



A COMPANION
TO THE WORKS OF
Heinrich Heine

EDITED BY ROGER F. COOK

A Companion to the Works of Heinrich Heine

Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

Edited by James Hardin
(*South Carolina*)

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CAMDEN HOUSE

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Chronology of Heine's Life

- 1797 Born in December (probably Dec. 13) in Düsseldorf to Samson and Betty Heine.
- 1807–1814 Student at Catholic schools and, from 1810 on, the Lyceum in Düsseldorf.
- 1815–1819 Business and banking apprenticeship; worked in Hamburg bank of his uncle Salomon Heine; ran family textile business.
- 1819–1825 Study of law (University of Bonn, 1819–1820; University of Göttingen, 1820–1821 and 1824–1825; University of Berlin, 1821–1824); member of *Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*, 1822–1824; doctor of law degree from Göttingen, 1825.
- 1825–1831 Worked as writer in Lüneberg, Hamburg, Munich, Berlin; co-editor of *Neue Allgemeine Politische Annalen* (Munich, 1827–1828), travels in Italy, 1828.
- 1831 Moved to Paris in January, where he began writing as a correspondent for German newspapers, most notably the Augsburg *Allgemeine Zeitung*.
- 1835 Named in Bundestag decree as one of six members of *Junges Deutschland*.
- 1843–1844 Friendship with Karl Marx in Paris; two journeys to Hamburg to visit his mother and his lifelong publisher, Julius Campe.
- 1848 Physical collapse in February; subsequent confinement to bed in his Paris “Matratzengruft” (mattress tomb) until his death.
- 1856 Died in Paris on February 17, buried in Montmartre Cemetery.

Heine's Major Works

(With English title and date of first published English translation in parentheses.)

Gedichte, 1822.

Briefe aus Berlin, 1822.

Tragödien nebst einem lyrischen Intermezzo (includes the plays *Almansor* and *William Ratcliff*), 1823.

Buch der Lieder, 1827 (*Book of Songs*, 1856).

Reisebilder, 4 vols., 1826–1831 (includes *Die Harzreise*; *Die Heimkehr*; *Die Nordsee*; *Ideen: Das Buch Le Grand*; *Reise von München nach Genua*; *Die Bäder von Lucca*; *Die Stadt Lucca*; *Englische Fragmente*), (*Picture of Travels*, 1855).

Aus den Memoiren des Herrn von Schnabelewopski, 1833 (*The Memoirs of Herr von Schnabelewopski*, 1892).

Französische Zustände, 1833 (*French Affairs*, 1889).

Französische Maler, 1833 (*French Painters*, 1892).

Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland, 1835 (*On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, 1882).

Die Romantische Schule, 1836 (originally published as *Zur Geschichte der neueren schönen Literatur in Deutschland*, 1833), (*The Romantic School*, 1882).

Elementargeister, 1836 (*Elementary Spirits*, 1905).

Florentinische Nächte, 1836 (*Florentine Nights*, 1887).

Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen, 1839 (*Heine on Shakespeare*, 1895).

Der Rabbi von Bacherach, 1840 (*The Rabbi of Bacherach*, 1892).

Ludwig Börne. Eine Denkschrift, 1840 (*Ludwig Börne: Portrait of a Revolutionist*, 1881).

Neue Gedichte, 1844 (*New Poems*, 1859).

Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen, 1844 (*Germany: A Winter's Tale*, 1859).

Atta Troll. Ein Sommernachtstraum, 1847 (*Atta Troll: A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1859).

Die Götter im Exil, 1854 (*The Gods in Exile*, 1887).

Romanzero, 1851 (*Romancero*, 1859).

Der Doktor Faust (a ballet scenario), 1851 (*Doctor Faust*, 1905).

Gedichte. 1853 und 1854, 1854 (*Poems: 1853 and 1854*, 1859).

Geständnisse, 1854 (*Confessions*, 1887).

Lutezia, 1854 (*Lutetia*, 1905).

Memoiren, 1884 (*Memoirs*, 1884).

Abbreviations

References to the following editions will be cited parenthetically in the text using these abbreviations:

- B Heinrich Heine. *Sämtliche Schriften*. Ed. Klaus Briegleb. Munich: Hanser, 1968–1976. 6 vols. (in 7).
- DHA Heinrich Heine. *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke*. Düsseldorfer Ausgabe. Ed. Manfred Windfuhr, et al. Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1973–1997. 16 vols. (in 23).
- HSA Heinrich Heine. *Werke, Briefwechsel, Lebenszeugnisse. Säkularausgabe*. Ed. Nationale Forschungs- und Gedenkstätten der klassischen deutschen Literatur in Weimar and Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris. Berlin and Paris: Akademie-Verlag and Editions du CNRS, 1970–. 27 vols.

Introduction

Roger F. Cook

HEINRICH HEINE CAME INTO THE world in 1797, at the beginning of Napoleon's rise to power, which would shake the foundations of European society, and by his death in 1856 Heine's life had spanned a transitional period in German history stamped by hope, disillusionment, anticipation, and suspended action. His generation inherited a dying system of social structures and cultural values without possessing a clear vision of either the political or the social order that could replace it. In this state of limbo on the threshold to modernity, the new generation of German *Dichter und Denker* were torn between a turn back to glorified visions of the past and a radical break with even the most revered traditions. No other German writer reflected this ambivalence as deeply as Heine. The richness and diversity of his writings is itself a testament to the vacillations that characterize German culture during his lifetime.

Heine was the oldest of four children born to Samson and Betty Heine in Düsseldorf. His father ran a yard-goods business that slowly deteriorated in the weak economic climate of the early Restoration period, until it finally collapsed in 1819. After two years in a communal Hebrew school, where he learned a smattering of Hebrew, Heine began attending Catholic schools in 1804, which at the time were structured according to the French system. He was a student at the Lyceum in Düsseldorf from 1810 until 1814, when he dropped out before graduation in order to prepare for a career in business.

However, coming of age in a time when Romantic poetry was considered the most genuine form of literary expression, and indeed even the mark of genius, Heine embraced it as his calling in his late teens. He continued to write Romantic verse even while his uncle Salomon, a wealthy Hamburg banker, supported him through half-hearted attempts to help revive the failing family business and then financed his university studies in law. As his poems began to appear in journals and then in a first published collection (entitled simply *Gedichte*, 1821), he established something of a reputation for himself as

one of the best young Romantic poets. Throughout his reluctant and prolonged study at three universities (Bonn, Berlin, Göttingen) he devoted more of his energies to writing than to law, trying his hand at drama, literary prose, and journalistic writing while continuing to fashion his own unique poetic voice. As his studies were drawing to a close, Heine wrote the first of what would become a series of satirical “travel pictures” (*Reisebilder*, 1824–1831) that, due in large part to their biting humor and innovative new style, enjoyed immediate success among a large portion of the German reading public. When he moved to Paris in 1831, where he resided for the final twenty-five years of his life in self-declared “exile,” this new genre of literary prose served as his chief calling card in the Paris circles of the intellectual and cultural elite. Only after Romantic composers began to set his early lyrical poems to music in the 1830s did his first major poetry anthology, *Buch der Lieder* (1827), enjoy similar success and earn him renown as a major Romantic poet. It is in this regard that he became one of the leading figures in the canon of nineteenth-century German literature and it remains the predominant image of Heine today, even though he pursued primarily other literary interests after the mid-1820s. He did continue to write lyrical verse throughout the first period in France and even published his second major anthology, *Neue Gedichte*, in 1844. However, the majority of his work in these years consisted of: reports on Parisian cultural and social life for German journals (published collectively in various editions, including *Französische Maler* [1833], *Französische Zustände* [1833], and the large collection of articles written in the 1840s for the Augsburg *Allgemeine Zeitung* but published much later as *Lutezia* [1854]); intellectual and belletristic essays (most notably, *Die Romantische Schule* [1836], *Zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Religion in Deutschland* [1835], and *Ludwig Börne. Eine Denkschrift* [1840]); polemical essays; and the two long narrative poems that mounted a barbed attack against the political and cultural tendencies in pre-1848 Germany (*Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen* [1844] and *Atta Troll* [1847]). Not until he suffered a debilitating physical collapse in 1848 did Heine again train his energies primarily on poetry. Ironically, the onset of the still unknown illness that would confine him to bed in his Paris “Matratzengruft” — as he termed it in a now famous characterization of his plight in 1851 — coincided with the outbreak of the doomed 1848 Revolution, which, in effect, signaled the demise of the revolutionary ideals that had informed much of Heine’s writings in the prerevolutionary period (*Vormärz*). The ensuing shift in his poetry away from the pre-

dominantly political themes of the *Vormärz* has generated much speculation among critics as to the effect that the failure of political liberalism of 1848–1849 and/or his physical condition had on his thinking. What occurred was not a return to the Romantic poetry of his early period, but a retrospective engagement with Romantic themes in a larger historical context, one that assesses their role within a larger scheme of history that itself is undergoing re-evaluation in this late period, for instance in *Romanzero* (1851) and *Gedichte. 1853 und 1854* (1854). As he strives to depict how the major themes of his writings evolve throughout the diverse phases of his life, Heine also offers ample reflective commentary on his thought in autobiographical texts such as *Geständnisse* (1854) and the posthumously published *Memoiren* and various accompanying pieces, among them “Nachwort zum Romanzero” (1851) and “Vorrede zur zweiten Auflage” of *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* (1852).

The effort Heine devoted to constructing a final, definitive account of his thinking suggests one of the challenges facing a Companion volume that seeks to do justice to a writer so diverse and ambivalent in his views, so controversial and fluctuating in his stances, and so varied and rich in his literary production. Any attempt to provide a composite view of this important European literary figure and his significance as a writer must focus on his work as a whole. Although this may be true to some extent of any writer, in Heine’s case it has special validity. For he placed particular emphasis on the overall image that his writings would present of him as an author and historical personage. Moreover, as he produced his final texts during the prolonged period of terminal illness and suffering (1848–1856), he became even more attentive to the way they would dovetail with his earlier writings to form an aggregate picture of his life’s work. And while his writing had always, with only minor exceptions, presented at least partial views of his own poetic persona, his late, more expressly autobiographical texts take up this task more directly. He openly admitted at times that they were to serve this purpose, and wrote in a letter of August 3, 1854 to his lifelong publisher and friend Julius Campe that his *Geständnisse* “ebenfalls nicht Jedem zugänglich [sind], doch sind sie wichtig, indem die Einheit aller meiner Werke und meines Lebens besser begriffen wird” (HSA 23: 358).

This attempt to combine his oeuvre into a harmonious whole did not suddenly begin when the dying poet became more concerned with the lasting image he would leave for posterity. In the various phases of a career that took many twists and turns, Heine frequently

assured the public that he had not abandoned those ideas and principles that had informed his earlier works. Perhaps the first major gap he needed to bridge in this regard came during the first political phase in France in the 1830s. After the success of his early journalistic reports from Paris and his important essay on philosophy and religion (*Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*, 1835), he had gained fame as a leading opponent of the conservative alliance between nobility and clergy in the German lands. And when he was named in the Bundestag decree of 1835 as one of a band of subversive writers called *Junges Deutschland*, his status as a leading dissident was solidified. But this new image seemed at odds with the idea many had of the poet whose early love songs were also gaining increased recognition as they were set to music by Romantic composers. He addressed this dichotomous image in the preface to the second edition of *Buch der Lieder* (1837), when he declared that he no longer felt the same impulses that had inspired his early Romantic poetry. Nonetheless, Heine was not about to distance himself completely from this Romantic phase. More importantly, he maintained that, as different as the literary products of the early 1820s may be from his present writing, the new phase did not signal a shift in his basic outlook. He cautioned that his poetry was spawned by the same idea that was behind his political, theological, and philosophical writings, and that no one can condemn the one (his poetry) because of the idea behind it, while praising the other (B 1: 11).

In the same passage he defended himself against rumors from the opposite direction, against claims that his more moderate language or even silence, which he attributes to stricter censorship following the 1835 decree, was a sign that he had abandoned the political cause of social justice. Asserting that such a change would be nothing less than “ein Abfall von mir selber” (B 1: 11), he again confirmed the constancy and consistency of his thinking. Given the multifaceted aspects of his personality and his work, it is difficult to accept this self-assessment without certain reservations, or at least provisions for explaining apparent inconsistencies. But for Heine himself his steadfast loyalty to a higher cause was the unshakable foundation for all his writings, no matter how divergent the particular positions he may have chosen at different junctures in his life. Whenever he felt the need to affirm this constancy, he always came back to the struggle for emancipation as the driving force behind his writing. This holds true even for the years of personal despair following the disabling illness of 1848. “Enfant perdu,” a poem clearly situated at a point in *Romanzero*, where one

might expect a definitive self-characterization, begins with this declaration of his steadfast devotion to the cause:

Verlorener Posten in dem Freiheitskriege,
Hielt ich seit dreißig Jahren treulich aus. (B 6.1: 120)

And indeed, scholars have generally supported this effort on Heine's part, frequently citing "Enfant perdu" as evidence of his undying allegiance to liberty.¹

That he was so intent on presenting this consonant picture of himself and that scholars have often quoted the texts that do so to support their own accounts of him as a consistent champion of freedom is itself evidence of the many ambivalences that characterize his life and work. The essays in this volume address those various different sides of Heine that are difficult to reconcile into a single, harmonious image of a German writer in the first half of the nineteenth century. This introductory essay discusses five authorial personae that, when seen in composite, offer a differentiated and consistent, although by no means complete, image of the individual and writer. Categorizing the different sides of Heine in this way also provides a backdrop against which to place the individual contributions to this Companion volume. However, these figurations are more than just a grid forced onto the wild variability of this complex author. In each case, they represent a literary persona he assumed both in his fictional and autobiographical writings, and about which he offered reflective commentary and assessment.

The Romantic Poet

Without question Heine began his literary career with the express goal of becoming a great German Romantic poet.² And while he wavered on the importance of poetry during the height of his political writings in Paris (ca. 1832–1845), much of his work after 1848 was devoted to the question of his own Romantic nature and the ability of poetry to mediate between such Romantic impulses and the collective human progress toward a more enlightened social order. Not only did he proclaim that Romanticism was a passing cultural movement whose viability had already ended, but he claimed for himself the distinction of the poet-herald who first announced its end. In doing so, he did not however claim that he himself had outgrown those subjective tendencies that gave rise to Romanticism. To the contrary, he confessed that his own psyche was a product of its particular cultural heritage,

and he conceded that even if he had been the first to declare that this age was over, he himself would never outgrow his Romantic sensibilities. Or, in his own self-characterization, which scholars have so often employed with regard to the problematical ambivalences of his final years, he termed himself a “romantique défroqué,” and he acknowledged: “Trotz meiner exterministischen Feldzüge gegen die Romantik, blieb ich doch selbst immer ein Romantiker, und ich war es in einem höhern Grade, als ich selbst ahnte” (*Geständnisse*; B 6.1: 447).

Although Heine attributed this self-awareness to the wisdom of hindsight, he had practiced the same self-critique even as he was gaining fame as a Romantic poet. As early as 1830, he wrote that his age was wrought with psychic frailty, and that healthier future generations would look back on it as a time of sickness (B 2: 490–93). And even though he was aware of this deficiency, he admitted that he belonged to this age. Nor did he contend that his insight into this collective malady would make him immune to it: “Denn ach! Ich gehöre ja selber zu dieser kranken alten Welt, und mit Recht sagt der Dichter: wenn man auch seiner Krücken spottet, so kann man darum doch nicht besser gehen” (B 3: 593–94). As Michael Perraudin points out in this volume, *Buch der Lieder* is not merely a poetic compilation of Heine’s personal discontent. What is often lost in the common perception of Heine’s love poetry, Perraudin argues, is that it is “a document of generational disillusionment,” a reflection of the general pessimism and recognition of both cultural and political postidealist disappointment following the Congress of Vienna.

In some respects, however, Heine’s critics, at least more recent ones, have given him more credit for bringing about the end of Romantic poetry and its complicity with “dieser kranken alten Welt” than he himself did. His own claims refer more to his critical prose writings that distance themselves from Romantic poetry and predict its end. Modern scholars have argued that this criticism is already inherent in his early poetry, residing in an irony and poetic idiom that undermines the idealist aesthetic notion of lyrical poetry’s power to recover an original, non-alienated mode of expression. To what extent this criticism distinguishes him from the more progressive forms of German Romanticism remains a matter of debate.³ Heine himself differentiated at times between the self-critical and progressive force of Romantic literature and the literature of the “Kunstperiode,” whose end he proclaimed in the 1820s. However, as Perraudin shows convincingly, Heine’s early love poems invoke what had become an almost commonplace poetic ideality in order to disrupt the mode of Roman-

tic idealism they embody. Not only do they undermine the very linguistic clichés of Romantic poetry, Perraudin maintains, but they even parody fashionable modes of emotional and spiritual experience that had been conditioned by Romantic literature.

To be sure, when the ailing Heine of the final years declares that he remained a Romantic despite his crusades against Romanticism, this bon mot applies predominantly to his psychic makeup rather than to his poetic production. With respect to his literary legacy, he immodestly proclaimed for himself the role of an epochal innovator: “ich bin ihr [der deutschen Romantik] letzter Dichter, mit mir ist die alte lyrische Schule der Deutschen geschlossen, während zugleich die neue Schule, die moderne deutsche Lyrik, von mir eröffnet ward” (B 6.1: 447). This assertion is all the more immodest when one considers the importance Heine ascribed to poetry. Near the end of *Geständnisse*, after he had given account of his (Romantic) character flaws at length, he concludes: “Es ist nichts aus mir geworden, nichts als ein Dichter.” But eschewing false modesty as the disingenuous trick of imposters, he quickly reverses his feigned disregard for poetry: “Man ist viel, wenn man ein Dichter ist, und gar wenn man ein großer lyrischer Dichter ist in Deutschland, unter dem Volke, das in zwei Dingen, in der Philosophie und im Liede, all andern Nationen überflügelt hat” (B 6.1: 498). This estimation of poetry and the coupling of it with philosophy does not assign any special status to Romanticism. But it does point to a central thesis that underlies all of Heine’s poetry. As Perraudin demonstrates clearly in his analysis of the *Buch der Lieder* poems, there is a constant oscillation between narratives of “poetic impotence” and those of “poetic power.”

For Heine, Romantic poetry was only the most recent phase in a young but rich literary tradition that provided an important complement to philosophy in the push toward an enlightened post-Christian Europe. He saw himself as a product of this transitional period and a writer whose Romantic poetry was ultimately deconstructing itself as part of the cultural stride forward.

The Poet-Herald of German Philosophy

In his evaluation of the German intellect and its ability to express itself in poetry, Heine carefully distanced himself from those nationalists who advocated an innate superiority of the German mind (*Geist*) and saw Romantic poetry as a manifestation of a purer, higher spirit. His

allegiance was to a broader German intellectual tradition that champions universal humanist principles applicable to the world community as a whole. At times, particularly when he was taking up the cause of the German masses against their princely and priestly suppressors most avidly, he was accused of betraying his own national heritage. In the foreword to *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen* (1844) he defends himself against those who portray him as a friend of the French and a traitor to his homeland. Referring to the territorial dispute over Alsace-Lorraine that had given rise to the most recent nationalistic outcries, Heine offers his own supra-national idea of Germany's special destiny:

Indessen, die Elsasser und Lothringer werden sich wieder an Deutschland anschließen, wenn wir das vollenden, was die Franzosen begonnen haben, wenn wir diese überflügeln in der Tat, wie wir es schon getan im Gedanken, wenn wir uns bis zu den letzten Folgerungen desselben emporschwingen, . . . wenn wir das arme, glückenterbte Volk und den verhöhten Genius und die geschändete Schönheit wieder in ihre Würde einsetzen, wie unsre großen Meister gesagt *und gesungen* [my italics], und wie wir es wollen, wir, die Jünger — ja, nicht bloß Elsaß und Lothringen, sondern ganz Frankreich wird uns alsdann zufallen, ganz Europa, die ganze Welt — die ganze Welt wird deutsch werden! Von dieser Sendung und Universalherrschaft Deutschlands träume ich oft, wenn ich unter Eichen wandle. Das is *mein* Patriotismus. (B 4: 574–75)

This vision of Germany's preeminence is intended as an alternative to the apotheosization of the German spirit common among early nineteenth-century nationalists. With it, Heine also placed himself as poet in a tradition of "great masters" of German poetry and philosophy older and broader than that of Romanticism.⁴

Not only did Heine revere the achievements of German philosophy, he saw its significance extending far beyond the academic discipline. As evidenced in the foreword to the *Wintermärchen*, he ascribed to German critical philosophy a revolutionary import that would radically change Western civilization. His prophecy that the whole world would become German invoked nationalist claims about the German *Geist* that had arisen in the first decades of the nineteenth century in order to reverse their thrust. As opposed to those who suggest that intellectual superiority is based on ethnic heritage, Heine grounded any claim to special destiny in the tradition of critical philosophy. His alternative message is that the irreversible advance of reason as the arbiter of all public discussion had established itself in philosophy, and

that the ideas it had produced would inevitably exert their authority in the sociopolitical world as well.

If philosophical discourse is the compelling agent for progressive change, then in what capacity does the poet (“gesagt *und gesungen*”) merit a commensurate place in the cultural heritage destined to lead the way? This same passage indicates what the singer’s role should be: not until the radical idea that delegates all authority to reason is put into action will the accomplishments of German philosophy find fruition. Heine believed that the cognitive genius of a Kant or Hegel capable of constructing comprehensive, impregnable systems of thought worked best in undisturbed detachment and lacked the rhetorical skills of engagement needed for such a step. The poet, on the other hand, belonged to a tradition in which wit, metaphor, word play, anecdote, allusion, insinuation, and the like had long been employed to smuggle contraband ideas into the mainstream.⁵ As one might expect from a writer who touted himself as the initiator of modern German poetry, Heine also envisioned himself as the poet who first took up this mission:

Ein neues Lied, ein besseres Lied,
O Freunde, will ich Euch dichten!
Wir wollen hier auf Erden schon
Das Himmelreich errichten. (B 4: 578)

But he also envisioned himself as more than just the executor of the philosophical idea. In the early 1840s, as he began to predict the inevitable successes of the nascent communist movement, he also boasted of how he had disclosed the irresistible logic of the Hegelian dialectic and the inevitable results it would engender. Looking back to his essay on *Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*, he claimed that already at this early stage he had lifted the veil hiding the secret of German philosophy and had revealed it as the driving force behind a dialectical progression toward emancipation and enlightened autonomy. He assigned epochal, almost mythological importance to his own role in this intellectual evolution:

Man hat mir von mancher Seite gezürnt, daß ich den Vorhang fort-
riß von dem deutschen Himmel und jedem zeigte, daß alle Gotthei-
ten des alten Glaubens daraus verschwunden, und daß dort nur eine
alte Jungfer sitzt mit bleiern Händen und traurigem Herzen: die
Notwendigkeit. (B 5: 196)

While the claim that he had understood and revealed the sociopolitical consequence of the Hegelian dialectic in the 1830s is an exaggeration, Heine had indeed adopted a progressive view of history along broad

Hegelian lines even earlier. He had attended Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history at the University of Berlin in summer 1821 and formed his own poetic approach to historical progress. While the philosopher elaborates a conceptual system that elucidates its dynamics, the poet devises a narrative capable of conveying its essence in terms of the contemporary political and social reality. In a well-known metaphor often cited as exemplary of Heine's synthesis of the political and the poetic, the narrator in the *Die Bäder von Lucca* (1830) laments that a great rift in the world runs straight through the heart of the Romantic poet and that his psychic wounds are also those of the collective soul of alienated modern humanity. For Heine, the poetic articulation of this collective wound not only serves to illuminate the present stage of history but also acts as a force pushing toward revolution. In this sense, he regarded himself as the herald of a progressive dialectic and, eventually, in the 1840s, when he ascribed a universal validity to dialectical philosophy, he claimed that his poetic revelation of the historical process was an integral part of the drumbeat driving history forward.

Even as the author of an introductory essay designed to familiarize the French with German philosophy, Heine never studied philosophical concepts and arguments with any disciplinary rigor. Where he did engage them more critically, it was inevitably in connection with revolutionary change and historical progress. And yet, in this regard perhaps more so than all others, his thoughts remain ambivalent. Gerhard Höhn addresses this issue at length in this volume, asking whether Heine eventually abandons the progressive view of history in the years following his physical collapse of 1848. Höhn establishes a continuity between the dying poet's reflections on the question of history and the ideas he had expressed at various earlier points in his writing. One central question that has occupied scholars in several recent studies is the break with Hegel, which Heine himself adamantly and frequently proclaimed after 1848. For the most part, the attempt has been to contextualize his renunciation of Hegel in such a way as to salvage a progressive (Hegelian) view of history. Following this line of thought, Höhn argues that Heine carefully qualified his vision of the historical dialectic, but ultimately did not discard it altogether. Regardless of how one judges his final stance on both Hegel and the Hegelian dialectic, and the differences on this matter will likely remain, one aspect of his historical reasoning is certain: it harbors a skepticism that is, as Höhn points out, characteristic of modern critical thinking on history.

The Politically Engaged Writer

When Heine began his studies at the newly founded university in Bonn in the fall of 1819, he immediately became involved in the patriotic liberal movement that was an outgrowth of the War of Liberation. For this son of the Rhineland who had come of age in Düsseldorf during the height of its embrace of Napoleonic reform — including civil rights for the Jews — student life entailed political opposition to the conservative forces reinstated at the Congress of Vienna. Early in 1820 he joined a *Burschenschaft*, even though the Carlsbad Decrees had banned them the previous fall. However, shortly after he transferred to the more conservative University of Göttingen in the fall of 1820, Heine was expelled from the student fraternity, quite possibly because he was Jewish. In any case, he experienced at first hand the repression of the Restoration powers that would stifle opposition and leave his generation disillusioned in its hopes for liberal reform.

As he concentrated on his literary career, Heine did not abandon his commitment to political change, and even devised in the satirical anecdotes of his *Reisebilder* an innovative mode of critique that, to some extent, could sidestep the extensive censorship of the 1820s. It was not, however, until the July Revolution of 1830 in France that he began to consider activist political writing a viable alternative. As was always the case when he considered the prospects of revolution, he viewed the events in France and the promise they held for similar uprisings in the German states ambivalently. To be sure, his Helgoland letters that make up book 2 of *Ludwig Börne. Eine Denkschrift* (1840) describe an elated response to the news of the July Revolution, which he received somewhat belatedly while on the island of Helgoland in the summer of 1830. In them he expresses enthusiasm that the French Revolution has now entered its second, more advanced stage and that it will now provide the basis for a broad social revolution throughout Europe. Although dated July-August 1830, these letters were certainly composed later, probably in 1839 when the Börne *Denkschrift* was written. Actual letters to friends at the time reveal a much more skeptical attitude about the movement, and in particular about the various parties rushing to join it.

This skepticism was fueled in no small part by patriotic-nationalist tendencies within the German liberal movement that frequently assumed conservative and, perhaps most important, anti-Semitic points of view. While he considered this a result of inbred nationalist sentiments that would be extremely difficult to root out, he had equally

strong reservations about the puritanical attitudes that dominated the opposition on the left. In his political positions as in his philosophical views, he carved out his own unique niche. While he shared the liberal call for social justice and the end of unfair privilege, he rejected what he termed their Nazarene character. In his call for not merely political emancipation, but also for libertine principles that challenge the religious rejection of pleasure (the “Nazarene” element), Heine considered himself an avant-garde thinker opposed to a reactionary moralism that even permeated revolutionary politics, critical philosophy, and aesthetic practice. While he often used this radical stance on the reinstatement of pleasure to excuse questionable political stances, there is no denying that the restoration of the flesh was a central part of his program for social change throughout all phases of his writing. Whether one agrees with his vision or not, there is in this regard some truth to the bold claim that his political allies in the fight against the exploitation of the German people did not understand it: “Auch war ich ihnen [den deutschen Revolutionären der dreißiger Jahre] so weit voraus geschritten, daß sie mich nicht mehr sahen, und in ihrer Kurzsichtigkeit glaubten sie, ich wäre zurückgeblieben” (B 4: 91). His own distinctive synthesis of progressive philosophy (Hegel) and early socialist doctrine (Saint-Simonianism) put him at odds with central tenets of every political program or ideological movement of his times.

In the 1830s and 1840s, when he pursued this vision most avidly — becoming, in his own estimation, “der große Heide Nr. 2” (B 5: 109) — his ideas were perhaps closest to those of the “literary prince” he both admired and challenged, Goethe. Despite his frequent sharp criticism of Goethe’s refusal to fight for his Hellenist principles⁶ in the political arena, Heine repeatedly embraced the ideas themselves as his own. He saw the free thought and devotion to the sensual world expressed in Goethe’s writings as a useful paradigm for that culture which would restore once again “den verhöhnten Genius und die geschändete Schönheit.” Heine differed from the poet laureate who withdrew into the protected provincial world of Weimar in that he felt compelled to join the struggle for “das arme, glückenterbte Volk.” His involvement with German philosophy revolves largely around this political or, more importantly, social vision, which he saw as a direct consequence of a modern philosophy determined to throw off the shackles of traditional religious authority and submit all ideas to the tribunal of reason. In a bold reading of Spinoza’s notions of the divine, Heine argued that Spinoza’s philosophical system does not ad-

vocate atheism, but rather a pantheism that recognizes the divine presence in all things, in the material as well as in the spiritual world:

“Gott,” welcher von Spinoza die eine Substanz und von den deutschen Philosophen das Absolute genannt wird, “ist alles was da ist,” er ist sowohl Materie wie Geist, beides ist gleich göttlich, und wer die heilige Materie beleidigt, ist eben so sündhaft, wie der, welcher sündigt gegen den heiligen Geist. (B 3: 565–66)

Here is the essence of Heine’s “political” program: “die Rehabilitation der Materie, die Wiedereinsetzung derselben in ihre Würde, ihre moralische Anerkennung, ihre religiöse Heiligung, ihre Versöhnung mit dem Geiste” (B 3: 568). In his far-reaching analysis of the aesthetic strategies Heine employed to establish the validity of this pantheistic philosophical perspective over and against the dominant idealist discourse, Willi Goetschel shows how Heine’s social, political, theoretical, and religious (namely, Jewish) concerns coalesced most forcefully in the pursuit of this primary goal. Much more crucial to revolutionary progress than any change in the institutions of government was the fulfillment of this philosophical idea, which Heine — in a move designed to realign the critical thrust of German philosophy — attributed to Spinoza, whose thinking brought charges of heresy from a coalition of the dominant social, political, and religious authorities of his day. As Goetschel argues, Heine mobilized a vast array of unusual tactics to reveal the material base of all philosophical discourse and the ideological underpinning of idealist conceptions that debase the physical world.

For Heine, the reinstatement of the flesh would not be achieved by political or even social revolution alone, but rather would evolve out of the philosophical idea and the basic human demand for happiness. In an often-cited passage from book 2 of *Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* Heine differentiates his idea of revolution from those Jacobean republicans who, in his view, preach total sacrifice and devotion to the cause of equality at the cost of pleasure:

Wir kämpfen nicht für die Menschenrechte des Volks, sondern für die Gottesrechte des Menschen. Hierin, und in noch manchen andern Dingen, unterscheiden wir uns von den Männern der Revolution. Wir wollen keine Sansculotten sein, keine frugale Bürger, keine wohlfeile Präsidenten: wir stiften eine Demokratie gleichherrlicher, gleichheiliger, gleichbeseligter Götter. Ihr verlangt einfache Trachten, enthaltene Sitten und ungewürzte Genüsse; wir hingegen verlangen Nektar und Ambrosia, Purpurmäntel, kostbare Wohlgerüche, Wollust und Pracht, lachenden Nymphantanz, Musik und Komödien —. (B 3: 570)

It is perhaps in the context of this peculiarly Heinean vision of social and political progress that Paul Peters's essay on the erotic in Heine's poetry adds most cogently to the composite image of his life and work. For the erotic — which, as Peters demonstrates, is either openly manifest or lurking in the shadows of the love poetry — is always part and parcel of Heine's campaign to eliminate the ideological restraints placed on pleasure by the privileged elite for their own advantage. Too seldom have critics emphasized this aspect of the love poetry, focusing rather on it more as Romantic verse on the verge of modernity in the aesthetic sense, but without addressing its political thrust. My own piece on Heine's love poetry focuses more on the pain engendered by the experiences of unfulfilled love, but also argues that the investigation of love's torments in the Romantic poetry always serves, too, as an indictment of the Nazarene renunciation of the flesh.

While the above emphasizes the more visionary and evolutionary aspect of Heine's political thinking, it is also important to note that he often took quite controversial and even dangerous stances on political issues. He did tend at times to exaggerate the danger his critical views may have caused him, but contemporary critics in Germany did in fact face hardships and even received prison sentences for less caustic and less visible attacks than his own. Both in his *Zeitgedichte* and in various prose writings, particular after his move to Paris in 1831, he addressed many of the hot political and social topics of his time, directing at times sharp criticism at the reactionary political governments in Austria, Prussia, and other German states and, more generally, at the Restoration alliance of the nobility and Church.

In *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen*, the most famous of his directly political writings, he not only turned all his literary skills against these conservative forces in Germany, but also reflected on the role of the poet as the mediator between the revolutionary idea of critical philosophy and the changes it is to effect in the sociopolitical realm. This epic poem addressing diverse political issues of the day was a new genre, or better yet, a genre unto itself that has yet to find a comparable companion in German literature. He proclaimed it as a new song (“Ein neues Lied, ein besseres Lied” [B 4: 578]) that would replace the old “song” of abstinence and obedience, the centuries-old creed fed to the people by the Church and aristocracy. While the latter creed is a standard refrain that breeds dependency and inaction, the poet depicts his own verses as a call for action against those exploitive forces. In the sixth and seventh chapters he describes “einen vermummtten Gast” who lurks behind him furtively as he writes or walks the streets

at night, always appearing in those moments “Wo Weltgefühle sprießen” (B 4: 591). This shadow figure is cloaked in black, and from beneath his coat, light reflects off what appears to be an executioner’s ax. When the poet confronts him on a moonlit night in Cologne and asks what he is carrying under his cloak, his mysterious companion reveals himself:

Ich bin dein Liktor, und ich geh
Beständig mit dem blanken
Richtbeile hinter dir — ich bin
Die Tat von deinem Gedanken. (B 4: 592)

Here we see Heine at his most confident as a political writer. Buoyed by the Left-Hegelian idea of an unstoppable dialectic of history, he entertains a grand notion of his own role in the inevitable revolutionary upheavals that are to come. Not only does his writing attack the dominant reactionary forces of the Restoration period, but it also conveys to the masses (“das arme, glückenterbte Volk”) the revolutionary import of critical modern philosophy in a form they can understand. Even as Heine maintains that he himself as a Romantic poet will be out of place in the new social order, he acclaims the liberty and social justice that it will bring as unimpeachable advances in the path toward a higher civilization. George Peters argues in his essay on the reception of Heine during the Weimar Republic that the events of 1918–1919 came closest to matching the optimistic predictions he had made in the *Wintermärchen*. However, Peters also chronicles how leftist intellectual supporters of the Weimar Republic on various different fronts all failed to embrace him as an ally, thus missing an opportunity to find grounding for the new republic in a part of Germany’s literary tradition that otherwise provided little. This failure may also be seen in some ways as a confirmation of Heine’s own growing distrust in the liberal movement and its ability to bring about effective social revolution.

At this point in the middle of the *Vormärz* years, Heine, like most of those who shared this liberal vision of emancipation and civil rights, felt that an end to the repressive Metternich regime was imminent. While his prophecy that the future belonged to the nascent communist movement was bold for its time (as early as 1843, and before he met Marx), he harbored serious doubts about the liberal movement and its ability to effect significant change.⁷ When the uprising against the reactionary regimes in central Europe did finally break out in February and March 1848, it coincided with Heine’s collapse in such a manner that he imagined his illness as an uncanny physical embodi-

ment of the futile political revolution. While he had been skeptical of the liberal political forces throughout the 1830s and 1840s, after 1848 he abandoned the idea that his political writings could act as a catalyst that would transform the ideas of Left-Hegelian philosophy into revolutionary action — at least in his lifetime or in any foreseeable future. However, even if the idea of his own time as a revolutionary epoch in history faded, Heine continued to hold a progressive view of history (see the essay by Gerhard Höhn), maintaining at least in general terms his faith that reason would continue to establish its influence over human affairs.

The German-Jewish Poet: Between History and Religion

Heine's own sense of German identity had its roots in the liberal-patriotic stirrings of the German Rhineland. Not only his strong identification with the blossoming of German culture in the eighteenth century, but also his thinking on history, philosophy, literature, and religion were informed by the enthusiastic embrace of the revolutionary ideals of the French Revolution he had experienced during his youth in Düsseldorf. No small part of his own fervor for the liberal Enlightenment principles of the Revolution must have been fueled by the promise of civil rights for the Jews. But the patriotic uprising against the increasingly tyrannical reign of Napoleon brought with it a backlash against the laws for the emancipation of the Jews he had imposed on the occupied German lands — and also against the Jews themselves. Moreover, the conservative-patriotic resistance to the Napoleonic code, and to the Jews, had deeper cultural roots in the Romantic idealization of the German past and, in particular, in a historicist concept of freedom that clashed with the more universal Enlightenment idea.

When seen in this light, Heine's desire to become a Romantic poet seems almost paradoxical. When he first began to write poetry, however, there was a complex set of factors involved in the intersection of Jewish assimilation and Romanticism. Romanticism was, of course, the leading cultural movement at the time, one that attracted the interest of the French to a German literature long deemed derivative and provincial, and that induced Mme. de Staël to give Germany the proudly embraced epithet: the land of "Dichter und Denker." While this external recognition did much to strengthen the status of

the German cultural elite, *Kultur* had already established itself in the late eighteenth century as an important component in the rise of the bourgeoisie. For the Jews, who had to prove their capacity for *Bildung* — both as a people and as individuals — as a prerequisite for emancipation, *Kultur* served as an “entry ticket”⁸ into German society on two levels: first for the very possibility of assimilation, and then for inclusion in the privileged sphere of the evolving *Bildungsbürgertum*.

Without question, Heine took up literature in part because of the opportunity it offered for fame, recognition, and simply acceptance. At the same time, he was, as he repeatedly maintained throughout his life, an irrepressible romantic by “nature.” But, as he also was quick to point out, this personal character was a culturally produced “Naturell” rooted not only in the German way of life, but also in the historical epoch in which he lived. Not surprisingly, his characterization of this Romantic disposition links it to the Enlightenment vision of a world community grounded in universal principles of reason and moral law. Precisely this understanding of what it meant to be a German Romantic poet put him at odds with the ethnocentric nationalist view of the Romantic soul as an organically evolved spirit whose roots necessarily go back to an early period of the Germanic tribes. In its more radical instances, this romanticized notion of German character excluded Jews from any intimate, authentic participation in Romantic thought and feeling. Thus, even while Heine’s poetry established him as a Romantic poet par excellence, he found it necessary to continually affirm that he was a German poet of the highest order, that is, a Romantic poet by “nature.” And, as Robert Holub stresses in his analysis of Heine’s characterizations of his conversion of 1825, the dichotomous existence as Romantic poet and proponent of Jewish culture resulted in a complex dynamic of displacement that influenced Heine’s statements on related issues ranging from his stance toward Judaism and Protestantism to his late renunciation of Hegel.

Heine’s initial efforts on behalf of Jewish assimilation already exhibited some of the ambivalence that later surrounded his conversion. Spurred at least in part by his direct contact with anti-Semitic “Teutomaniacs”⁹ in the student fraternities in Göttingen, he sought avenues for supporting the civil rights of Jews. As he entered the university system, he certainly became familiar with the debates stirred by conservative-nationalist academics (Jakob Fries, Friedrich Rühs) who, in the wake of the Congress of Vienna, questioned Jewish assimilation. Only weeks after he arrived in Berlin in 1821 Heine gained entry into the salon of Rahel Varnhagen, where he began important associations

with some of the leading young minds of the Berlin cultural scene, and in particular, with liberal thinkers who actively supported full Jewish emancipation. The following year he became a member of the *Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*, a society founded by young Jewish intellectuals intent on developing a path for Jewish assimilation that would allow the Jews to maintain their identity and cultural heritage. While he shared his fellow members' call for unconditional rights for all Jews, he differed with them in some important ways as well. First, as Holub argues, he had already adopted at this early stage the critical, even dismissive stance toward all "positive" religions that he would retain throughout his life (even during the so-called "religious return" to God in 1848). At times he singled out the Jewish Reform movement in particular, whose advocates he often ridiculed as social conformists who were abandoning Judaism for the sake of assimilation and their own desire for status. In his contribution to this Companion volume, Jeffrey Grossman examines at some length the textual strategies Heine employed to undermine the dominant assimilationist approach that saw *Bildung*, that is, the abandonment of Jewish culture and consciousness for the ascendant German middle-class values, as a prerequisite for Jewish emancipation. He focuses on, among other writings, the travel essay "Über Polen," in which Heine subtly questions whether the Jews in Poland, despite their squalid living conditions and "regressive" ghetto culture, have not retained a cultural integrity that the German Jew is shedding in the rush to assimilation. Written simultaneously with his admission to the *Culturverein* in fall 1822, *Über Polen* demonstrates a more radical adherence to the idea of Jewish emancipation than that advocated by most of his fellow members. Similarly, Holub shows that from this early point on Heine identified with the Jewish nation's long, collective history of unjust suffering.

The other key difference with the *Culturverein* concerns the always-difficult question of Hegel. Key figures in the *Verein*, whose members belonged to the first generation of university-educated German Jews, were strongly influenced by Hegel, whose philosophy had taken German academia by storm in the preceding years. In their application of the historical dialectic to Jewish history, these Hegelian thinkers — primarily, Eduard Gans and Immanuel Wohlwill — focused on the monotheistic *idea* as the great contribution of Judaism. In its most exacting form, this school of thought held that the particular laws and customs of Judaism had outlived their usefulness in the modern era and could, or even should be jettisoned in their en-

tirety. This placement of the idea over and above life itself — in this case, the living customs, social interactions, and even language of the Jews — upset Heine almost violently. In a letter to Moses Moser in 1823, even as he was most heavily involved in the work of the *Verein*, he raved against this tendency toward abstraction, complaining that Gans and Wohlwill want to turn everything, even Heine himself, into nothing but an idea! (HSA 20: 97; June 18, 1823). In this emotional outburst against the Christian spiritualist dimension of the Hegelian dialectic, we see an early example of that unique synthesis of Hellenic sensualism and Jewish moral pragmatism that will become central to the late Heine.

After his involvement with the *Verein* ended in 1825, at the same time as his practically motivated baptism into the Protestant Church, Heine became less concerned with matters of Jewish emancipation and assimilation. When he moved to Paris in 1831 and became absorbed in the revolutionary import of German philosophy and the dialectical march of history, he accepted, in broad terms, Hegel's relegation of Judaism to a past role in history. Not only Judaism, but all positive religions would, he argued, soon be superseded by that materialistic pantheism he touts in *Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* as the secret of modern German philosophy. Still, he never stopped fighting for the rights of Jews and the end to all persecution, becoming involved whenever anti-Semitism flared up, most notably as a result of the Damascus affair of 1840.¹⁰

Not until the collapse of 1848, when he began to re-examine his adoption of the Hegelian dialectic, did Judaism again play an important role in Heine's thinking on human progress. This question is complicated by the often at least apparently contradictory statements he made about a renewed faith in a "personal God" (the so-called "religious return") and about religion in general. One thing, however, remained constant, as he himself stressed in *Geständnisse* in response to rumors flying about an embrace of Protestantism: "Ich weiß nicht, inwieweit ich merken ließ, daß ich weder für ein Dogma noch für irgendeinen Kultus außerordentlich schwärme und ich in dieser Beziehung derselbe geblieben bin, der ich immer war" (B 6.1: 488–89). While the passage to which he referred concerns primarily Protestantism and Catholicism, the reference to dogma and ritual practice also includes the formal practice of the Jewish religion. On the other hand, he displayed a reinvigorated faith in the elemental moral law introduced by the Jews, and even offered a somewhat idealized vision of how it was practiced in the early days of Judaism:

[D]as Echte, Unvergängliche und Wahre, nämlich die Sittlichkeit des alten Judentums, wird in jenen Ländern ebenso gotterfreulich blühen, wie einst am Jordan und auf den Höhen des Libanons. Man hat keine Palme und Kamele nötig, um gut zu sein, und Gutsein ist besser denn Schönheit. (B 6.1: 486)

Perhaps the essence of Heine's "religious return" — particularly insofar as he depicted his belief in a personal God as a rejection of an atheism he had once adopted along with the *absolute* idea of the historical dialectic — is that this renewed faith in a fundamental moral law, whose validity is established ultimately by intuition rather than by logic, replaced the Hegelian view of history.

However, for the present context, more important than the consistency of Heine's personal stances on God, religion, or even philosophy is his perspective on the role the Jews have played historically in humanity's struggle for progress. The return to Judaism manifests itself in his late poetry, where Jews, as the people of the diaspora, serve dialectically as a critical, corrective Other to their dominant host nations. His autobiographical texts touch on this role marginally, but Heine was cautious in addressing such issues explicitly, always wary of the misconceptions they would be likely to produce. This had happened readily in 1848 even in response to more private and personal utterances he had made about his recent thoughts concerning God. Rumors abounded about a religious "conversion," with the result that he found himself forced to issue a public disclaimer ("Berichtigung" [B 5: 108–10]) in April 1849; and he continued to confront them in the "Nachwort" to *Romanzero*, the "Vorrede" to the second edition of *Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*, and in *Geständnisse*.

Heine enlisted his late thinking on Judaism more cogently in the poetry, where he assumes the personae of Jewish figures in history who had suffered and been pushed to the margins of society because of, among other things, their ethnic heritage: Moses, the Sephardic poets of "Jehuda ben Halevy," and Lazarus. In one important respect, those Jewish figures of the diaspora (in particular the medieval *poets* in "Jehuda ben Halevy") suffer a fate analogous to Heine's own as the unjustly exiled German-Jewish opponent of Restoration Germany. He also identified with literary (Aristophanes) and religious figures (Job) who had questioned divine authority in their day, much as Heine challenged the "positive" religions of Europe. And even the "personal God" whom he had acknowledged in the autobiographical texts appears in the late poems. It is a conception of God that is open to radical revision; a God whom he can engage in dialogue, openly challenge, and

even place before the tribunal of reason that will strip away all those attributes that support unjust privileges or delusions.

Thus, the discourse of Judaism Heine invokes is select, limited largely to those cases that correspond well to his own situation as a German-Jewish writer whose opposition to dominant social and political forces not only made him an arch-enemy of reactionary parties but also alienated him from many of his liberal allies. As his despair at the political situation converged with the futility of his lifelong struggle for the emancipation of the flesh — that is, the restoration of sensual pleasure as a basic human need and right, which he generally termed the Hellenic principle — he reassessed the merits of Judaic tradition. In both cases, the ethical complement to reason that allowed for hope on both fronts was not the Jewish religion, but rather the moral law in its essence,

nämlich das Gesetz, welches Mose dem Hause Jakob zum Schatz befohlen hat. . . . Daraus der Verstand geflossen ist, wie der Euphrates, wenn er groß ist. . . . Er ist nie gewesen, der es ausgelernt hätte: und wird nimmermehr werden, der es ausgründen möchte. Denn sein Sinn ist reicher, weder kein Meer: und sein Wort tiefer, denn kein Abgrund. (B 3: 512–13)

However, “Hebräische Melodien,” the set of three poems that comprise the final section of *Romanzero*, is a sophisticated poetic engagement of Jewish tradition in a critical project whose depths scholars have only recently begun to fathom. The focus on these poems in three of the essays in this volume (Goetschel, Grossman, Phelan) is representative of the present emphasis in Heine scholarship on this theme, which until recently has not received its due attention.

The Dying Poet in His “Matratzengruft”

The contributions to this volume are weighted more heavily in favor of the later period of Heine’s life. This stronger focus on the later writings is in keeping with a decided shift in Heine scholarship over the last two decades. In part, it represents a swing of the pendulum back from what had been an overemphasis on the politically engaged writer and critic of an emerging German nationalist ideology in the first half of the nineteenth century. It is not surprising that the reinstatement of Heine as a leading figure of German literature after the Second World War would concentrate on him as an opponent of what at the time, in the aftermath of the Nazi regime, had become suspect

elements in German culture. Accordingly, the rather checkered history of the reception his works had received, both in his own lifetime and up through the Nazi period, took on new significance as scholars began to examine the German literary tradition from this new critical perspective. From the vantage point of the present, this emphasis on Heine as political dissident during the period of divided Germany is itself of historical interest. And while it is not possible here to pursue this question further, the difference in approaches in the two German states even became to some extent a matter of political propaganda that reinforced the strong focus on the politically engaged poet.

The need to champion an early opponent of nascent nationalist ideologies in the nineteenth century led scholars in the two Germanys to downplay those sides of the dying poet that are hard to reconcile with the more favored image. This applies in particular to the often ambiguous or puzzling statements found in the important autobiographical texts and reflective commentaries of the late period: primarily, *Geständnisse*, the “Nachwort” to *Romanzero*, the “Vorrede” to the second edition of *Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*, and the *Memoiren*. The tendency to shy away from the more perplexing views on religion and philosophy carried over to his late poetry as well. Broader and more complex in their thematic scope as well as in their narrative strategies, the late poems require however more comprehensive analysis before they can shed light on Heine’s thinking in these final years. This complexity is due in large part to an almost programmatic effort on Heine’s part to produce a final, consistent image of his work and thought, and ultimately of himself as a figure of historical significance.¹¹ Only recently have scholars begun to give the late poetry its due attention. The result has been not only a better insight into Heine’s thinking in the “Matratzengruft.” Indeed, critics have found that a critical engagement with both the poetry and the prose after 1848 leads to a fuller understanding of the earlier work, from the philosophical and literary essays to even the early Romantic poetry.

If at the beginning of the new millennium Heine scholars can look back and explain the reception of his works in the second half of the twentieth century largely in terms of divided Germany’s attempts to come terms with its recent history, then a later generation of scholars will probably see the recent focus on the late period as a function of our own critical (perhaps postmodern or even *posthistoire*) fixations. To the extent that the reception of Heine — not merely after 1945, but from the 1820s on — has served as an effective barometer of the German *Zeitgeist*, this gives a twofold meaning to the title of one of

his favored categories of poems, *Zeitgedichte*. Not only do they address social or political issues that were current at the time, but they can also serve in some respects as a foil in which later generations can see reflected their own thinking on similar issues of their time.

This holds, however, not only for his poetry, and in the case of his poetry not only for the actual *Zeitgedichte*. Many, indeed the great majority of the late writings address either directly or indirectly Heine's own situation. Facing an imminent death, or at least a death that he always thought was imminent during the last eight years of his life, Heine reflected back on his life and work, assessing his views and the goals he had set for his writing. However, in doing so he did not slip back into the past; rather he continued even after 1848 to depict an inextricable connection between his own life and the contemporary situation of Europe along its progressive path to a more enlightened social order. Given the failure of the middle European liberal movement in the revolutionary uprisings of 1848–49, and Heine's already totally pessimistic view of these events at their very outset, it is not surprising that his late writings display aspects of a critical thinking that would not dominate mainstream culture until near the end of the nineteenth century. Two factors have caused this affinity to modernism to go largely unheeded until quite recently: first, his own focus on individual, mainly personal parameters within this larger social development; and second, the desire of many to hold onto the image of the directly involved writer whose critical verve was part of an active opposition. As a result, scholars have only recently begun to examine the distinctive form of modern negative aesthetics Heine developed in the late writings.

In his piece on the late poetry, Anthony Phelan points to several such perspectives, or "archetypes of modernity," as he terms them. He analyzes subtle narrative and aesthetic strategies that draw into question not only the specific poetic project of Romanticism, but the whole cultural tradition that informed Heine's literary career. Taking up ideas first postulated in Adorno's well-known short essay "Die Wunde Heine" (albeit one that had rather the effect of curbing further pursuit of the modernity issue), Phelan examines passages (here, primarily from "Jehuda ben Halevy") that reveal how traditional aesthetic values are rendered obsolete as art becomes dominated by the laws of commodity exchange. He locates other, now commonplace perspectives of modernity in Heine's resigned vision of exhausted traditions. They include: the city as an enervating locus for modern culture; a secularized culture that leaves little room for moral consolation;

the ennui of a daily bourgeois life that is as paralyzing as it is plain; and an empty continuity that precludes narrative closure, mythic importance, and heroic action. In his essay on Heine's discursive use of Greek mythology, Paul Reitter also argues that the late writing (and *Die Götter im Exil* in particular) addresses the problem of a traditional mode of cultural enfranchisement that has lost its vibrancy. He emphasizes, however, Heine's attempt to offset the degenerative tendency of modernity and to find an alternative mode by which the "otherness of mythic sensualism" can exert its redemptive powers. While no longer the self-assured prophet of an eventual synthesis of the sensual and the spiritual, the ailing writer continues the "Freiheitskampf" even in his own weakened capacity and against a suffocating modern culture. In his incisive examination of the concept of time in the three poems of "Hebräische Melodien," Goetschel also demonstrates how Heine endeavored to ward off what he saw as a debilitating modernist apprehension of history. In particular, he shows how Heine (in "Disputation") reveals that the derogatory idea of a divided Jewish identity is in actuality the projection of modernity's own split onto a Jewish tradition still vibrant enough to oppose the exhaustion of tradition in the modern world.

This emphasis on Heine's analysis of historical progress at the threshold of modernity should not come at the expense of his reflections on his personal situation and the perspectives they open up on the individual psyche. Joseph Kruse focuses on this aspect of the late writings, while cautioning that even the investigation of his most private thoughts never loses sight of the larger goals of a collective human progress. Moreover, Heine used these more intimate contemplations as a foundation for reassessing his former thinking in a productive fashion, such that the final poetry even expands on the earlier themes. Kruse also explains how the confinement to the "Matratzen-gruft" necessitated a move away from the social and cultural world Heine had frequented both in person in Paris and intellectually in Germany. It resulted in a journey inward, most notably to the edge of that netherworld that preoccupied him during much of these last eight years. This manifested itself in his writing as a provocative approach to his own death that defied the normal limits of propriety. Working in what one could justifiably describe as a living hell, he was able, in an astonishing feat of will, to maintain a balance between his desire for death and the will to live on, and correspondingly, between total resignation at the human condition and continued commitment to the struggle for social justice.