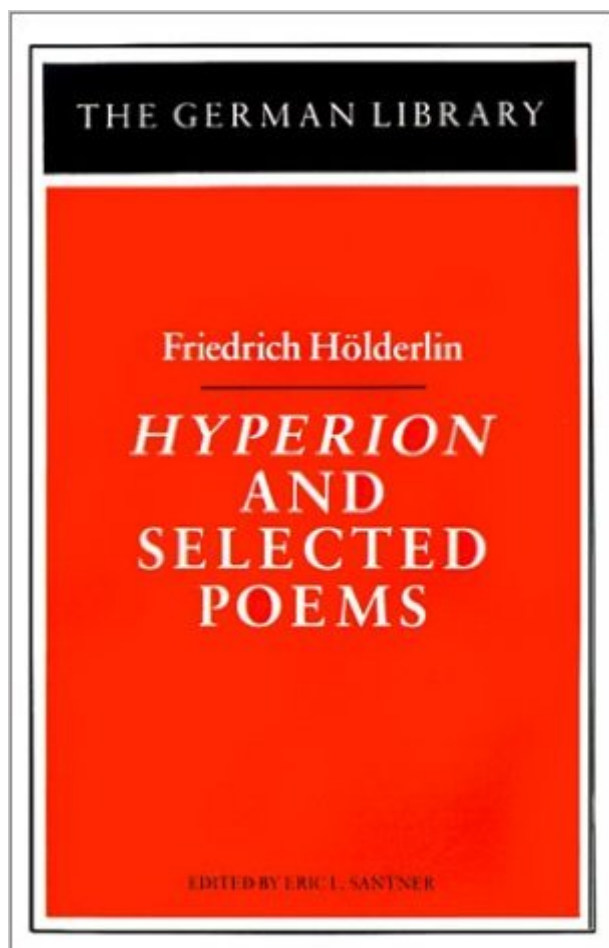


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Hyperion And Selected Poems



Synopsis

Book by Friedrich Holderlin

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Customer Reviews

Eric L. Santner has collected a veritable who's who of Hölderlin translators in this wonderful edition. The centerpiece is Willard R. Trask's 1965 complete translation of *Hyperion*, though the version presented here calls for some comment. Santner writes (Intro, xxxvi), Trask's translation "has been adapted by David Schwarz with an eye toward preserving the jarring strangeness of Hölderlin's diction so that it strikes the American reader precisely as strange rather than merely foreign or archaic." Santner makes no more mention about this so-called "adaptation," nor are there notes in the text indicating what, if anything has been changed. A comparison with the original Trask work (sadly out of print) shows that in places the translation does indeed change radically, though the overall impression is that Schwarz worked more on adapting and smoothing the English than on re-translating the German. This is a good thing, on the whole, and does almost no real damage to the strength of Trask's original translation. In fact, the general tenor of the German is preserved and even enhanced by Schwarz's adaptation of Trask. One could wish for more comment on the adaptation, but leave that lie. The matter of translations, of course, always comes down to the ability to work through the text in its original German, and since any translation is at best an interpretation of the original text, the difference between a translation and an adaptation of a translation may matter little. The Schwarz/Trask edition which Santner presents is truly a magnificent piece of

literature in its own right. Pity that the preeminent Hölderlin translator, Michael Hamburger, never got around to a full English version of Hyperion.

Hölderlin today deserves to enjoy a much wider readership than ever before given the veneration afforded to him by none other than Martin Heidegger for whom he was the greatest of the great. Sadly, Hölderlin was to leave us only one completed novel before his final descent into madness and obscurity but, my goodness, it is a gem of the greatest philosophic and poetic depth. This is without doubt one of the truly greatest novels to have ever been written. Certainly there is the typically German influence of music on this contemporary of Beethoven, hence the idea of applying the structural principles of sonata-allegro form to the novel. Anyone familiar with the musicological musings of Nikolaus Harnoncourt will know that the principles of sonata form structure in music were originally grounded on the classical principles of rhetoric - the art of presenting arguments - with all of its origins in Aristotle and which was a corner stone of education at this time. At the same time Hölderlin was to enjoy friendship with none other the great Hegel himself, thus lending this novel a philosophical profundity perhaps unrivalled by any in history - even by Camus or Satre. The novel is set on the backdrop of a classical Greece of ancient ruins but occupied by the Ottoman Empire. Hyperion yearns to reawaken the glories of Classical Greece but kindles Romantic dreams of fighting for the liberation of his homeland, and leaves his idyllic Mediterranean world and the love of his life to fight in the name of freedom.

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