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The Literature of German Romanticism



Edited by Dennis F. Mahoney

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The Literature of German Romanticism

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Dennis F. Mahoney

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D. F. M.
June 2003
Burlington, Vermont

Abbreviations

- KFSA* Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, 28 vols. to date, eds. Ernst Behler et al. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1958-).
- NS* Friedrich von Hardenberg, *Novalis Schriften: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe in vier Bänden, einem Materialienband und einem Ergänzungsband in vier Teilbänden*. 6.2 vols. to date, eds. Richard Samuel, Hans-Joachim Mähl, and Gerhard Schulz, et al. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960-).

Apart from these two historical-critical editions, which are used throughout the volume, the individual contributors have selected whatever other editions they found most helpful. Frequently quoted sources, whether primary or secondary literature, are given their full bibliographical information in an endnote, along with the abbreviation that thereafter will be used as a parenthetical reference within the main text itself.

Introduction

Dennis F. Mahoney

AT THE END OF the eighteenth century, there occurred an outburst of intellectual, literary, and artistic creativity within German-speaking lands that signaled the start of the Age of Romanticism throughout Europe and even the Americas. While many literary historians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries regarded German Romanticism as the polar opposite to Enlightenment rationalism — with the evaluation of such a purported opposition depending on the ideological orientation of the critic — it might be more productive to view the Romantic era in Germany as a time when discordances latent in eighteenth-century society and thought became manifest. In this way, Enlightenment and Romanticism become part of a continuum of development in European intellectual history that also includes more narrowly confined literary movements in Germany such as the *Sturm und Drang* and Weimar Classicism.¹

Within German Romanticism itself it is customary to distinguish at least two and perhaps even three phases in the years between 1795 and 1830 — *Früh-, Hoch-,* and *Spätromantik* (Early, High, Late Romanticism) — whereby the middle attribute then suggests a high point to the movement in the years between 1805 and 1815 before it either lapsed into repetitive self-parody or was superseded by other groups and directions in nineteenth-century literature. Regardless of whether one chooses to accept this tripartite division or else simply speaks of Early and Late Romanticism, there is no doubt that the first phase of this movement overlaps with the literary partnership of Goethe and Schiller between 1794 and 1805 known as Weimar Classicism. The Early Romantics, in fact, were the first to direct critical attention away from Goethe's literary productions of the 1770s like *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (The Sorrows of Young Werther, 1774) and praise his most recent novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship, 1795–96). Instrumental in this regard was the *Athenaeum* (1798–1800), the journal founded and edited by the brothers August Wilhelm (1767–1845) and Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), which included the latter's essay "Über Goethes Meister" (1798) as well as collections of aphorisms on topics relating to literature, philosophy, religion, art, and politics by Friedrich Schlegel and his friend Friedrich von Hardenberg

(1772–1801), who first published under the pen name of Novalis (that is, the clearer of new ground) in the *Athenaeum*.² When one considers that 1798 was also the year that William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge published the first edition of their *Lyrical Ballads*, which contained such masterpieces as Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” and Coleridge’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” it becomes apparent that new directions in literature were beginning in other European countries as well.

It would not be until 1800 that a poem of comparable literary quality appeared in the *Athenaeum*, namely Novalis’s *Hymnen an die Nacht* (Hymns to Night), whose mixture of rhythmic prose and ecstatic lyrics proved particularly influential in French poetry of the later nineteenth century. The principal strength of the Schlegel brothers was their critical acumen, which they later were to display in public lectures in Berlin and Vienna that were then translated and distributed throughout the Western world, aiding in the development of other national schools of Romanticism after 1815. Besides Hardenberg, the only Early Romantic who excelled as a poet as well as a theoretician, the other two principal literary talents of the first phase of German Romanticism were Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder (1773–98) and Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853), who published in 1796 their collection of essays on art and music entitled *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (Heartfelt Effusions of an Art-Loving Monk). As was true for Friedrich Schlegel and Friedrich von Hardenberg, Tieck and Wackenroder became friends during their student days, when excursions from the Prussian university of Erlangen into the southern German countryside around Bamberg and Nuremberg gave these native Berliners a newfound enthusiasm for the art of the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Baroque that in turn had an impact on the development of German Romantic art and music until at least as far as *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (1868) by Richard Wagner (1813–83).³ Throughout the Romantic era, Tieck’s experiments in the novel, shorter prose narratives, drama, and lyric poetry likewise were to prove influential models for other writers, as the corresponding chapters within the present volume will make evident.

Collaborative work was to become characteristic of the Romantic generation, although the personal configurations shifted from year to year and place to place. The Early Romantics, for example, are often known as the Jena Romantics, as this small university town near Weimar is where August Wilhelm Schlegel was appointed professor in 1796, his brother Friedrich immersed himself in the study of the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), and Tieck became friends with Hardenberg in the summer and fall of 1799. But Berlin, a city hitherto regarded as a citadel of the Enlightenment, has equal claims to be regarded as a center of Romanticism — from the work of Tieck and Wackenroder through that of Late Romantics like E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822), Adelbert von Chamisso

(1781–1838), and Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué (1777–1843). It was in Berlin, after all, that the *Athenaeum* was published and where Friedrich Schlegel first met his future wife Dorothea Veit-Schlegel (1763–1829), the daughter of the Jewish Enlightenment leader Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86), and also brought the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) into the orbit of the Early Romantic movement. In Berlin as well as in Dresden and Jena, ideas were discussed at formal and informal gatherings that embodied the Early Romantic ideal of “Symphilosophieren,” or philosophizing together, in preference to the closed philosophical systems of contemporary German Idealism.

At the beginning of his *Gespräch über die Poesie* (Conversation on Poesy, 1800), one of the key documents of German Romantic theory and practice, Friedrich Schlegel argues that individual thoughts about life and art are necessarily limited and require their complement in the views of others (*KFSA*, 2: 285–86). Consequently, Schlegel strives in this work to recreate the lively discussions among the Early Romantics. For our twenty-first century *Gespräch* on Romanticism, an international team of scholars from a variety of disciplines and critical perspectives will attempt to come to grips with one of the most fruitful and complex, but also most controversial periods in German literature. The editor’s introduction and the following three chapters establish an overall framework for the essays to follow. In the course of his exploration of the genesis of German Romanticism at the end of the eighteenth century and the discussion of its place in literary history, Gerhard Schulz differentiates the concept “Romantic,” as applied to literary and artistic history, from its more typological usage as synonymous with “imaginative,” “fantastic,” and “unreal.” In an oft-quoted remark to Eckermann on 4 April 1829, Goethe even went so far as to distinguish between “classic” and “romantic” by labeling the former as healthy and the latter as sick. Had he only known that Anglo-American critics would come to regard him as a key figure in European Romanticism!⁴ Goethe and his younger contemporary Schiller are too protean in their development to be confined to any single literary movement — within the *Camden House History of German Literature* they also are treated in the volumes on the *Sturm und Drang* and Weimar Classicism; but in this volume Arnd Bohm helps us to consider their significance for the English and German Romantics as well as the ways in which Goethe in particular strove to distinguish himself from tendencies in Romanticism that he regarded with deep reserve. By way of counterpoint to Goethe’s conception, Richard Littlejohns provides an overview of Early Romanticism that stresses not only the value ascribed to rationality in the circle around Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel, but also their attempt to respond to the political and philosophical revolutions of the 1790s in a whole gamut of forms and modes of writing.

By this point in the volume, it will have become evident that the German Romantics were anything but dreamy, moonstruck poets who relied on their emotions to create their art. Even with later Romantics such as Clemens Brentano (1778–1842) and Joseph von Eichendorff (1788–1857), the apparent simplicity of their tales and poems is the product of conscious artifice, as the ensuing discussion of these works will show. This next set of four chapters on the novels, short prose works, dramas, and poetry of German Romanticism uses as a starting point the traditional distinctions between epic, dramatic, and lyric genres, all the while realizing that, particularly in the Romantic novel, there was a conscious, programmatic attempt to intermingle these three modes of writing. Although also written with an audience of fellow Romanticists in mind, these chapters by Gerhart Hoffmeister, Ulrich Scheck, Claudia Stockinger, and Bernadette Malinowski should be of particular value for graduate student and generalist readers looking for a reliable guide to the literature of and scholarship on German Romanticism.

It has been maintained that — for better or worse — Romanticism had a deeper and more wide-ranging impact on German society and culture than it did in other European countries. In the second half of this volume, therefore, Fabian Lampart, Klaus Peter, Gabriele Rommel, Martha B. Helfer, Kristina Muxfeldt, and Beate Allert focus on the most significant aspects of German Romanticism and their interplay with folklore, politics, natural science, gender presentation and representation, music, and the visual arts. The penultimate chapter by Paul Bishop and R. H. Stephenson explores facets of Goethe's late verse that cannot be subsumed under the rubric of Weimar Classicism; we will leave it up to the reader to decide whether Goethe was more "Romantic" than he might have suspected. The concluding chapter by Nicholas Saul, though, should leave no doubt as to the extent that the writings of the German Romantics have stimulated literary production throughout the twentieth century.

If, as we hope, this volume is read from cover to cover, its organization is such that the argument of each chapter should flow seamlessly into the succeeding piece. Such a "classical" order may seem out of place for a study on German Romanticism, whose writings often have been decried as formless and artless outpourings. Goethe, for example, once compared Achim von Arnim (1781–1831) to a cooper who forgets to put rings around his barrel, thus causing the contents to spill all over the place.⁵ Ironically, this remark in a letter to Karl August Varnhagen von Ense (1785–1858) of 8 July 1825 resembles contemporary complaints about the seeming formlessness of Goethe's final novel *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (Wilhelm Meister's Years of Wandering, 1829), which Goethe countered with reference to the organizational principle of multiple mirroring that he had long incorporated into his writings.⁶ For individuals who may be consulting this volume

for purposes of learning about a particular German Romantic author, work, genre, or theme, such a Goethean, “classic-romantic” method of reading will enable them to benefit from sections that complement the one with which they begin. The opening and concluding chapters by Gerhard Schulz and Nicholas Saul on the genesis and twentieth-century reception of German Romanticism provide a chronological and thematic frame for the volume as a whole. The two chapters on Goethe at either end of the volume also relate to each other as a matter of course. Chapters 3–7 and 9–13, meanwhile, provide opportunities for multiple reflections on a single work or author from different perspectives. For example: chapter 3 on Early Romanticism by Richard Littlejohns draws attention to Friedrich Schlegel’s deliberate flouting of conventional structure in his novel *Lucinde* (1799); in his account of the German Romantic novel (chapter 4), Gerhart Hoffmeister discusses how this seeming chaos actually is organized into two groupings of six literary arabesques around a central, more chronologically narrated chapter entitled “Lehrjahre der Männlichkeit” (Years of Apprenticeship in Masculinity); and chapter 10 by Martha B. Helfer investigates the Romantics’ experiments with gender roles in their writings, with special attention to Friedrich Schlegel’s *Lucinde* and Dorothea Veit-Schlegel’s novel *Florentin* (1801).

Where, then, does that leave Fabian Lampart’s discussion of “The Turn to History and the *Volk*: Brentano, Arnim, and the Grimm Brothers” in chapter 8? In analogy to the structure of *Lucinde*: this central chapter deals with topics around which the entire volume revolves, namely, the radical restructuring of European society in the wake of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period, and the efforts of writers such as Arnim, Brentano, and Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm (1786–1859) Grimm to come to terms with this phenomenon by constructing an alternative model of reality in their writings. These authors, along with Joseph von Eichendorff, belong to the so-called Heidelberg group of Romantics, who congregated intermittently in this southern German university town in the years between 1805 and 1808 and attempted to preserve and renew the German cultural heritage through collections of folk songs and fairy tales, as well as their own literary production.⁷ So successful were they in their creation of an imagined “Germany” that Heidelberg, the Rhine River, and its seductive temptress the Lorelei — first evoked in a ballad by Brentano within his novel *Godwi* (1801) and later immortalized in the poem by Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) — have become mainstays of the tourist industry ever since. After all, the fairy-tale palace in the Walt Disney movie *Cinderella* (1950) that now serves as the emblem for the “Magic Kingdom” throughout the world is itself modeled on Neuschwanstein Castle, which King Ludwig II of Bavaria (1845–86) built as his “romantic” refuge from unpleasant reality and decorated with scenes from the music dramas of Wagner.

There is an earlier film, however, that also makes use of the trappings of Romanticism, namely *Der Triumph des Willens* (1935) directed by Leni Riefenstahl (1902–2003); while Riefenstahl to her death claimed that she was merely making a documentary of the 1934 Nazi Party Congress in Nuremberg, her film’s cinematic message clearly suggests that Adolf Hitler embodies the German people just as surely as Nuremberg represents its glorious past and promising future under National Socialism. Although Romanticism was not the only era of German culture that the Nazis exploited for their own sinister purposes, one cannot overlook this area of its reception history.⁸ The remainder of this introduction, therefore, will provide a review of the sweeping intellectual and societal changes in the decades before and after 1800 before proceeding to a writer who often has fallen into the literary-historical crack “between Classicism and Romanticism,” namely Heinrich von Kleist (1777–1811), and regarding his life, works, and problematic reception as illustrative of the difficulties that Kleist and his Romantic contemporaries faced when attempting to come to terms with a world in flux.⁹

German Romanticism, the French Revolution, and Napoleon

When writing his monumental history of German literature between 1770 and 1832, Hermann August Korff took as his organizing principle a quasi-Hegelian *Geist der Goethezeit* (Spirit of the Age of Goethe) that made itself manifest in the various literary movements of the *Sturm und Drang*, Classicism, and Romanticism.¹⁰ For his magisterial account of German literature of the Classic and Romantic period, Gerhard Schulz chose a more material framework than did Korff, his professor in Leipzig: the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 and the July Revolution of 1830 in Paris that signaled the precarious nature of the Restoration imposed upon Europe after the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.¹¹ In 1798, Friedrich Schlegel already had drawn connections between social upheaval and intellectual innovations when he termed the French Revolution, the *Wissenschaftslehre* (Theory of Knowledge, 1794–95) of the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and Goethe’s novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* the three main tendencies of the age (*KFS*, 2: 198, no. 216). Schlegel envisioned as the common thread linking changes in the worlds of politics, philosophy, and literature the willingness to break away from traditional methods of organization; the novel, in particular, offered the greatest possibilities of artistic and intellectual freedom. In a Europe shaken by revolutionary developments in politics, science, and philosophy, young writers like Schlegel saw literature as the medium for joining seemingly disparate cultural spheres through the “progressive Universalpoesie”

of Romanticism (*KFSA*, 2: 182, no. 116). By the second decade of the nineteenth century, however, it had become clear that German Romanticism itself was less a solution than it was a manifestation of the seismic shocks striking a civilization on the fracture line between tradition and modernity.¹²

The first ten years of the French Revolution provided a common background for the development both of Weimar Classicism, treated in a separate volume of this literary history, and of Early Romanticism. Goethe, after all, had accompanied Duke Carl August of Saxony-Eisenach-Weimar on the disastrous Austrian and Prussian military campaign of the summer and fall of 1792 that resulted in the French occupation of the Rhineland and precipitated the overthrow of the new constitutional monarchy in France and the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette in 1793. Schiller, who had been named a honorary citizen of France in the fall of 1792, was so disgusted by the excesses of the Reign of Terror of 1793–94 as to compose his letters *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (On the Aesthetic Education of Man, 1795) in an attempt to diagnose and prescribe a cure for the ills of modern society. The peace treaty of Basel that Prussia signed with revolutionary France in April of 1795, the withdrawal of the various Saxon principalities from the imperial war against France in the fall of 1796, and Austria's own treaty at Campo Formio in October of 1797, meanwhile, provide the background for the hope for peace expressed at the end of Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* (1797), in which the Rhine River is accepted as the border between German and French territory.¹³

One essential difference between Goethe, Schiller, and the Early Romantics, however, is that the former writers were willing to accept modifications, but not major alterations to the social structure of pre-Revolutionary Europe under which they had spent their formative years, while the Romantic generation experienced the cataclysmic changes in the political and social fabric of Europe wrought by the French Revolutionary wars as teenagers or young adults. Even if, in their later years, many Romantics opposed the Napoleonic reorganization of Europe — which Goethe understood as the restoration of order after the chaos of the French Revolution — they were acutely conscious that such radical transformations of the world were part of the stuff of daily life. Writing to his friend Friedrich Schlegel on 1 August 1794, at the climax of the Reign of Terror in France, Friedrich von Hardenberg observed that in their time one did not have to be too reserved with the word “Dream”; things were being realized that ten years earlier would have been consigned to the philosophical madhouse (*NS*, 4: 140). Not surprisingly, his own experimental novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802) later would open with a dream of the blue flower that inspires the protagonist to undertake a search destined to transform the entire world into a realm ruled by love, peace, and poetry.



If such an envisioned ending to this novel sounds more like a fairy tale than the realistic depiction of contemporary life promoted by most eighteenth-century novelists, Goethe included, it is — but it was also intended to be so. Writing to Friedrich Schlegel after the completion of part one of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, which remained incomplete due to its author's death from tuberculosis at the age of 28, Hardenberg hoped that his friend would notice a fortuitous mixture of novel and fairy tale that would become even more pronounced in the second part (NS, 4: 330). In effect, Hardenberg was attempting to take two admired works by Goethe, the novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and the cryptic tale *Märchen* (Fairy Tale) published in Schiller's journal *Die Horen* in 1795, and transform them into a fairy-tale novel. Indeed, the question-and-answer pattern encountered at crucial moments within Goethe's *Märchen* provides the stylistic model for the most famous statement in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, namely the answer Heinrich receives to the question as to where he is going: "Immer nach Hause" (Home. All the time; NS, 1: 325).

Hardenberg's choice of the term "Mischung" (mixture) to describe his artistic procedure in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* indicates another contemporary source for Romantic poetic theory — advances in chemistry. Although the effects of the Industrial Revolution that had already begun in England and France did not make themselves felt appreciably in Germany until later in the nineteenth century, the scientific discoveries fueling technological change were well known by the Romantics. Due to his profession as salt-mining official in Saxony, Hardenberg had studied at the Mining Academy in Freiberg, which was one of the leading schools of its kind in the world, and had received a thorough training in subjects such as chemistry, geology, and mathematics. Following Joseph Priestley's (1733–1804) discovery that water was actually a combination of the elements hydrogen and oxygen, other elements were identified at a rapid pace. More important, scientists realized that the seemingly stable natural world was capable of modification and manipulation, if one understood the rules. Alluding to the prominent role played by French chemists such as Antoine Lavoisier (1743–94) and Antoine de Fourcroy (1755–1809), Friedrich Schlegel noted that it was natural that the French were also playing a dominant role in the "moral chemistry" of an Age of Revolution (*KFS* 2: 248, no. 426). By way of analogy, for Romantic poets and critics the model for poetic production no longer was the imitation of existing nature (mimesis), as it had been since the time of Aristotle, but the creation of new worlds through poetic experiment and imagination.¹⁴ In his *Fichte-Studien* (1795–96), Friedrich von Hardenberg made an observation on the nature of Fichte's philosophy of human freedom that was soon to characterize his own poetic output:

Das oberste Princip muß schlechterdings Nichts Gegebenes, sondern ein Frey Gemachtes, ein *Erdichtetes*, *Erdachtes* seyn, um ein allgemeines metaphysisches System zu begründen, das von Freyheit anfängt und zu Freiheit geht. / Alles Filosofiren zweck auf Emancipation ab. / (NS, 2: 273, no. 568).¹⁵

The Early Romantics extended such poetic experimentation into the realms of politics and religion as well. Hardenberg's collection of aphorisms *Glauben und Liebe* (Faith and Love), published in 1798 under his poetic pseudonym, develops the vision of a Prussia combining monarchical and republican principles in which the new king Friedrich Wilhelm III (1770–1840) and his spouse, Queen Luise (1776–1810), serve less as rulers and more as representatives of ideal humanity. True to his poetic principles, Novalis was, in effect, inventing a Prussian monarchy that has been created by poetic fiat. As Ingo R. Stoehr observes, it is this concern with innovation that characterizes literature written after 1800; in that regard Romanticism is “the first truly modern literary period.” However, Stoehr sees an additional trend developing in this period, namely “a world that is defined by autonomy of individual spheres or, put in negative terms, lack of cohesion in the society as a whole,” and it is the consciousness of the disparity between “art” and “life” that also is characteristic of German Romanticism.¹⁶ One real difference between the aesthetic ideal of Weimar Classicism and that developed by the Early Romantics is that Goethe and Schiller insisted on the autonomy of art, whereas Novalis and other Romantic authors made a conscious attempt to effect political changes through works like *Glauben und Liebe* and thereby to narrow the gap between ideal and reality. The piece met with the disfavor of the king, however, at least in part because Friedrich Wilhelm III resented such an intrusion into his sphere of activity, and the Prussian censor forbade the publication of its concluding political aphorisms. *Die Christenheit oder Europa* (Christendom or Europe, written 1799, published 1826) was even more ambitious in scope, calling for a Christianity freed of dogmatic divisions and capable of bringing peace to a war-torn Europe. Given the outbreak of the War of the Second Coalition against France earlier in 1799, it is not surprising that its closing words, which Hardenberg delivered as a speech to the members of the Early Romantic circle, evade any answer to the question as to when such utopian dreams will occur. Instead the narrator reassures his audience with allusions to paragraph 86 of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's (1729–81) *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* (The Education of Mankind, 1780) and the title of Immanuel Kant's 1795 treatise on perpetual peace:

Nur Geduld, sie wird, sie muß kommen die heilige Zeit des ewigen Friedens, wo das neue Jerusalem die Hauptstadt der Welt seyn wird; und bis dahin seydt heiter und muthig in den Gefahren der Zeit, Genos-

sen meines Glaubens, verkündigt mit Wort und That das göttliche Evangelium, und bleibt dem wahrhaften, unendlichen Glauben treu bis in den Tod. (NS, 3: 524)¹⁷

Despite such rhetorical flourishes, even Hardenberg's most immediate associates were not convinced, and *Die Christenheit oder Europa* was not published until 1826, when it was understood as a reactionary defense of the so-called Holy Alliance propagated by the monarchs of Europe after the Congress of Vienna in 1815. But even in the years between 1799 and Hardenberg's death in March of 1801, political realities had outstripped poetic articulation. On 9–10 November 1799, several days before Hardenberg, the Schlegels, and other members of their circle gathered in Jena, Napoleon Bonaparte had organized the *coup d'état* that catapulted him from the rank of revolutionary general to that of First Consul of France. By 9 February 1801, a succession of military defeats in Germany and Italy induced Austria to sign the peace treaty at Lunéville that recognized as sovereign states the puppet governments the French had established in the Netherlands, Switzerland, and northern Italy on the fringes of the crumbling Holy Roman Empire. On 25 March 1802, France and Great Britain signed a treaty at Amiens that gave Europe its first respite from war in ten years — a chief reason why Romantic writers like Friedrich Schlegel, Arnim, and Kleist were able to undertake extensive European travels, including sojourns in Paris, in the years prior to the resumption of hostilities between France and Austria in the fall of 1805.¹⁸

In these years between 1801 and 1805, Napoleon consolidated his rule in France, crowning himself as Emperor of the French in Notre Dame Cathedral on 2 December 1804, and built the *Grande Armée* that was to be employed with such devastating effects in the years thereafter. On the east side of the Rhine, the Holy Roman Empire was not formally dissolved until 6 August 1806, but as early as 1805 the southern German states of Baden, Württemberg, and Bavaria had become allies of Napoleon, gaining territory and increased prestige in the process; the protected status of Heidelberg in the new arch-duchy of Baden was one reason why it became a meeting place for Romantics like Arnim, Brentano, and Eichendorff in the years after 1805. In the meantime, the fruitful partnership between Goethe and Schiller was brought to a close by Schiller's death in May of 1805. As for the Early Romantics, the death of Friedrich von Hardenberg in March of 1801 had served to accelerate the process of dissolution of this literary group, and centers of Romantic literary activity shifted from Jena to cities like Heidelberg, Berlin, Dresden, and even Vienna, following Friedrich Schlegel's conversion to Catholicism in 1808 and energetic defense of the Austrian emperor as the true representative of imperial legitimacy. In these years of historical and literary flux, the life and works of Heinrich von Kleist epitom-

mize the forces that impinged on the new generation of Romantics and that in turn were treated in their writings.

“Immer nach Hause?” Heinrich von Kleist

Born into an aristocratic family that numbered eighteen generals among its ancestors, Heinrich von Kleist served in the Prussian army from 1792 to 1799, where he took part in the siege of republican Mainz in the spring and summer of 1793, and eventually rose to the rank of lieutenant. Kleist, however, chafed under Prussian military discipline, regarding it as demeaning for officers and enlisted men alike; in a letter of 19 March 1799 to his former tutor Ernst Christian Martini, he described regiment drill as a living monument to tyranny. After he was given royal permission to leave the military, Kleist studied law and economics for three semesters at the University of Frankfurt an der Oder, his hometown, before assuming a position in the Prussian Ministry of Economics in November of 1800. Already in that same month, though, Kleist confided his dissatisfaction with his new situation in a letter to his fiancée Wilhelmine von Zenge, whom he had met while studying in Frankfurt: “Ich soll tun was der Staat von mir verlangt, und doch soll ich nicht untersuchen, ob das, was er von mir verlangt, gut ist. Zu seinem unbekanntem Zwecken soll ich ein bloßes Werkzeug sein — ich kann Es nicht” (I am supposed to do what the state demands of me, and yet I should not investigate whether that which it asks of me is good. For its unknown purposes I am supposed to be a mere instrument — I cannot do this). Later that winter, Kleist’s despondency further intensified when his readings in Kantian philosophy led him to the conclusion that humans can never know whether that which seems to them to be true actually is truth. In the same letter to Wilhelmine of 22 March 1801 that contains the description of this so-called “Kant crisis,” Kleist revealed his plans to leave on a journey to France with his half-sister Ulrike.¹⁹

Heinrich and Ulrike arrived in Paris in time for Bastille Day, which was particularly elaborate that year in honor of the Treaty of Lunéville. Yet the uncaring anonymity of the metropolis repelled him, and the Bastille Day celebrations seemed only a means of entertaining and distracting the populace, rather than the celebration of republican virtue that Kleist had expected in his Rousseauistic idealism. In Paris for the official purpose of pursuing chemical and mathematical studies, Kleist furthermore expressed his disgust at what he termed the cyclopean one-sidedness of scientists.²⁰ In the ensuing months and years of restless travel throughout Germany, Switzerland, northern Italy, and France — in the course of which his engagement with Wilhelmine dissolved, his health deteriorated, and thoughts of suicide occurred at regular intervals — Kleist’s energies turned ever more to literature. Between the fall of 1804 and the summer of 1806, Kleist made one more

attempt to assume a position within the Prussian civil service, but even during this time he was occupied with what were to become some of his most celebrated works: the plays *Amphitryon* (1807), *Penthesilea* (1808), and *Der zerbrochene Krug* (The Broken Pitcher, performed in 1808, published 1811) as well as the novellas *Das Erdbeben in Chili* (The Earthquake in Chile, 1807), *Die Marquise von O.* (1808), and *Michael Kohlhaas* (1810) that were later published in his first collection of stories in 1810.²¹

In August of 1806, Kleist wrote from Königsberg (today Kaliningrad) to his superior, the Finance Minister Baron vom Stein zum Altenstein, requesting a six-month leave of absence due to reasons of ill health. By October of that year, the much-vaunted Prussian army met the same fate as Austria and Russia in December of 1805 at Austerlitz: it was decisively defeated by Napoleon's forces at the battles of Jena and Auerstedt. Upon returning to Berlin, now occupied by French troops, Kleist was taken for a spy and imprisoned in France from February to July of 1807 until after the Peace Treaty of Tilsit, which stripped Prussia of all its territories west of the Elbe and the bulk of its acquisitions in Poland. One of these prisons was Fort de Joux near Besançon, in which the Haitian rebel leader Toussaint l'Ouverture had died in 1803. Kleist's novella *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo* (The Engagement in Santo Domingo, 1811), whose setting is a successful slave rebellion against French forces, is an indication of his growing interest in using literature as a weapon against Napoleonic hegemony in Europe.²² In a letter to Ulrike from 24 October 1806 warning against the baleful effects of a Napoleonic occupation of Europe, he had described the Germans as the subjugated peoples of the Romans (7: 26). This metaphor finds its full application in *Die Hermannsschlacht* (Arminius's Battle, published 1821), the play that Kleist completed in Dresden in the second half of the year 1808, at a point when guerilla war had broken out in Spain against French occupying forces and Austria was readying itself for renewed struggle against France. In the first three acts of this play, the German tribal leader Hermann (Latin form Arminius) acts in a way consonant with the submissive behavior of Prussian leadership since their military defeat in 1806 — but for the purposes of lulling Roman suspicions and luring their forces into the impenetrable morasses of the Teutoburg Forest, where in A.D. 9 three Roman legions under the command of Quintilius Varus were annihilated. Richard Samuel has made a convincing case that the Machiavellian tactics displayed by Kleist's Hermann bear considerable resemblance to those advocated by his former superior and leader of the Prussian Reform Movement, Baron vom Stein, particularly with regard to reconciliation between Prussian and Austria for purposes of a general German uprising against Napoleon.²³

Kleist's correspondence in the winter and spring of 1809 documents unmistakably his interest in a speedy performance and publication of this drama, preferably in the prestigious Burgtheater in Vienna. When war broke

out in April of 1809, he left Dresden for Austria, visiting the battlefield at Aspern where Archduke Karl's forces had won a victory over Napoleon's army and offering his services as a propagandist. The ensuing defeat of Austria, however, eliminated the likelihood of any performance of a work that could be construed as a call for uprising against Napoleon and the German states allied with him since 1806 in the Confederation of the Rhine. Even after Ludwig Tieck's publication of *Die Hermannsschlacht* in 1821, the drama met with relative inattention, only gradually becoming more popular in the latter course of the nineteenth century as nationalist sentiments arose in Germany and new applications of its political message could be construed, such as seeing Hermann as a predecessor of Prussia's "Iron Chancellor" Otto von Bismarck (1815–98). The high or, rather, low point in the reception history of this drama occurred during the period of National Socialism, when *Die Hermannsschlacht* became the most frequently staged of all of Kleist's dramas in Germany, lauded for its depiction of the molding of disparate tribes into one, uncompromising fighting body at the bidding of a truly German leader. A main dilemma of Kleist scholarship and dramaturgy ever since has been to determine whether such tendentious interpretations are consonant with Kleist's play, or whether its structure and message offer alternative opportunities that undercut the seeming glorification of hatred and deceit in the service of national liberation.²⁴

One point speaking against the reduction of *Die Hermannsschlacht* to a mere propagandistic piece is the transparency with which Kleist outlines the willingness of his main character to employ every wile for the purpose of accomplishing his goal. Whereas earlier Arminius dramas, such as Johann Elias Schlegel's *Hermann* (1743), had outdone themselves in depicting the moral integrity of their protagonist, a more apposite object of comparison with Kleist's Hermann would be the figure of Wallenstein in Schiller's great trilogy (1798–99), who likewise not only readily manipulates his officers but also makes use of his own family within his political intrigues.²⁵ Indeed, Kleist's Hermann distinguishes himself chiefly from Schiller's field marshal in that he has mastered the skills of dissimulation more completely and hence succeeds in convincing the Romans that he is the simple-minded German that they can direct for their own purposes, thereby causing them to fall into the trap he has prepared for them. But if victory is only possible when one becomes "more Roman than the Romans," what has been accomplished? By the end of act 5, the Teutoburg has been reduced to a smoldering ruin, and Hermann's chief remaining goal, as expressed in the closing lines of the play, is to ensure that the same eventually occurs to Rome:

Denn eh doch, seh ich ein, erschwingt der Kreis der Welt
Vor dieser Mordbrut keine Ruhe,
Als bis das Raubnest ganz zerstört,

Und nichts als eine schwarze Fahne,
Von seinem öden Trümmerhaufen weht! (3: 211)²⁶

As Bernd Fischer has observed, not only has the putative struggle for liberation become a war of annihilation, it also has turned into a war of conquest, as aggressors and victims switch their roles and the hunters become the hunted. In that respect, it can serve, doubtless against Kleist's original intention, as a quasi-Brechtian parable of the dangers of an unmitigated nationalism at that very point when this ideology was beginning to be developed.²⁷

A chilling illustration of this point is the passionate hatred that Hermann nourishes in Thusnelda, his wife. Throughout the course of the play Thusnelda is the one character besides Aristan, the unrepentant Ubian ally of the Romans whom Hermann ultimately orders beheaded, who dares to oppose Hermann's will. In act 2, scenes 3 and 8, she tells her husband to keep her out of his game with Ventidius, the Roman legate who imagines he has saved her life in the aurochs-hunt and who now proclaims his devotion to her in fulsome fashion — while surreptitiously cutting a lock of her hair as a token for the empress Livia. In act 3, scene 3, she initially refuses to believe Hermann's assertion that the Romans plan to shear the golden hair of Cheruskan women as booty for their wives just as they already have done in Ubia on the Rhine, although a seed of doubt is sown. In the final scene of act 4, Thusnelda is horrified to learn that all Romans, the good with the bad, are to be slaughtered in the planned uprising, and pleads in particular for the life of Ventidius. Hermann accedes to this request, but only while simultaneously returning the lock of Thusnelda's hair with the letter that Ventidius (allegedly) has sent to the empress together with the promise that the rest of her tresses will be cut off once Hermann has fallen (3: 181). As Hermann already has demonstrated no compunction about exaggerating or even inventing misdeeds by the Romans for purposes of inflaming his people, commentators such as Gerhard Schulz and Bernhard Greiner are justified in calling into question the genuineness of this letter. Given the prevalence of falsified letters in the dramas of Schiller and his predecessors, one can not rule out this possibility here as well, although Kleist does include a conversation between Varus and Ventidius in act 3, scene 6, which makes it clear that Romans intend to treat the Cheruskans not as allies, but rather as a conquered people.²⁸

Unprecedented even in the most outrageous scenes of *Sturm und Drang* drama, however, is the revenge on Ventidius that Thusnelda devises, who promises her departing husband that he will be pleased with her: in the expectation of a nocturnal tryst with Thusnelda, Ventidius enters an enclosure where he is attacked and torn to pieces by an enraged she-bear. More horrifying still is Thusnelda's sadistic taunting of Ventidius, even as Gertrud, her maid, and Childerich the bear keeper do their best to wrest the key to

the enclosure from her and to rescue the anguished Roman: “Sag ihr, daß du sie liebst, Ventidius, / So hält sie still und schenkt die Locken dir! / *Sie wirft den Schlüssel weg und fällt in Ohnmacht*” (3: 203).²⁹ Beginning with Kleist’s first play *Die Familie Schroffenstein* (1803) there is no lack of scenes where characters fall unconscious at crucial moments. Perhaps Thusnelda faints here because she does not want to witness the culmination of her revenge; when Thusnelda later embraces Hermann upon his return from battle and he asks how splendidly she has kept her word (of revenge), she replies distractedly: “Das ist geschehen. Laß sein” (It took place. Let it be; 3: 208). But given the sexually charged language of the scenes leading up to the laceration of Ventidius, it is more likely that Thusnelda, like the Amazon queen Penthesilea in the drama that Kleist had completed prior to *Die Hermannsschlacht*, is experiencing what Friedrich von Hardenberg had observed in one of his notebook entries: “Sonderbar, daß der eigentliche Grund der Grausamkeit Wollust ist” (Strange, that the actual basis for cruelty is pleasure; *NS*, 3: 655, no. 581). If one relates the orgy of violence unleashed by the end of this drama — and Hermann explicitly calls the conversion of Thusnelda to his way of seeing and acting “der erste Sieg” (the first victory; 3: 183) — to Kleist’s earlier scruples about the uncertainty of truth and the misuse of individuals as mere instruments by the state, then “Hermann’s Slaughter” is an evil omen for the war-torn Europe of the Napoleonic period. In this light, Anthony Stephens understands Kleist’s drama, as “a helpless act of provocation, addressed to whatever forces might — despite all appearances — be active in history, as a corrective to facile optimism. But it was a provocation that failed to impinge upon either its immediate or more distant interlocutors.”³⁰

In act 3, scene 1 of Kleist’s final drama, *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* (published 1821), the title figure reacts with horror and indignation at the news that the Kurfürst (Elector) of Brandenburg actually intends to sign the sentence of death his military tribunal has invoked because of the prince’s failure to follow orders at the Battle of Fehrbellin in 1675 — the very battle won by his actions. What makes this act more monstrous in Homburg’s eyes is that hitherto he has regarded the Kurfürst as a father figure to whom he hopes to become even more closely bound by marriage with his niece, Princess Natalie. When he learns that the Swedish emissary has offered a peace treaty with Brandenburg upon the condition of Natalie’s marriage to the Swedish king, the explanation for his execution is all too clear to him: he is to be sacrificed for reasons of state (3: 253–54).

Homburg’s despair, which leads him to beg for his life before the Prince Elector’s wife on bent knee and to renounce any claim to Natalie, is all the more extreme because of the pageant enacted before the somnambulant prince in the first scene of the play.³¹ Here the Kurfürst, observing Homburg winding for himself a crown of laurel leaves, wraps this insignia in his chain

of office and hands it to Natalie, who holds it upraised as a virtual incarnation of the goddess of victory. Although Homburg fails to secure the crown of laurel before the Kurfürst and his party retreat from the scene, he does wrest from Natalie one of her gloves, which he later understands as confirmation that his dream was no mere chimera, but rather a prophecy of his success in love and war. For Kleist's literary generation, the dream of the blue flower in the opening chapter of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802) already had provided a model of fantastic expectations destined to be realized. In Kleist's play, the opening tableau repeats itself in the final scene of the play, but with one significant difference: Homburg, awaiting his execution, instead receives the laurel crown and chain of office from Natalie, who places his hand on her heart.³² This happy ending is, in effect, also a rewriting of Schiller's *Wallenstein*: rather than being sacrificed on the altar of power politics, as was the love between Max Piccolomini and Wallenstein's daughter Thekla, the Prince and Natalie may marry; the Kurfürst proves himself to be a loving father and not an unfeeling despot. All figures on stage depart for battle against the Swedish forces with the resounding words: "In Staub mit allen Feinden Brandenburgs" (Into the dust with all enemies of Brandenburg; 3: 289).³³

Not coincidentally, the Sweden of both 1675 and 1810–11 was allied with France. But Kleist's *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*, while containing numerous plot details that link it, like *Die Hermannsschlacht*, to Kleist's ongoing anti-Napoleonic animus, has more to do with inner reform of the Prussian state. Unlike the concrete reforms undertaken during the years 1808–11 — such as emancipation of the serfs, civil rights for the Jewish population, or the founding of the University of Berlin — the changes advocated by Kleist's play involve the attitudes of individuals toward each other and to the state that incorporates them. Whereas in the first two acts the prince seems to be impelled chiefly by dreams of private glory and the main concern of the Kurfürst is that his commands be carried out to the letter, both characters seem to have learned from each other by the end of the play. Given the opportunity to gain his freedom if he disagrees with the justice of the death sentence, the prince refuses to do so. Through the petition on behalf of Homburg that the officers of his army bring him, meanwhile, the Kurfürst comes to realize that Homburg represents the living spirit of his army. Anticipating their answer, he asks his officers whether they are willing to risk yet another battle with the Prince and then leads them, as his "Freunde" (friends), into the garden for the final scene (6: 286). This resolution of extremes is characteristic of the philosophy developed by Adam Müller (1779–1829), Kleist's friend and co-editor of the journal *Phöbus* from their days in Dresden, who in the spirit of Novalis's *Glauben und Liebe* also advocated that citizens should be bound by feelings of love and devotion to their country, not by contracts motivated by mutual self-interest.³⁴

Having returned to Berlin in December of 1809, Kleist hoped to lend a hand in the renewal of his homeland. In a letter to Ulrike von Kleist of 19 March 1810, he reported about a planned private and public performance of his drama, which was then to be given to Queen Luise of Prussia, whom Kleist idolized and who is generally regarded as the model for Natalie. But the queen died in July of 1810, and no performance of *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* took place during Kleist's lifetime. Nor did Kleist succeed in securing court patronage through Prince Wilhelm, the younger brother of the Prussian king, and his wife, Marie Anne of Hessen-Homburg, to whom he dedicated the play. Of all the many deviations from historical fact that Kleist undertook in this play, none proved more harmful to his cause than Homburg's fear of death in act 3, which the princess reputedly described as being unworthy not only of the memory of her ancestor, but also of any Prussian officer. On 21 November 1811, less than three months after this final attempt to secure material and moral support from the Prussian state, Heinrich von Kleist committed suicide.

The reception history of *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* shares many features with *Die Hermannsschlacht*; likewise published by Ludwig Tieck in 1821, it initially enjoyed limited recognition until the 1870s but eventually developed a reputation as the play par excellence that glorified Prussian patriotic fervor; the Kurfürst becomes a figure of adulation on Kleist's stage. In 1938, the Nazis underscored this play's importance for Germans everywhere by having *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* staged in Hitler's presence in the Burgtheater, the site of its original performance in 1821, in celebration of the annexation of Austria to the German Reich. Two postwar productions deserve particular credit for freeing Kleist's play from the odium of such associations and directing attention back to the figure of the prince himself. Jean Vilar's stagings in Avignon and Paris in 1951 and 1952, with Gérard Philipe in the title role, unleashed the existentialist wave of Kleist interpretations. In Germany, Peter Stein's 1972 rendition of "Kleists Traum vom Prinzen von Homburg" quickly attained the status of a modern classic. As its title indicates, Stein and his company — including the renowned actor Bruno Ganz in the role of Homburg and the novelist and playwright Botho Strauß as dramaturgist — emphasize that Kleist's depiction of a humane Prussia that has a place for the prince (and himself) was not only a dream, but also an unfulfilled one. In the final tableau, as the overwhelmed prince falls to the ground in a faint, the elector and his party leave him lying on the ground and depart instead with a waxen image that seemingly suffices for them and their marching chorus of "Heil! Heil! Heil!" (3: 288). As these militaristic nationalists depart, the figure of the prince rises, as lonely on stage as he was in the beginning, while the voice of Jutta Lampe, the actress who plays Natalie, recounts Kleist's suicide and his words to Ulrike von Kleist in the letter he wrote on the morning of his death: "die Wahrheit ist,

daß mir auf Erden nicht zu helfen war” (the truth is that there was no help for me on earth). Last but by no means least, the set back-drop by Karl-Ernst Herrmann — modeled after the painting “Der Mönch am Meer” by Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840) that Kleist and his friends Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano had analyzed so memorably in his *Berliner Abendblätter* (1810–11; 5: 61) — in effect turns the solitary prince into Kleist as well.³⁵

As early as 1935, Anna Seghers had responded to National Socialist attempts to claim Kleist, Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843), and Georg Büchner (1813–37) as forerunners of their movement by emphasizing that the true patriotism of these and other writers from the time of the *Sturm und Drang* through the 1830s consisted in their vain attempts to prevail against the repressive society surrounding them, which led to suicide, madness, or death at an early age. At the end of the 1970s, the East German writer Christa Wolf followed the example of her teacher Anna Seghers by exploring the psyche of not only Kleist, but also Karoline von Günderrode (1780–1806), another Romantic author who committed suicide, in *Kein Ort: Nirgends* (No Place on Earth, 1979). That Wolf should turn her attention to Kleist and Günderrode at a point when she was undergoing surveillance from East German state security suggests the degree to which writers, stage directors, and filmmakers have come to perceive German Romantic authors as kindred spirits — not so much for their proffered solutions to personal and societal problems as for their embodiment of the problems themselves and the willingness to struggle for their resolution.³⁶

In this regard, the jacket illustration for this volume is a fitting representation of the place for German Romanticism in our times. That the blue flower should be depicted in connection with the birthplace of the Friedrich von Hardenberg seems appropriate; but it is situated at the spot reached by the demolition of Schloss Oberwiederstedt in 1987 before a local citizens’ initiative prevented any further destruction of what East German authorities regarded as a decaying building of little value. By the time Kerstin Hendrich (b. 1978) rendered her artwork in 1992 as a project at the newly renamed Novalis-Gymnasium in nearby Hettstedt, an international Novalis Society had been founded, with Schloss Oberwiederstedt as its headquarters, but a restoration of the demolished west wing of the building was still a vision. In the meantime, that “dream” has been fulfilled. Other dreams, such as work and prosperity for one of the most economically depressed areas of Germany, remain to be accomplished; but stories with open endings are a common feature of Romanticism — with *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* being a key example. Let us hope that the fairy-tale ending for this real-life story will be a happy one. And may the following chapters help stimulate readers to explore the terrain of German Romanticism and rediscover some dreams of their own in the process!

Notes

¹ The following single-authored studies will be of use to those interested in further readings on German and European Romanticism: Ricarda Huch, *Die Romantik*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Haessel 1899–1902); Paul Kluckhohn, *Das Ideengut der deutschen Romantik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1942); M[eyer] H[oward] Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971); Gerhart Hoffmeister, *Deutsche und europäische Romantik* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1976; 2nd. ed. 1990); Glyn Tegai Hughes, *Romantic German Literature* (London: Arnold, 1979); Lothar Pikulik, *Romantik als Ungenügen an der Normalität: Am Beispiel Tiecks, Hoffmanns, Eichendorffs*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979); Klaus Peter, *Stadien der Aufklärung: Moral und Politik bei Lessing, Novalis und Friedrich Schlegel* (Wiesbaden: Athenaion, 1980); Alan Menhennet, *The Romantic Movement* (London: Croom Helm, and Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes and Noble, 1981); Claus Sommerhage, *Deutsche Romantik: Literatur und Malerei 1796–1830* (Cologne: Taschen, 1988); Theodore Ziolkowski, *German Romanticism and its Institutions* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990); Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995); Gerhard Schulz, *Romantik: Geschichte und Begriff* (Munich: Beck, 1996); Detlef Kremer, *Romantik* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001). Essay collections that have been of particular value in the conception and development of this volume include: *Das Nachleben der Romantik in der modernen deutschen Literatur*, edited by Wolfgang Paulsen (Heidelberg: Lothar Stiehm, 1969); *The Romantic Period in Germany: Essays by Members of the London University Institute of Germanic Studies*, edited by Siegbert Praver (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, and New York: Schocken Books, 1970); *Romantikforschung seit 1945*, edited by Klaus Peter (Königstein: Hain, 1980); *European Romanticism: Literary Cross-Currents, Modes, and Models*, edited by Gerhart Hoffmeister (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1990); *Romantik-Handbuch*, edited by Helmut Schanze (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1994).

² See the essay by Gerhart Hoffmeister in this volume for a discussion of how the Romantics viewed their own novels as a response to, and advance upon Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. For studies on the relationship between Goethe, Schiller, and the Schlegel brothers, see Josef Körner, *Romantiker und Klassiker: Die Brüder Schlegel in ihren Beziehungen zu Schiller und Goethe* (Berlin: Askanischer Verlag 1924; reprint Bern: Lang, 1974); Arthur O. Lovejoy, "Schiller and the Genesis of German Romanticism," in *Essays on the History of Ideas* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P, 1948), 207–27; Ernst Behler, "Die Wirkung Goethes und Schillers auf die Brüder Schlegel," in *Unser Commercium: Goethes und Schillers Literaturpolitik*, edited by Wilfried Barner et al. (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1984), 559–83. For discussions of Friedrich von Hardenberg, who had been a student of Schiller's at the University of Jena in 1790–91, and his literary response to Weimar Classicism see Herbert Uerlings, "Novalis und die Weimarer Klassik," *Aurora* 50 (1990): 27–46, and Ulrich Stadler, "Novalis — Ein Lehrling Friedrich Schillers?" *Aurora* 50 (1990): 47–62. See also the essays in the catalog to the exhibit "*Ein Dichter hat uns alle geweckt: Goethe und die literarische Romantik*," edited by Christoph Perels, (Frankfurt am Main: Freies Deutsches Hochstift / Frankfurter Goethe Museum, 1999).

³ See Klaus Peter, "Nürnberg's krumme Gassen: Zum Deutschlandbild bei Wackenroder, Tieck und Richard Wagner," *Aurora* 57 (1997): 129–47.

⁴ Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, edited by Ernst Beutler (Zurich: Artemis, 1948), 332. See Ernst Jenisch, "'Das Klassische nenne ich das Gesunde, und das Romantische das Kranke': Goethes Kritik der Romantik," *Goethe: Neue Folge des Jahrbuchs der Goethe-Gesellschaft* 19 (1957): 50–79, as well as the essays by Arnd Böhm, Beate Allert, and Nicholas Saul in this volume. For a discussion of Goethe as "Romantic," see Robert C. Holub, "The Romanticizing of Goethe: A Study in the Acquisition of a Label," in *English and German Romanticism: Cross-Currents and Controversies*, edited by James Pipkin (Heidelberg: Winter, 1985), 349–61. For a stimulating treatment of Goethe's poetry between 1770 and 1785 in its relationship to the theory and practice of German and European Romanticism, see David E. Wellbery, *The Specular Moment: Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996).

⁵ Quoted in the opening sentence of the recent study by Nicola Kaminski, *Kreuz-Gänge: Romanexperimente der deutschen Romantik* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2001), 15. Kaminski's close readings of not only Arnim's *Gräfin Dolores*, but also the anonymous *Nachwachen: Von Bonaventura*, Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde*, Clemens Brentano's *Godwi*, Joseph von Eichendorff's *Ahnung und Gegenwart*, and E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Die Elixiere des Teufels* are an excellent complement to Gerhart Hoffmeister's survey of the German Romantic novel in this volume.

⁶ See the chapter on *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* in Dennis F. Mahoney, *Der Roman der Goethezeit (1774–1829)* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1988), 155–62, and Jürgen H. Petersen, "Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre — ein 'romantisches Buch,'" in *Re-reading Romanticism*, edited by Martha B. Helfer (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), 389–406. For further readings on the topic of Goethe and German Romanticism see Hartmut Fröschle, *Goethes Verhältnis zur Romantik* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002), and *Goethe und das Zeitalter der Romantik*, edited by Walter Hinderer (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002).

⁷ For further information on this phase of German Romanticism, see Lothar Pikulik, "Die sogenannte Heidelberger Romantik: Tendenzen, Grenzen, Widersprüche. Mit einem Epilog über das Nachleben der Romantik heute," in *Heidelberg im säkularen Umbruch: Traditionsbewußtsein und Kulturpolitik um 1800*, edited by Friedrich Strack (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), 190–215, and Friedrich Strack, "Heidelberg als Stadt der Romantik," in *Stätten deutscher Literatur: Studien zur literarischen Zentrenbildung 1750–1815*, ed. by Wolfgang Stellmacher (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1998), 455–74.

⁸ On the development of the conception of Nuremberg as a German and Romantic city from Wackenroder and Tieck through Wagner's *Meistersinger* until the beginnings of National Socialism, see Klaus Peter, "Nürnberg's krumme Gassen" (note 3). On the phenomenon of anti-Semitism during the Napoleonic era, as propagated by Romantic authors like Arnim and Brentano, see Charlene Lea, "The 'Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft': Napoleonic Hegemony Engenders Political Anti-Semitism," in *Crisis and Culture in Post-Enlightenment Germany: Essays in Honour of Peter Heller*, edited by Hans Schulte and David Richards (Lanham, MD: U P of America, 1993), 89–111, and the essay by Fabian Lampart in this volume.

⁹ For concise bio-bibliographic introductions to other authors and works treated in this volume, see *German Writers in the Age of Goethe: Sturm und Drang to Classicism*, edited by James Hardin and Christoph E. Schweitzer (Detroit: Gale, 1990); *German Writers in the Age of Goethe, 1789–1832*, edited by James Hardin and Christoph E. Schweitzer (Detroit: Gale, 1989); *Deutsche Dichter der Romantik: Ihr Leben und Werk*, edited by Benno von Wiese (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1971); and relevant entries in the *Encyclopedia of German Literature*, edited by Matthias Konzett. 2 vols. (Chicago and London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000).

¹⁰ Hermann August Korff, *Geist der Goethezeit: Versuch einer ideellen Entwicklung der klassisch-romantischen Literaturgeschichte*. 5 vols. (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1923–57).

¹¹ Gerhard Schulz, *Die deutsche Literatur zwischen Französischer Revolution und Restauration: Erster Teil: Das Zeitalter der Französischen Revolution 1789–1806* (Munich: Beck, 1983; 2nd ed. 2001); *Zweiter Teil: Das Zeitalter der Napoleonischen Kriege und der Restauration 1806–1830* (Munich: Beck, 1989).

¹² For an interpretation of German literature written between 1790 and 1830 as a response to the political and cultural crises of the times, particularly revolution and secularization, see Nicholas Saul, “Aesthetic Humanism (1790–1830),” in *The Cambridge History of German Literature*, edited by Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 202–71. In “The Pursuit of the Subject: Literature as Critic and Perfecter of Philosophy 1790–1830,” Saul explores the interplay between philosophy and literature during the period covered in this volume: *Philosophy and German Literature, 1700–1990*, edited by Nicholas Saul (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 57–101.

¹³ For more information on the historical background, with particular attention to German intellectual and social history, see Thomas P. Saine, *Black Bread, White Bread: German Intellectuals and the French Revolution* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1988) and Horst Möller, *Fürstenstaat oder Bürgernation: Deutschland 1763–1815* (Berlin: Siedler, 1998). For a general overview of the military conflicts of this period, see Michael Glover, *The Napoleonic Wars: an Illustrated History 1792–1815* (New York: Hippocrene, 1978).

¹⁴ For the impact of Friedrich von Hardenberg’s studies in mathematics and natural science on the development of his poetics, see Dennis F. Mahoney, *Die Poetisierung der Natur bei Novalis: Beweggründe, Gestaltung, Folgen* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1980); for the importance of chemistry for the poetic theory of the Early Romantics, see Peter Kapitzka, *Die frühromantische Theorie der Mischung: Über den Zusammenhang von romantischer Dichtungstheorie und zeitgenössischer Chemie* (Munich: Hueber, 1968). For a stimulating discussion of the increasing importance of the concept of imagination throughout the eighteenth century, see James Engell, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1981).

¹⁵ “The foremost principle must be absolutely nothing given, but rather something freely made, *fabricated, invented*, in order to found a general metaphysical system that begins with freedom and goes to freedom. / All philosophizing has emancipation as its goal.”

¹⁶ Ingo R. Stoehr, *German Literature of the Twentieth Century: From Aestheticism to Postmodernism*. Camden House History of German Literature; volume 10 (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2001), xii.

¹⁷ “Only [have] patience, it will, it must come the holy age of eternal peace, where the new Jerusalem will be the capital of the world; and until then be cheerful and courageous in the dangers of the age, comrades of my faith, proclaim with word and deed the divine gospel and remain loyal to the true, unending faith until death.” For further discussion of *Glauben und Liebe* and *Die Christenheit oder Europa*, see the essays by Richard Littlejohns and Klaus Peter in this volume.

¹⁸ For information on Napoleon and his empire, see Felix Markham, *Napoleon* (New York, Mentor, 1963); Michael Broers, *Europe under Napoleon 1799–1815* (London: Arnold, 1996).

¹⁹ For the corresponding sections in the letters see Heinrich von Kleist, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, edited by Helmut Sembdner (Munich: dtv, 1964), 6: 19–20, 117–18, 163–64. Any further parenthetical citations of Kleist’s letters and writings refer to this edition.

²⁰ Letter of 29 July 1801 to Adolfine von Werdeck (6: 205); for a further discussion of the ambivalent reaction of writers like Kleist to the natural science of their day, as well as the importance of natural science and philosophy for their writings, see the essay by Gabriele Rommel in this volume.

²¹ The former three plays will be discussed in more detail in the volume on Weimar Classicism edited by Simon Richter; for a discussion of Kleist’s tales see the essays by Ulrich Scheck and Gabriele Rommel in this volume.

²² See Ruth K. Angress, “Kleist’s Treatment of Imperialism: *Die Hermannsschlacht* and “Die Verlobung in St. Domingo,” *Monatshefte* 69 (1977): 17–33; Paul Michael Lützeler, “Napoleons Kolonialtraum und Kleists *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo*,” *Nordrhein-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Vorträge G 372 (= Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2000): 1–32.

²³ Richard Samuel, “Kleists *Hermannsschlacht* und der Freiherr von Stein,” *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 5 (1961): 64–101; see also the chapter “Partisanenkrieg” in Wolf Kittler, *Die Geburt des Partisanen aus dem Geist der Poesie: Heinrich von Kleist und die Strategie der Befreiungskriege* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1989), 218–55. As a complement to these elucidations of the immediate military and political background to Kleist’s play undertaken by Samuel and Kittler see the close reading of Hermann’s machinations in William C. Reeve, *In Pursuit of Power: Heinrich von Kleist’s Machiavellian Protagonists* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: U of Toronto P, 1987), 23–111. For a survey of the employment of literature in the construction of a new image of German national identity, see Otto W. Johnston, *The Myth of a Nation — Literature and Politics in Prussia under Napoleon* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1989).

²⁴ For a survey of the reception history of *Die Hermannsschlacht* and *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* see Rolf Busch, *Imperialistische und faschistische Kleist-Rezeption 1890–1945: Eine ideologie-kritische Untersuchung* (Frankfurt am Main: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1974); William C. Reeve, *Kleist on Stage: 1804–1987* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s U P, 1993).

²⁵ See Gesa von Essen, *Hermannsschlachten: Germanen- und Römerbilder in der Literatur des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1998), 146.

²⁶ “For I see that the sphere of the world will not / Attain any rest from this brood of murderers / Until the nest of robbers is completely destroyed / And nothing, but a black flag, / Waves from its desolate heap of ruins.”

²⁷ Bernd Fischer, *Das Eigene und das Eigentliche: Klopstock, Herder, Fichte, Kleist: Episoden aus der Konstruktionsgeschichte nationaler Intentionalitäten* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1995), 300–21, here 318. Klaus Peter likewise employs Kleist’s *Die Hermannsschlacht* to warn against an uncritical acceptance of the Romantic call for a New Mythology: “Sehnsucht nach dem Gott: Kleist, der Mythos und eine Tendenz der Forschung,” *Jahrbuch des freien deutschen Hochstifts* 1993: 183–257, here 243–57.

²⁸ Gerhard Schulz, *Die deutsche Literatur zwischen Französischer Revolution und Restauration*, vol. 2 (Munich: Beck, 1989): 655–56; Bernhard Greiner, *Kleists Dramen und Erzählungen: Experimente zum “Fall” der Kunst* (Tübingen and Basel: UTB, 2000), 118.

²⁹ “Tell her that you love her, Ventidius, / Then she will hold still and give you her locks. / She throws away the key and falls into a faint.”

³⁰ Anthony Stephens, *Heinrich von Kleist: The Dramas and Stories* (Oxford and Providence, USA: Berg, 1994), 170.

³¹ For the contemporary understanding of the notions of “animal magnetism” that permeate Kleist’s depiction of somnambulism in dramas such as *Penthesilea*, *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn* (1810) and *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*, see Maria M. Tatar, *Spellbound: Studies on Mesmerism and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), esp. 82–120.

³² See in this regard Roland Heine, “‘Ein Traum, was sonst?’ Zum Verhältnis von Traum und Wirklichkeit in Kleists *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*,” in *Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte: Festschrift für Richard Brinkmann*, edited by Jürgen Brummack et al. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1981), 283–313. Gabriele M. Wickert has drawn attention to the flower imagery that Natalie and the prince himself use to describe him: *Das verlorene heroische Zeitalter: Held und Volk in Heinrich von Kleists Dramen* (New York: Lang, 1983), 130–32.

³³ Kleist’s letter to Wilhelmine von Zenge of 16 August 1800 makes clear that the figures of Max and Thekla in *Wallenstein* had a particular value for him as a means of indirect conversation with her: “Alles, was *Max Piccolomini* sagt, möge, wenn es einige Ähnlichkeit hat, für mich gelten, alles was *Thekla* sagt, soll, wenn es einige Ähnlichkeit hat, für Dich gelten” (Everything that *Max Piccolomini* says may apply to me, if it has some similarity; the same applies to you with regard to *Thekla*; 6: 55). For a further discussion of intertextual references within Kleist’s play to *Wallenstein* and other works by Schiller, see Gisela Berns, “‘Mit dem Rücken’ gegen Schiller: Zur Funktion der Schillertexte in Kleists *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*,” in *Ethik und Ästhetik: Werke und Werte in der Literatur vom 18. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert: Festschrift für Wolfgang Wittkowski zum 70. Geburtstag*, edited by Richard Fisher (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1995), 329–348; Johannes Endres, *Das “depotenzierte”*

Subjekt: Zu Geschichte und Funktion des Komischen bei Heinrich von Kleist (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1996), esp. 131–45.

³⁴ For an explication of the political theories of writers like Müller and Novalis, see Klaus Peter's essay in this volume. For specific connections between Kleist's drama and political Romanticism, see Klaus Peter, "Romantik und Politik in Kleists *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*," *Jahrbuch des freien deutschen Hochstifts* 1992: 95–125.

³⁵ Many thanks to Courtney Magwire for pointing out Stein's adaptation of this painting by Friedrich for his stage production. For a discussion of "Der Mönch am Meer" and Kleist's interpretation of it, see the essay by Beate Allert in this volume. For further information on the Peter Stein production of *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*, see Hans Mayer, "Denkspiel oder Traumspiel? Kleists *Prinz vom Homburg* im Schillertheater und bei der Schaubühne," *Theater Heute* (1972, no. 12): 9–14; Hajo Kurzenberger, "Kleist's Traum vom Prinzen von Homburg: Zu Peter Steins Inszenierung an der Berliner Schaubühne," in *Geist und Zeichen: Festschrift für Arthur Henkel*, edited by Herbert Anton, Bernhard Gajek, and Peter Pfaff (Heidelberg: Winter, 1977), 235–40; Michael Patterson, *Peter Stein: Germany's Leading Theatre Director* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981), 90–97.

³⁶ Anna Seghers, *Glauben an Irdisches: Essays*, edited by Christa Wolf (Leipzig: Reclam, 1969), 12–13; many thanks to Gabriele Rommel for this reference. For a study of the twentieth-century reception of German Romanticism, including Anna Seghers and Christa Wolf, see the essay by Nicholas Saul in this volume. Ulrich Scheck likewise concludes his essay on the short prose of the German Romantics, including Kleist, with a review of recent works inspired by some of the works he has discussed.

From “Romantick” To “Romantic”: The Genesis of German Romanticism in Late Eighteenth-Century Europe

Gerhard Schulz

JOSEPH VON EICHENDORFF'S (1788–1857) novel *Dichter und ihre Gesellen* (Poets and their Companions) appeared in 1834, when Europe was already in the grip of the Industrial Revolution, Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) had settled in Paris, and Georg Büchner (1813–37) was writing the revolutionary pamphlet *Der Hessische Landbote* (The Hessian Messenger). More placid concerns, however, occupy the characters in Eichendorff's book; in chapter 24, for example, a young lawyer elopes with an equally young lady. A group of friends, among them a poet, hears about these events, and it is the poet to whom everybody turns for an opinion because he is regarded as an expert “in solchen romantischen Fällen” (in such romantic cases), to which Fortunat, the poet, responds: “Ach teurer Freund, [. . .] ich wollte, die Romantik wäre lieber gar nicht erfunden worden!” (Dear friend, [. . .] I wish Romanticism had never been invented).¹ It is a comment which ever since has elicited sympathy from literary historians.

Eichendorff knew what he was talking about. In German literary history he is commonly known as one of the most distinguished, as well as popular, exponents of Romanticism in its most general terms. His poetry conjures up starry moonlit nights, and rustling treetops in the unfathomable depth of forests where Lorelei, the seductive witch, lures the homeless wanderer to death and destruction. A wedding procession moves through a valley, the pretty bride weeps silently and mysteriously, musicians compete with the birds, a roe jumps over rustling brooks, and an aged knight rests fast asleep atop an ancient tower. It is images of this kind that have established Eichendorff's reputation as a Romantic poet, and composers such as Mendelssohn, Brahms, Wolf, Reger, Pfitzner, and, above all, Robert Schumann have made his name known worldwide through musical settings, their “Lieder,” as in Schumann's *Liederkreis* (Song Cycle, op. 39, 1840).²

Eichendorff, however, was also one of the first historiographers of German Romantic literature; his *Geschichte der poetischen Literatur Deutschlands* was published in 1857, shortly before his death in the same year. By then

Büchner had been dead for twenty years, Heine for one, and railways connected some of the major German cities, in short: little was left of the romantic ambience of stage coaches and singing wanderers, if it ever existed. The second part of Eichendorff's history is a sober and critical account of the "neuere Romantik" (more recent Romantic literature) in Germany from which Eichendorff modestly excludes himself. "More recent" suggests the existence of an earlier Romantic literature, and with this we enter the entangled field of terminology and definitions.

As is commonly known, the application of the word "romantic" to literature has English origins — literature here to be understood as *belles-lettres*, that is, a product of the imagination transmitted by words. In 1650 Thomas Bayly used the word "romantick" as "fictional" or even "fictitious" in the subtitle of a story, and in 1659 Henry More wrote in his book *The Immortality of the Soul*: "As for 'Imagination,' there is no question but that Function is mainly exercised in the chief seat of the Soul, those purer Animal Spirits in the fourth Ventricle of the Brain. I speak especially of *that Imagination* which *is most free*, such as we use in *Romantick Inventions*, or such as accompany *the more severe Meditations* and *Disquisitions* in Philosophy."³ The further history of the word "romantic" then amply demonstrates how, from such origins, two different families of usage developed: that of "Romantic" as an aesthetic quality within the confines of literary or, more generally, artistic history, encompassing literature, fine arts and music, and that of a typological usage in the sense of imaginative, emotional, remote from experience, visionary, passionate, dreamy, fantastic and unpractical — the *Oxford Dictionary* and Roget's *Thesaurus* provide a whole range of synonyms and variants. For purposes of clarity: in this volume, we use the upper-case spelling in variants of "Romantic" referring to the artistic movement, with "romantic" taking on the typological usage. But the tendency to confuse the two meanings, or at least not differentiate between them clearly, has persisted in scholarship as well as in general usage.

Even the early history of the concept is confusing. Its godfather is none other than the eternal city of Rome, and the path from here to Romanticism has been well documented and carefully researched. The etymology of "romantic" can be traced back to an old French word "romanz," which meant the popular Romanic language in contrast to the Latin of scholarship and the Church. Here for the first time in history the word appeared in contrast to the culture of antiquity, though in a quite unpolemic manner. But such opposition to classical antiquity later became its actual content in a historical perspective. In the course of time, Provençal verse and prose tales, mostly about knights and their chivalrous exploits, assumed the name "romance." The German word "Roman" (novel) was subsequently derived from this linguistic kernel, and when Thomas Bayly first employed the adjective "romantick" in the sense of "like in a novel," it referred to tales that

were steeped in imagination and adventure, fictitious and therefore also untrue, for the qualification “romantic” was not intended as praise but as criticism. Even as late as 1806 — that is to say at a time when the concept had already assumed both a broad cultural-historical and subtle aesthetic significance — Johann Christoph Adelung (1732–1806) in his German dictionary spoke of romantic landscapes as of “vorzüglich angenehmen und gleichsam bezaubernden Gegenden [. . .], so wie sie in den Romanen und Ritterbüchern beschrieben werden” (especially pleasing and enchanting regions [. . .] as they are depicted in novels and knightly tales).⁴ Adelung did not recognize that by this time the novel had taken on many diverse shapes, and had continued to gain in popularity with an ever-increasingly enlightened reading-public. The old-style chivalric novel had long since merged with Gothic horror stories, while the novel as a sentimental love story from the new reality of middle-class life had gradually matured into a fully-fledged serious and sophisticated form of literature. Thus, “romantic” came to be used more and more as an umbrella term, embracing the eccentric and extravagant, the weird and wonderful, the ghastly and gruesome, not to mention the emotional and sensitive, and to call something “romantic” was no longer a matter of simply passing critical judgment on such qualities, for what caused one person to hold their nose in disgust provided others with immense pleasure — in other words, “romantic” attained as much seriousness and respectability as the novel.

Adelung spoke of “Gegenden.” It must be remembered that “romantic” was not just a characterization of certain literary features, but also developed into a descriptive term for landscapes in art, denoting in particular the paintings of Claude Lorrain (1600–82), Nicolas Poussin (1593–1665) and Salvator Rosa (1615–73). It referred to emotional qualities of these pictures, which were engendered by nature in its sublimity or silent seclusion, as an antithesis to the hectic and busy everyday world. Hence, “romantic” and picturesque became synonyms, and from there arose an intimate pact between “romantic” on the one hand, and nature as a world lying outside society on the other. The cultivation of the inherently “natural” or “wildly romantic” parks and landscapes of the “English garden” in the eighteenth century was one of the consequences of this relationship.

In addition to these critical or culturally affirmative usages of the concept “romantic” there finally emerged in the course of the eighteenth century a third, specifically historical meaning. It was this meaning that decisively separated the *concept* from the abundant and wide-ranging meanings of the *word*, a concept, which has since become indispensable to literary and cultural history. When in 1780 at the beginning of his epic poem *Oberon*, Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813) implores the muses to saddle-up the winged poetic steed Hippogryph for a ride “ins alte romantische Land” (into the ancient romantic land) of medieval chivalry, he forges

a bond between the original age of “romances,” the Romanic chivalric chronicles of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, and the subsequent European culture.⁵ Looked at in a historical sense, the concept “romantic” had thus become the antithesis of “classical,” which denoted the art and culture of antiquity, that culture which had most of all impressed itself upon the dominant education and erudition of Wieland’s age. In contrast to it, there now arose the idea of a modern Christian culture independent from pagan antiquity, a culture embracing within it all European-Christian languages and nations. This allowed the concept to acquire a breadth and depth over and beyond its specific historical sense, rendering it a vessel for fresh conceptions, artistic forms and perspectives, into a “Romantic” art that was seen in turn as modern art.

There was no unanimous agreement concerning such a change in and variety of meaning, nor were the changes even widely noticed and registered. When, for example, the word “Romantik” (Romanticism) appeared for the first time in the German language in 1790, in a novel by Johann Gottwerth Müller (1745–1828), it solely referred to the novelistic works — “Romane” in German — of the novel’s literary hero; when at the beginning of 1799 Novalis (nom de plume of Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1772–1801), for the first time, used the word “Romantiker” (Romanticist; *NS*, 3: 466), he too meant nothing else but a writer of novels. Likewise, Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), one of the first and most brilliant theoreticians of Romanticism, variously understood Romantic culture around 1800 simply as literary culture dominated by the form of the novel, whose prose had eclipsed the ancient epic and played a genuine role in the etymology of the concept. Nevertheless, Schlegel’s definition of the novel as “ein romantisches Buch” in his *Gespräch über die Poesie* (Discourse on Poetry, 1800; *KFS*, 2: 335), only served to add to the confusion surrounding this form, for he chose as its masters not merely epic writers such as Dante or Cervantes, but also the lyric poet Petrarch and the dramatists Shakespeare and Calderón. Moreover, when some ten years later Schlegel himself and a number of his colleagues were branded “Romantics,” this was said by the opponents of their ambitions and, more generally, of the latest literary production in Germany. It was clearly uttered in a derogatory, often hostile tone, and came from a conservative position. Actually, around 1800 it was indeed these young German writers such as Friedrich Schlegel or Novalis who took the concept beyond its cultural-historical import, relating it now to their own efforts and aims to create an art form for the future, thereby exercising a significant influence not only upon its usage within its own linguistic domain, but furthermore within the whole of Europe.⁶

It is impossible to protect the study of Romanticism from misunderstandings and deliberate or accidental misinterpretations deriving from the confusion of the two family trees which have grown from the one root,

unless we execute the wish of Eichendorff's poet Fortunat and abolish the term altogether in the histories of art, music, and literature. Whether this will happen one day, is impossible to predict. Until then usage of the words "romantic" and "Romanticism" must be accompanied in each case by clear definitions, however widely views on the value and truthfulness of historical assessments may differ.

In German literary historiography the term "Romanticism" has been commonly used as an umbrella word for a substantial part of the literary production between 1789 and 1830, but there have always been significant exclusions. Whether Goethe is to be regarded as "Romanticist" or "Classicist," has sparked much — and mostly unproductive — discussion; especially among German scholars outside the German-speaking area Goethe usually is regarded as a Romantic *par excellence*. The position of Schiller (1759–1805), Jean Paul (1763–1825), and Kleist (1777–1811) — writers of the highest distinction — has remained uncertain in respect of these categories. Once again it has to be remembered that around 1800 "Romantic literature" was generally given that wider meaning which Wieland's *Oberon* had already reflected: it signified the tradition of Christian culture from the Middle Ages to the present day. It was in this sense that the word was used predominantly in the early writings of Friedrich Schlegel, while his brother August Wilhelm (1767–1845) provided the first comprehensive survey of this tradition in his *Vorlesungen über schöne Literatur und Kunst* (Lectures on Belles-lettres and Art) held in Berlin between 1803 and 1804. The lectures had a profound impact on the younger generation of German intellectuals, as they represented an attempt to break away from rigid adherence to and admiration of the art of ancient Greece and Rome as the sole worthwhile model for any present and future artistic efforts. Literary studies at schools and universities in those days usually meant the study of antiquity, of the Greek and Latin classics, and nothing else.

In August Wilhelm Schlegel's lectures Romantic literature began with the epic poems of the Middle Ages and continued then with Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Calderón to the literature of his own time. Schlegel's masterly translation of Shakespeare opened the German stage to him. Goethe, though in those days in matters of art no doubt a classicist, was for the Schlegels the fulfillment of all Romantic aspirations, and they revered him and tried to emulate him in some of their own literary works. The tendency to historicize ancient art and deny it an exemplary role in the present was, of course, not new. In France the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes* (Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns) toward the end of the seventeenth century had already moved in that direction. Now, toward the end of the eighteenth century, fundamental changes in the social foundations of life in Germany had developed. The philosophical interpretation of history reflected these changes, and a review of the aims, motivations, and

practices of all artistic and literary efforts was indicated in response to such changes and interpretations. Romantic literature became, as indicated, gradually identical with “modern” literature. Especially in Friedrich Schlegel’s writings the word even related to the future, as, for instance, in his well-known “Fragment” No. 116 published in 1798 in his journal *Athenaeum*:

Die romantische Poesie ist eine progressive Universalpoesie. Ihre Bestimmung ist nicht bloß, alle getrennten Gattungen der Poesie wieder zu vereinigen und die Poesie mit der Philosophie und Rhetorik in Berührung zu setzen. Sie will und soll auch Poesie und Prosa, Genialität und Kritik, Kunstpoesie und Naturpoesie bald mischen, bald verschmelzen, die Poesie lebendig und gesellig und das Leben und die Gesellschaft poetisch machen (*KFSA*, 2: 182).⁷

In this passage awareness of the indigenous traditions of the European nations at the onset of industrial and technological revolution blends here with rather activist expectations of the humanizing power of literature, of “Poesie,” as Schlegel writes. Here the aesthetic and historical use of the word “romantisch” seems to merge again with the typological usage and indicates an attitude which appears to be nothing but the fulfillment of all the qualities which the *Oxford Dictionary* identifies with it.

Chiliasm tendencies with strong religious overtones prevailed in German literature around 1800. The lack of a national identity at a time of an extreme political and military crisis, that is, the French occupation of a large part of the German-speaking territories in Central Europe, were the main causes for this prevalence. In literature, political aims merged with religious faith and with the interpretation of world history as the history of the advent and rise of Christianity, especially in the work of Novalis. In his vision, laid down in his essay *Die Christenheit oder Europa* that he read to his friends in November 1799, but which was not published until 1826, twenty-five years after his death, a peaceful united Europe was to develop under the spiritual guidance of a new, united Christian church. Friedrich Schlegel, on the other hand, believed instead in literature as the decisive instrument for the pacification of mankind, and the novel — “der Roman” — a form for which no models existed in ancient poetics, was to become, as already mentioned, “the romantic book,” combining and merging prose and poetry, drama and theoretical reflection. Later, however, Friedrich Schlegel, the son of a Lutheran pastor, had his doubts about the validity of his dreams, joined the existing Roman Catholic Church, and became a militant defender of his new faith.

As always, differences between persons and their views, aims, ambitions, talents, or literary techniques inevitably developed, even between those who worked in close collaboration. Often such differences were anything but fundamental. Literary history, however, has later drawn rigid dividing lines

between them, between Goethe and Schlegel or Novalis and Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843). But was “Romanticism” really the antithesis of “Classicism?” Hölderlin, for instance, expressed his poetic visions of a new era in an imagery that subtly blends Christianity with the ideal life in an ancient Greek republic. Moreover, his novel *Hyperion* (1797–99) combines such visions with references to the then-topical struggle of late eighteenth-century Greeks from Turkish occupation. It was a struggle that enthused and inspired successive generations of European intellectuals from 1770 onward. The daring combination and amalgamation of past and present, antiquity and modernity produced unconventional perspectives within the confines of what is regarded as “Romantic” literature, that is as modern literature at the beginning of the nineteenth century and as literature influencing the future, a literature distinct from that promoted by the traditional eighteenth-century schools of aesthetics for which antiquity alone was the sole yardstick in all artistic achievement.

Younger German writers, quite unlike their English contemporaries such as John Keats (1795–1821) or Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), mostly rejected classical imagery. Hölderlin, who masterfully adapted Greek lyrical forms and greatly admired republican life in ancient Greece, was ignored by most of his contemporaries, who did not discover the thoughts of tomorrow in what appeared to be the language of yesterday. Equally underestimated or ignored was the work of Heinrich von Kleist, who even more audaciously than Hölderlin blended Christian imagery with that of antiquity. Virgin birth for example is fused with the erotic escapades of Zeus-Jupiter in *Amphitryon* (1807), a daring adaptation of Molière’s comedy, and Kleist’s story *Die Marquise von O . . .* (1808) oscillates between myth and reality through allusions to the Immaculate Conception, so that, as one critic wrote at the time, the very summary of the contents of this story would preclude its being mentioned in refined and cultivated circles. Kleist’s works, just like the works of Hölderlin, Friedrich Schlegel, and Novalis, contain bold excursions into the modern secular mind, explorations of the tensions between the sexes, between love and sexuality, or, on the political level, between the urge for power and the desire for justice — images and thoughts which transcended the comprehension of most of their contemporaries. Kleist’s, Hölderlin’s, Schlegel’s, and Novalis’s works were properly edited and critically examined only at the beginning of the twentieth century, and their place in world literature has been established only recently. In any case, German Romanticism would be considerably narrower and poorer, if a terminological wall were built between Schlegel and Novalis on the one side and Hölderlin and Kleist on the other.

What complicates a clear definition of German Romanticism, in particular, is the fact that there were common issues for many German intellectuals beyond their philosophical or artistic creeds and convictions. In a country

without political centralism and unity the quest for a national identity, corresponding to the cultural identity achieved in its literature and based on a common national language, was such an issue. This problem intensified, when after 1806 Napoleon and his armies invaded most of the German-speaking territories. But while Romanticism in literature generally coincides with the rise of a national consciousness in many European nations and with the gradual diminution or abrupt, revolutionary destruction of feudal power there, nationalism is not an essential symptom or ingredient of Romantic literature nor can it solely be found there. Nationalism has little importance for the visions of Novalis, Hölderlin, and Friedrich Schlegel, although it is not entirely absent there. Kleist's fierce anti-French chauvinism, on the other hand, is that of a Prussian patriot struggling for social acceptance and public recognition of his work. It may seem to dominate such plays as *Die Hermannsschlacht* (Arminius's Battle, 1808, publ. 1821) or *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* (1811, publ. 1821), but only on the surface, while on a deeper level these works share concerns that are typical of other exploratory excursions in modern thought. Patriotism and Romanticism do not essentially belong together, and even though Joseph von Eichendorff enlisted as a volunteer in the battles against the French occupants, he despised all "Vaterländerei," all patriotic fervor.

Similar considerations apply to the connection between Romanticism and Catholicism. Religious values had declined under the impact of the philosophy of the Enlightenment, the growing importance of the natural sciences, and of course the French Revolution. Private mythologies developed, and so did private religious constructs. Nihilism was one of the consequences, most significantly in the *Nachtwachen* (Night Watches, 1804) by Bonaventura, a pseudonym for Ernst August Klingemann (1777–1831). Novalis, on the other hand, dreamed of a new, united Christian church beyond the contemporary split into confessions hostile to or competing with each other. Eichendorff, for his part, was a devout Catholic, but unlike Friedrich Schlegel, a Lutheran who had converted to the Catholic Church, he never questioned his faith nor fought for it, but did regard his religion as the best way to check, restrain, and, perhaps, tame "das wilde Tier" (the wild beast)⁸ in the human breast of which he was very much aware and which he had portrayed in his poetic work in more than one dangerous situation. Such language is, of course, metaphorical and thus in itself an expression of the "Romantic" imagination and its deep concern with the motivations of human beings who possessed within themselves both a divine creativity and animal-like desires.

So, to sum up, the use of the word "romantic" ("romantisch") and its derivatives in German remain problematic. The noun "Romantik," usually regarded as the equivalent for "Romanticism," was around 1800, that is, at the time when it was first introduced as a term in literary history, mainly

used in the sense of the aesthetics of the novel — in German “der Roman” — or as a summary term for “romantic” qualities in the more general typological sense. Its use as a denotation of a “school” or literary movement, which now seems to prevail, first developed among the conservative enemies of all “romantic” tendencies, people like Johann Heinrich Voss (1751–1826), the famed translator of Homer, who tried to retain the exemplary character of classical poetics for all literature, and who led a fierce attack against the introduction of poetic forms from the Christian — “Romantic” — tradition into German poetry, above all the sonnet, which had become a literary fashion around 1800. He was, indeed, the first to speak of a “Romantic school” in German literature and condemn it. While no such school ever existed, the terms “Romantische Schule” or later “Romantik” nevertheless made history, not least through works such as Heinrich Heine’s brilliant survey of German literature of this time in his book *Die romantische Schule* (1833).

With the concept of a “Romantic school” its presumed members also became “Romantiker” in the eyes of their critics. A satirical sonnet by the Danish writer Jens Baggesen (1764–1826) in the “anti-romantic” anthology *Der Karfunkel oder Klingklingel-Almanach* (1809), written in German, lists no fewer than twenty-seven “Romanticists” (“Die siebenundzwanzig Romantiker”). Friedrich Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853), Clemens Brentano (1778–1842), Achim von Arnim (1781–1831), Joseph Görres (1776–1848), Kleist, Adelbert von Chamisso (1781–1838), Eichendorff, Adam Müller (1779–1829), and a few minor writers belong to this versified catalogue, thereby establishing connections and a unity of interests, aims, and concepts that in reality did not tie them together. The English term “Romanticist” is of a later origin and dates back to about 1850. However, words such as “Romantiker” or “Romanticist” remain of dubious value, as they tend to simplify the complexity of literary relationships and artistic as well as intellectual interaction over a period of more than half a century.

The essence of what may rightly be called, in historical terms, “Romantic” in German literature refers then to the literary attempts toward the end of the eighteenth and at the beginning of the nineteenth century that try to invoke a Christian-European consciousness and depart from the traditions of forms and the mainly mythological imagery of classical antiquity. But “Romantic” has also developed into the denomination for those literary concepts around 1800 that attempt to give art and literature a decisive role and function in the process of human history. The names of Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel, Hardenberg-Novalis, Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder (1773–98), Tieck, Arnim, Brentano, Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué (1777–1843) and Eichendorff have been closely linked with those concepts. Whether Goethe and Schiller, Hölderlin, Jean Paul, Kleist, E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822) or Heine should be included in or excluded from this