, as he aims toward some unforeseeable point, says, *I am pulled as rivers are toward the end of something...*

Tautly flexing his bow, the poet draws the string back so far, the tension is so extreme, it sounds as if the cord is going to snap.

Holding it there, feeling it pulsate and tremble between his fingers, words issue from the mouth of Bene-X in the softest whisper, rising from his body like a rivulet:

May jubilant madness laugh at those who deride it,
When in hallowed Night poets are seized by its power;
Off to the Isthmus, then!
To land where wide open the sea roars
Near Parnassus and snow glistens on Delphian rocks;
Off to Olympian regions, up to the heights of Cithaeron,
Up to the pine trees there, up to the grapes,
From which rush Thebe down there and Ismenos,
Loud in the country of Cadmus:
Thence has come & back there points the god who's.....

At that exact second, as the *s* of *who's* leaves his tightly compressed lips, Bene-X lets the arrow soar into the distance — it is heard hurtling through the air, far from their sight, far from ear-shot, *far, far, far*.

Is Hölderlin there any longer, or is the late writing simply the playback machine of the unconscious assembling and arranging words out of the poetic vat of the mind, words no longer guided by thought, words no longer sculpted by poetic insight or conscious craft, only the mechanics of a brain operating with the remnants of a body. Zombie vaticism. Is there any reflection of memory in thought, or are these instances of seeming poetic creation only man as automata, a wind-up doll with vital organs, alive but dead, generating matter like the unconscious editing, condensing, transforming, and inventing films out of the morass of our lives and, against our will, projecting them at night on the inner screen of the body? Is Hölderlin Hölderlin, or is the body that once housed the composite of cells that made him who he once used to be now but some part-human Talos whose ichor is slowly evaporating over time? Is Hölderlin Hölderlin, or is the body that once housed him now Killalusimeno, now Scardanelli, now Scaliger Rosa, now Scarivari, now Herr Bibliothekarius, now X, now O? Did he become disgendered and dishumanized like Empedocles and become boy and girl, bush, bird, and mute fish in the sea? Is his endless, infinite recitation of passages from *Hyperion* and other works born of a conscious, personal force, an obsessive-compulsive gesture overriding the will, or the mechanized enactment of a Talos driven solely by quicksilver? Some kind of human artificial intelligence or bio-techne? Or is it a willed but continu-

ously short-circuited — *by what?* — *attempt* to return to or recover a past self, brief instances when the biológico-spiritual configuration that was once Hölderlin rear up, or appear like flashes of lightning emitting their last vital remnants, their final electrical charges, frequencies and elements consequently reduced to violent static? When questioned about all of his earlier achievements, when the topic of *the work of Hölderlin* is broached to the figure of the tower, he becomes distinctly ill at ease, raves, shrieks aloud, paces back and forth all night long, unable to find repose until his massively overstrained body can itself escape from such inquiries. Destructive plasticity not yet in full effect, 'Hölderlin' is winding down, emerging now, not now, sometimes, never, briefly. — Will. Quicksilver. Entropy. The biomimetic vivisystem breaking down. Who wants poets at all in impoverished times? The sign = 0.

Night passes —

Agitated and troubled, Bene-Hölderlin rises before the sun and leaves the tower to walk. The landscape of Tübingen, like the Neckar River, mingles and collides with the landscape of Delphi, no longer mere physical locales, but energies that unite into a unified vision.

In his meandering, Bene-Hölderlin finds earth in balance with sky and mountains mirrored in lakes.

As he journeys for hours and hours and hours, sometimes he takes out his handkerchief and flaps it against fence posts, some-

times he tears up clumps of grass, and whatever things he comes upon, such as pieces of iron or scraps of leather, he pockets. He also picks flowers and tucks them into his doublet, his face making convulsive movements, his shoulders rising up and down, his hands and fingers trembling.

Eyeing what they see as odd behavior, fearful he might be dangerous, strangers along the way mock Bene-Hölderlin, provoking him to throw mud and stones at his tormentors.

As the raven sings, he mutters to himself, look to the stars! Sibyl! I remain nowhere. No sign binds. Rarely a vessel to grasp me...

When returning to his tower, exhausted from his lengthy peregrination and all that he endured during it, Bene-Hölderlin spots a group of Zimmer's apprentices gathering around the house and chases them away, bolting the door so that they cannot enter.

The poet is raving furiously and riven with convulsions, forcing Zimmer to subdue him with his own fists.

The carpenter's thrashing opens a portal in Bene-Hölderlin's body and, like a film reel fluttering before him, as if run through a projector at high speed, with missing, scratched, and distorted frames projected in all different order, he watches as episodes from his past unfurl in the landscape like a series of tableaux-vivants:

Tableaux-vivant 1 — Several men enter the temple and seize Hölderlin then force him into a carriage. As it starts to move, in a

fury, he pushes the men to the side and attempts to leap from the vehicle but is restrained with violent force. Believing he is being abducted, Hölderlin scratches the men with his long fingernails until they are entirely bloody.

Bene-Hölderlin shouts, *No!*

Tableaux-vivant 2 – The Autenrieth Klinik: Hölderlin is forced to consume digitalis and Belladonna and swiftly immersed in cold-water baths in a cage, the onset of treatments designed to reverse his condition by way of moral regeneration.

Bene-Hölderlin shouts, *No!!*

Tableaux-vivant 3 – Hölderlin is forced by the doctors to read the Bible, imposed upon to memorize and recite from it at command.

Overcome with spasms, Bene-Hölderlin shouts, *Sacrilege!*

Tableaux-vivant 4 – Hölderlin tears pages from the Bible and throws them in the air, then rips the book into pieces, after which he is subdued and confined in a straitjacket.

With ever-greater wrath, Bene-Hölderlin shouts, *No!!!*

To his head is affixed the thick leather Autenrieth mask. Although openings for the eyes and nostrils permit him to see and breathe, a piece of hard wood in the shape of a small pear is thrust into his mouth. A crossbar with straps is tied securely at the back of his neck. His oral cavity nearly filled, if the subject can utter no articulate sounds, it can emit stifled screams, its partially muted

but guttural voice scoring the air like saw-teeth cleaving through iron.

As he watches the poet being submitted to this restraint, Bene-Hölderlin howls in anguish, his face and body contorting as if he himself is undergoing the treatment.

Tableaux-vivant 5 — The asylum doctors engaging in leechcraft, during which a black mass of parasites are applied to the patient's anus and powders of calomel are applied internally, too.

When the predators do not detach, the doctors use everything from salt, to lighted matches, alcohol, turpentine, and vinegar or cocaine, tartaric acid, and dilute adrenaline sprays to remove them.

The poet's body burns.

When some of the parasites creep too far into his rectum, as it is being bitten and gnawed on, the poet feels a thin, flexible tube being inserted and extended far into his oral cavity.

There is copious loss of blood, vivid eruptions, high pulse rate, increased blood pressure, sleeplessness.

Bene-Hölderlin emits guttural growls, gurgling violently as if his body is surging with lava. He secretes piercing screams that echo throughout Delphi and reverberate between the decaying Doric columns.

Tableaux-vivant 6 — The doctors unleash a second and greater relay of leeches that persevere until considerable and lasting

faintness is produced but no abatement of the virulence of the patient's delirium, only more incessant raving, suffusion of the eyes, parched tongue, inflamed gums, ashen visage, ataxia, erethism, arm and facial tremors.

Bene-Hölderlin wonders if he is subjected to the crib, the bedstrap, the fingerless gloves, the handless sleeves and muff, the belts, the manacles, the chains, the bifurcated sack, the knee breeches, the buckled straps, the pear of anguish, the gag, the wicker basket, the suspended box, the cord and the restraining chair, the dark chamber and the padded room, the rotary machine, the suspended seat, the hanging mat, the hollow wheel, the swing, the douche and the surprise bath, and if he is he kept lying down, deprived of food until emaciated, or forced to remain in a standing posture and awake for four and twenty hours, or forced to fast for several days and, perhaps, for good measure, is even subjected to a little etherization? Why else during his time in the Tübingen Tower would the poet be subsumed with paroxysms of fury and riven with convulsions whenever he saw someone approaching from the Autenrieth Klinik? Why else would he have become schizothymic? Is it only a question of the exigencies of thought? Do not deny the reality of the body, cacademic!

Tableaux-vivant 7 — The patient's head being shaved, the most industrious application of cold to his scalp, his pulse becoming weaker, his breathing quicker, his strength failing rapidly, con-

tinued raving and delirium giving place to insensateness and subsultus.

Scurrying to the top of one of the Doric columns, the Pythia flings himself from it, crashing to the ground with great violence.

Struggling again and again to rise, he mumbles with each different movement of his limbs, stammers with each partial rise and collapse: we have no footing anywhere, no rest, we topple, fall, and suffer blindly from hour to hour like water pitched from fall to fall, year in, year out, headlong, ignorant.

Prostrate, the Pythia murmurs, as if speaking into the earth against which its face is pressed: *I'm stiff with cold. The heavens are like iron, and I am like a stone, an empty vessel, an unwanted guest...*

Some well of strength emerging in him, the poet rises and scurries to the top of the column again, scans the expanse, looking not for an origin but a crossroads, gazing this way, gazing that way, looking toward the slopes of Olympus and to the peak of Cithaeron, then toward Germany, then to Asia Minor, listening for rivers as the old mute rocks of fate surround him.

Did I, like Tantalus, have more of the gods than I could digest?

No longer recognizing the lands below, as the day of the sun has been extinguished and broken and the onset of night has come again, the possessed one murmurs to himself, you will look in vain for your kith and kin under the sun and, careening beyond the frontiers of the wandering star, he flings himself from the col-

umn once again and sotto voce sings out, *Res nuuuuullllliiaaaaa-aaa!!! Res nuuullliiaaaaaa!! Res nullia!*

In casting himself to the ground with such force, Bene-Hölderlin splits apart and, in being severed from Hölderlin, the Pythia's body begins to slowly morph back into his own.

Dusting himself off, the oracular figure returns to the Temple of Apollo and watches Hölderlin eating in his chamber, ravenously, and indulging in copious amounts of wine, which the poet does not cease drinking until Zimmer removes it. After finished consuming his food, because he cannot bear the presence of anything in his dwelling save for the few rare items that belong to him, he places the dirty dishes on the floor on the opposite side of his door. Order having been restored, as the poet gazes out his window, he feels the effect of the wine opening a new portal in his body & he and Bene watch as yet other tableaux-vivants unfurl before them:

Tableaux-vivant 8 — On orders from Hölderlin's mother, the carpenter Zimmer enters the poet's room and confiscates the loose-leaf folio manuscript sheaf in which he has been drafting and rewriting his poems so as to deliver it to the family. Does this open a schism between him and the word?

Bene growls, *Porco Dio!*

Tableaux-vivant 9 — After verses from Aeschylus in the original Greek are read aloud to Hölderlin the poet appears bemused,

his face full of consternation, and he cries out with an asphyxiated laugh: I don't understand any of this. *Das ist Kamalattasprache!*

Is this a knowing neologism, a metathetic act, a dada mongrelization avant la lettre, or a true instance of bewilderment? Is this a sign of Hölderlin's madness, of the disintegration of his mind, or is it a wily stratagem whereby, through a sly linguistic mask, he bewilders his interlocutor with a half-invented but significant word evoking his *Hyperion* and the Greek war of liberation against the Ottomans? Language broken, syllables twisted, tongues invented — the dodging movements of a hunted animal. *Divert, switch in flight, jest!*

Bene laughs riotously, repeating with infinite variation the poet's ludic recasting of the word Kalamata, and muttering to himself, *O our lady, our lady...*

Tableaux-vivant 10 — Hölderlin is seen declaiming from his *Hyperion* in a loud voice, the words resounding through Delphi and Tübingen like the rumbling of thunder.

Bene feels the air rapidly heating, cooling, and contracting. A steely blue light irradiates the sky.

When Hölderlin finishes a particular section, he exclaims with ponderous gesticulations: Wonderful, wonderful, Your Majesty!

After reading more, the words sounding like sharp cracks or clicks, he suddenly sits down, saying: You see gracious sir, a comma!

Hölderlin, when did you write this?

I for one, kind sir, no longer have the same name. Nor am I Scardanelli! From now on I am to be known as Scarivari. *The other I's do not exist!*

But, Hölderlin, it is you; you are the author of *Hyperion*, are you not? All that you recite, are they not your words?

It's you who say so; it's you who assert this, so nothing can happen to me.

Bowing deeply, affording his guest great reverence, Scarivari bestows compliments upon him, making gestures that would be graceful were they not spasmodic.

Pallaksch! he declaims in the same incantatory voice with which he recited *Hyperion*, his speech as vehement as the wind. *Pallaksch!!*

As he returns to the tripod, the Pythia Bene watches as Hölderlin paces in his chamber, moving round and round and round, locked in a circle, in monologue, asking himself questions and answering them, often in the negative. At times, he declaims at the open window, out into the void, struggling to unburden himself of his knowledge.

Bene listens as he hears Hölderlin whisper to himself, Daily I must summon back the vanished god. When I think about great men in great times, how they renew everything in their surroundings, a holy fire, and all that is dead, wooden, the straw of the

world, is transfigured into flames, which fly with them to the heavens, and then I think of me, how often I go around, a smoldering little lamp begging for a drop of oil so I can shine just a little while longer through the night — look! A strange shudder runs through all my limbs and quietly I say to myself that terrifying phrase: *The living dead!*

Unable to sustain his thought any longer, he turns his head, his confusion redoubles, his brow is overcome with terrible nervous convulsions, he shakes his head and cries out, *No, no!*

Turning about on the tripod, Bene emits a great mocking laugh and counters Hölderlin, shouting, *Gähren, poet! Gähren!!* You cannot be a genius yet; there is still too much suffering... You're still an artist, but I'm a genius. Genius goes beyond suffering! To be crippled, to be weaker, to be dead is to be alive, to be more alive than the living!! To laugh at all suffering like a gypsy! You must cadaverize the tragic and exhaust it with a suspended grin. *Asbestos gelos!*

The poet turns about, startled by the voice, startled by the pronouncements, startled by the laughter, and gazes toward the figure on the tripod who gazes back at him.

Think back to that moment in France, to your long springtime when, high in the fearful Auvergne, in storms, in the wilderness, in icy nights with a loaded pistol by your side, when in hard and unsavory beds you prayed — *think, poet! think back!* but to-

day, do not pray, *no!!* Take up your gun, light a torch, and burn the land clean of its weeds! Give yourself dynamite, and break up the heavy ground. Take the fragment – with the torso, we have all that we need! Totality be damned! Friedrich, the gods did not return, and they are not returning! The arrival you were waiting for was knowing that they would never return, that they have died, that *our need for them* has died, that we killed it, and since we invented them, we did not need to invent them yet again. We freed ourselves of all need for gods! What you were waiting for was freedom, liberation, and the pinnacle was your fragmentariness, moving into the stammering, the break, the schism... *The schism = freedom from all deities!* It's the clochards who have achieved a real advancement, a kind of absolute failure, total failure, to express this misery, when there is no expressing it. Hölderlin, your only success, your real advancements, are the moments where your poems go on, falter, stammer, and then admit failure, and are abandoned. At such points you advance! When you abandon the spurious magnificence. Reflect ruin and failure!

You are a good soul, Herr Bene. I am obliged to you, Your Holiness.

I appeared to Apollo!