

CAMDEN HOUSE

HISTORY OF GERMAN LITERATURE

Volume 9

**German Literature of the
Nineteenth Century**

1832–1899



Edited by Clayton Koelb and Eric Downing

Camden House History of German Literature

Volume 9

German Literature of the Nineteenth Century, 1832–1899

The Camden House History of German Literature

Volume 9

The Camden House History of German Literature

Edited by James Hardin

Vol. 1: Early Germanic Literature and Culture

Edited by Brian Murdoch and Malcolm Read,
University of Stirling, UK

Vol. 2: German Literature of the Early Middle Ages

Edited by Brian Murdoch, University of Stirling, UK

Vol. 3: German Literature of the High Middle Ages

Edited by Will Hasty, University of Florida

Vol. 4: Early Modern German Literature

Edited by Max Reinhart, University of Georgia

*Vol. 5: German Literature of the Eighteenth Century:
The Enlightenment and Sensibility*

Edited by Barbara Becker-Cantarino, Ohio State University

Vol. 6: Literature of the Sturm und Drang

Edited by David Hill, University of Birmingham, UK

Vol. 7: The Literature of Weimar Classicism

Edited by Simon Richter, University of Pennsylvania

Vol. 8: The Literature of German Romanticism

Edited by Dennis Mahoney, University of Vermont

Vol. 9: German Literature of the Nineteenth Century, 1832–1899

Edited by Clayton Koelb and Eric Downing,
University of North Carolina

*Vol. 10: German Literature of the Twentieth Century:
From Aestheticism to Postmodernism*

Ingo R. Stoehr, Kilgore College, Texas

German Literature of the Nineteenth Century, 1832–1899

Edited by
Clayton Koelb and Eric Downing

CAMDEN HOUSE

Copyright © 2005 by the Editor and Contributors

All Rights Reserved. Except as permitted under current legislation, no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system, published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast, transmitted, recorded, or reproduced in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

First published 2005
by Camden House

Camden House is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Inc.
668 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620, USA
www.camden-house.com
and of Boydell & Brewer Limited
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK
www.boydellandbrewer.com

ISBN: 1-57113-250-3

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

German literature of the nineteenth century, 1832-1899 / edited by
Clayton Koelb and Eric Downing

p. cm. — (Camden House history of German literature; v. 9)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-57113-250-3 (hardcover: alk. paper)

1. German literature—19th century—History and criticism.

I. Koelb, Clayton, 1942- II. Downing, Eric. III. Title. IV. Series.

PT341.G42 2005

830.9'007—dc22

2004027939

A catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

This publication is printed on acid-free paper.
Printed in the United States of America.

Disclaimer:

Some images in the printed version of this book are not available for inclusion in the eBook.
To view these images please refer to the printed version of this book.

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Illustrations | vii |
| Introduction | 1 |
| <i>Clayton Koelb & Eric Downing</i> | |

Part I. Contexts

| | |
|---|----|
| The Afterlife of Romanticism | 23 |
| <i>Andrew Webber</i> | |
| Parallels and Disparities: German Literature in the Context of European Culture | 45 |
| <i>Lilian Furst</i> | |
| Revolution and Reaction: The Political Context of Central European Literature | 63 |
| <i>Arne Koch</i> | |

Part II. Movements

| | |
|--|-----|
| Literary Controversy: Naming and Framing the Post-Romantic, Pre-Realist Period | 93 |
| <i>Robert C. Holub</i> | |
| Poetic Realism, Naturalism, and the Rise of the Novella | 117 |
| <i>Gail Finney</i> | |
| Literary Movements of the 1890s: Impressionism, Symbolism, and fin-de-siècle Austria | 139 |
| <i>Ernst Grabovszki</i> | |

Part III. Genres

| | |
|--|-----|
| The Absence of Drama in Nineteenth-Century Germany <i>Benjamin Bennett</i> | 157 |
| The Nineteenth-Century German Novel <i>Jeffrey L. Sammons</i> | 183 |
| Between Sentimentality and Phantasmagoria: German Lyric Poetry, 1830–1890 <i>Thomas Pfau</i> | 207 |
| Richard Wagner: Opera and Music Drama <i>Christopher Morris</i> | 251 |

Part IV. Bibliographical Resources

| | |
|--|-----|
| Navigating the Nineteenth Century: A Critical Bibliography <i>John Pizer</i> | 281 |
| List of Primary Sources <i>Compiled by Thomas Spencer</i> | 303 |
| Selected Secondary Works Cited | 317 |
| Notes on the Contributors | 331 |
| Index | 335 |

Illustrations

| | |
|---|------|
| Friedrich Kaiser, <i>Tempo der Gründerzeit</i> , ca. 1875, oil on canvas, depicting building site on the Grenadierstraße (now called Amalienstraße) in Berlin | viii |
| The German Federation: The German states after the Congress of Vienna, 1815–1866 (Map) | 61 |
| Germany during the Wilhelmine Empire and the German Wars of Unification 1864–1918 (Map) | 62 |
| The agony in Silesia. Hunger and despair. The official remedy | 116 |
| Sezession House, Vienna | 138 |
| Carl Spitzweg, <i>The Reading from the Breviary, Evening</i> | 182 |
| Franz Stassen, <i>Valhalla: The Valkyrie</i> (1914) | 250 |



Friedrich Kaiser, Tempo der Gründerzeit, ca. 1875, oil on canvas, depicting building site on the Grenadierstraße (now called Amalienstraße) in Berlin. Courtesy of Stadtmuseum Berlin.

Photograph by Christel Lehmann.

Introduction

Clayton Koelb & Eric Downing

THE PERIOD BETWEEN 1832 AND 1900 produced some of the most remarkable writers in the history of European literature, and it includes names that nearly everyone would recognize. There is the poet Heinrich Heine, whose poem about the Lorelei on the Rhine inspired stories and songs known around the world. There is the writer and composer Richard Wagner, whose music dramas are still so popular that eager fans are willing to wait years to get tickets to major performances. There is the philosophical writer Friedrich Nietzsche, whose influence on European thought and culture extends through the twentieth century and now into the twenty-first. But there were also figures not so well known outside Germany whose work deserves wider recognition. This book aims to introduce many of them, and to reintroduce the names already famous throughout the world. It will also introduce the reader to the most important periods, movements, and genres of nineteenth-century German literature.

Periods, movements, and genres: these are the stock-in-trade categories of all literary histories, including this volume of the Camden House History of German Literature. The topic treated by the book as a whole is itself a period, the nineteenth century, though we have defined that period in a way that pays more attention to literary and cultural events than to the pure chronology of the calendar. For us, the signpost that marks the beginning of the century is not the change from 17— to 18— in the first two digits of the date, but instead the end of the “Age of Goethe” with the death of Germany’s foremost man of letters in 1832. At the other end, the century ends for us about where the numbers say it should, around the time of the publication of Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams* in 1899 (but dated 1900 by the publisher). Our nineteenth century, then, falls considerably short of a hundred years, encompassing seven decades from the 1830s to the 1890s. It is the literary period that begins with the end of Romanticism and ends with the beginnings of modernism.

Brief Overview of Nineteenth-Century Literary History

Literary historians traditionally divide the nineteenth century into movements roughly as follows:

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Junges Deutschland/Vormärz/Biedermeier | 1832–1850 |
| Realism/Poetic Realism | 1850–1890 |
| Naturalism | 1880–1900 |
| Jahrhundertwende | 1890–1914 |

The starting and ending dates of these sub-periods are, of course, not exact: there is considerable overlap, and there is in some cases wide disagreement among scholars about such periodizations. Some, for example, would set the Biedermeier several decades later than Junges Deutschland, and some would start the *Vormärz* — a period of political and cultural unrest — as early as 1815. Also, though it is common practice — followed in this book — to group the three designators Junges Deutschland (Young Germany), Vormärz (Before [the] March [revolution]), and Biedermeier (the untranslatable name of a style) together into a single phenomenon, a few literary historians occasionally insist on separating Biedermeier from the other two. There is also considerable overlap between Poetic Realism and Naturalism, and in this volume the two are treated together. The *Jahrhundertwende* (“Turn of the Century”) encompasses the decades immediately before and after 1900 and includes a number of distinct movements, including symbolism, late naturalism and realism, and the beginnings of expressionism and modernism. Because of the limit date of 1900 set for our enterprise, only a portion of the *Jahrhundertwende* is treated in this volume.

It is not always useful, however, to understand the course of nineteenth-century German literature in this traditional way. Instead of regarding the century as chopped up into four or more movements, one can readily see it as divided into no more than two principle periods: the relatively calm, inward-looking mid-century decades between the death of Goethe (1832) and the birth of Thomas Mann (1875); and the intense end-of-century ferment of the 70s, 80s and 90s. Here is a quick sketch of those two sections.

After the death of Goethe the pace of innovative literary production slackened for a time in Germany. The middle years of the nineteenth century — the four decades from roughly 1830 to 1870 — produced a number of significant writers of drama, poetry, and fiction, but the period was by no means so intense as the turn of the century had been. The roster of major figures in these years is not so numerous, and the level of achievement is perhaps not as astonishingly high as it had been during Goethe’s lifetime.

A few very talented writers were active in these four decades, however, and one of the most talented among them was the poet Heinrich Heine (1797–1856). His skill was such that some of the poems he composed seemed, from the moment they appeared, to have already existed for centuries. He appealed to a very wide audience, acquiring for his poetry an international following larger than that of any other German poet. Even today, people who know any German poetry at all are likely to know at least one poem by Heine. He expresses himself in terms that are simple, direct, and yet hauntingly allusive: “Du bist wie eine Blume, / So hold und schön und rein; / Ich schau dich an, und Wehmut / Schleicht mir ins Herz hinein.” (You are like a flower, so lovely, chaste and pure; I look at you and melancholy creeps into my heart.)

Another, very different, revolutionary talent of the years after Goethe’s death, Georg Büchner (1813–37), died too young to have much impact during his lifetime; but his influence on later writers, especially those in the twentieth century, was substantial. Büchner was a playwright who in many ways anticipated the themes and techniques of much later writers. His play about the French revolution, *Dantons Tod* (Danton’s Death, 1836), presents a subtle psychological portrait of its central characters and paints a vivid picture of the political and emotional turmoil of the period. Most remarkable among his works is the fragmentary drama *Woyzeck*, first published long after its author’s death and little read until the twentieth century. Indeed, with its almost expressionistic technique and its intense interest in the psychopathology of its hero, it seems to belong more to that century than to its own time. That hero is in fact more of an anti-hero, a poor and not particularly bright man who falls apart psychologically and finally commits murder when he finds that his girlfriend is unfaithful to him.

Another major figure of mid nineteenth-century German drama was the Austrian poet and playwright, Franz Grillparzer (1791–1872), whose works for the stage remain among the classics of the German theater. It is worth noting, though, that Grillparzer also wrote an important novella, *Der arme Spielmann* (The Poor Fiddler, 1848), which also has become a classic. While Grillparzer’s dramas now seem a bit dated and distant from contemporary literary concerns, his story of the poor fiddler still seems fresh and relevant today. The fiddle player named in the story’s title is in fact poor in every sense: not only does he have little money, he has very little musical ability. His playing is so inept that people beg him to stop. But his commitment to art is genuine, and it is informed by a sophisticated concept of the role of the artist and of the place of art in human life. When the fiddler dies after rescuing several of his neighbors during a flood, his fiddle is preserved and revered by those who knew him as the relic of a great man.

The example of Grillparzer’s long-term success with his short story is instructive, for this literary form, called the *Novelle* in German, was the most vital genre of the period and perhaps its greatest contribution. Other

writers of the time, including those who made their reputations in other areas, produced outstanding and durable examples. The great poet Annette von Droste-Hülshoff (1797–1848), one of the most remarkable women in all German literary history, is a case in point. She wrote many fine poems, but also a single superb *Novelle*, *Die Judenbuche* (The Jew's Beech, 1842), a disturbing tale of murder and supernatural retribution that was in her lifetime and remains to this day her most widely-read work.

The list of excellent short stories from the mid nineteenth-century is long and impressive, and only a few can be mentioned here. Especially notable are the tales from the collection *Bunte Steine* (Many-colored Stones, 1853) by Grillparzer's fellow Austrian Adalbert Stifter (1805–68); those in the collection *Die Leute von Seldwyla* (The People of Seldwyla, 1856) by the Swiss novelist Gottfried Keller (1819–90); and several of the stories by north German poet Theodor Storm (1817–88) and the prolific prose writer Wilhelm Raabe (1831–1910).

Although not remembered as writer of literary works, one figure from this period became by far the most influential German author of the mid-century. The publication in 1867 of the first volume of *Das Kapital* brought the world's attention to Karl Marx (1818–83), a man of the nineteenth century whose thinking made an incalculable impact, for good or for ill, on the history of the twentieth.

The transition from the quiet mid-century to the intensity of the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s is also marked by a shift in the kinds of cultural activity that dominated the literary scene. Two of the most significant literary figures of the 70s and 80s were not poets, dramatists, or novelists but rather a composer, Richard Wagner (1813–83), and a classical scholar turned philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). Though primarily a composer, Wagner had at the heart of his operatic project a very literary ambition: he wanted to reconstruct Greek tragic drama in all its glory as described by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. Wagner's operas were meant to be more than pieces of music performed by singers in costumes; they were fully-formed music dramas in which the music performed a vital *dramatic* function. It is typical of Wagner's goal of writing not only music but also developing wide-ranging if obscure philosophical themes that he wrote all the texts for his operas.

No one understood Wagner's ambition better than the young Nietzsche, whose first important publication, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (The Birth of Tragedy, 1872), was enormously influenced by the success of Wagnerian opera. The merger of music and dramatic poetry in Wagner's works led the philosopher to the idea that ancient Greek tragedy had been from its inception in ancient Athens an art balanced, through the spirit of music, between form and the formless, between the dark urges of what Nietzsche called the Dionysian (after the Greek god of wine) and the bright clarity of the Apollonian (after the sun god Apollo).

Nietzsche's conception of Greek tragedy — and ultimately all great art — as poised on the edge between the two poles of rational organization (Apollo) and irrational dissolution (Dionysus) influenced nearly every writer who came after, including not least the young Thomas Mann. Mann, too, was intoxicated by Wagner's music and thrilled by the way certain musical figures could transform the emotional impact of a dramatic situation. Both his love of Wagner's music and his admiration for Nietzsche's concept of art would inform his mature writing.

There were, of course, more purely literary developments in the late nineteenth century. In the last decades of the century, a naturalistic strain became dominant in the stories and plays of German writers. The play *Die Weber* (The Weavers, 1892) by Gerhart Hauptmann (1862–1946) offers an apt example. It depicts in heart-breaking detail the uprising of the Silesian weavers in 1844, showing how desperate their economic and social situation was and how hopeless their lives had become. The play has no central character, no hero or heroine: its protagonist is an entire class of people represented by the exploited, alienated weavers. It is a play Karl Marx would have understood and admired.

Social concerns also predominate in the fiction of the period. The novels of Theodor Fontane (1819–98) center around issues of marriage, money, and social standing and often spotlight the problems of the rising middle class in the newly prosperous city of Berlin, Fontane's home. *Frau Jenny Treibel* (1893), for example, explores the conflict between emotions and economics in the marriage plans of a newly rich middle-class Berlin family. The main character, Jenny, professes to have interests in art and in intellectual matters; but when it comes to the marriage of her son, she prefers a daughter-in-law with funds to one with finer feelings. Fontane's characterization of Jenny is one of the most effective social satires in modern German literature, and the next generation of writers, including Mann, learned much from it.

An engagement with social problems also characterizes the work of the dramatist Frank Wedekind (1864–1918). One of the boldest of his plays, *Frühlingserwachen* (Spring's Awakening, 1891), confronts the embarrassing matter of teenage sexuality in an age of repression. Wedekind dares to put on stage scenes involving masturbation, sado-masochistic eroticism, and abortion, shocking his audience into examining a set of problems it would probably have preferred to ignore. Shocking, too, was Wedekind's daring dramatic technique, which begins with realism but drives beyond it by representing the world as an adolescent might see it. A school faculty meeting in *Frühlingserwachen*, for example, depicts the teachers as caricatures straight from a student's fantasy; and the last scene of the play includes among its characters a boy who had died earlier in the action, allowing the dead boy to explain to the audience the circumstances of his death.

The nineteenth century ended with two epoch-making events in German cultural history. The first was the aforementioned publication of Sigmund Freud's *Traumdeutung*, and the second was the appearance of Thomas Mann's novel of family decline, *Buddenbrooks* (1901).

Freud (1856–1939), the founder of psychoanalysis and certainly one of the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century, argued that dreams provided a window on a part of the mind Freud proposed to call the unconscious. This unconscious mind, though almost impossible to detect, was for Freud the origin of much human behavior and the explanation for much mental disease. Freud was convinced that if one could understand what was taking place in the unconscious mind of a patient, it would be possible to effect a cure. Freud's theory had enormous importance for literature, for he believed that literary texts often functioned as a kind of institutionalized dreaming. They could thus, like ordinary dreams, offer a glimpse into the workings of the unconscious.

Mann's novel *Buddenbrooks*, subtitled *Der Verfall einer Familie* (The Decline of a Family), was an equally important event for German letters, but in quite a different way from Freud's theory of dreams. The twenty-five-year-old author achieved the greatest literary sensation in Germany since the publication of Goethe's *Werther* 125 years earlier. The story is set in Mann's own home city of Lübeck in northern Germany and chronicles the events affecting the Buddenbrook family, a fictional family bearing a marked resemblance to the real-life relatives of the author. The lengthy novel has the gripping appeal of a soap opera, as the reader gets to experience in intimate detail the troubled lives of the well-to-do Buddenbrook parents, children, and grandchildren over the period of several decades. Mann showed himself in his mid-twenties already the master of his craft, painting with gentle irony the traits of people he clearly both loved and despised, people clearly deserving of both affection and contempt. The novel was a technical tour-de-force, an artistic breakthrough, and a financial bonanza for both Mann and his publisher. It was both the last great work of the old century and the first great work of the new one.

The Organization and Contents of This Volume

We have chosen to come at our subject from several different angles. Part I provides the necessary contexts — social, cultural, political — without which it would be impossible to understand or assess the literary achievements of the nineteenth century. Part II examines the principle movements, Part III the major genres characteristic of the age. Part IV provides bibliographical tools for further study, including both a bibliographical essay on the secondary literature and a straightforward list, inclusive as practicable, of the primary texts, including information about English translations of these works.

Thus, the primary organization of this book is: Contexts, Movements, Genres, Resources. This seems to us, and we expect to readers as well, a fairly standard approach to the presentation of literary history. And yet, direct and uncontroversial as such categories may appear, they are never neutral. They inevitably bring with them assumptions about the literary material they supposedly only describe. They privilege some authors, works, and features of works as more proper and definitive for the order they represent, and they play down or even neglect others as of lesser representative significance. Hermeneutically aware literary historians must consider the shaping influence of their own methodological categories just as carefully as they consider the literature under interrogation, and all the contributors to this volume prove themselves acutely hermeneutically aware. This fact should help readers to remain alert themselves, to keep in mind the limitations of an enterprise such as this, and to be ready to undertake further reading as inclination and opportunity suggest. That is why this book ends, not with a conclusion that wraps up the history of nineteenth-century German literature in a neat bundle, but with extensive suggestions for additional, more sharply focused study.

The most important function a literary history can serve is to let the reader know what the major texts are, who wrote them, and how and why they reward one's attention. It is this last element that all the contributors to this volume have tried to stress above all others. A bare list can provide the essential information about authors and titles — indeed just such a list, compiled by Thomas Spencer, concludes this book — but the list cannot suggest why these authors and titles are worth the effort of finding and reading them. The essays offered here attempt to do precisely that, and to do it in such a way as to give a sense of how German nineteenth-century literature participates in a larger cultural universe.

That larger cultural and historical context is the special province of the essays in Part I. Because the nineteenth century (as we have defined it) follows directly on the heels of Romanticism, we have opened the volume with Andrew Webber's essay on the afterlife of Romanticism. As Webber's essay reveals, the whole nineteenth century could easily be conceived as the afterlife of the Romantic period, but in a very special sense: the romantic spirit lived on by serving as what he calls the "cultural unconscious" for the age of bourgeois realism. The voices of Romantic writers continued to inhabit nineteenth-century texts in spectral form through a process of "intertextual recall" that preserved the traces of Romanticism in the very act of trying to subvert or overthrow Romantic ideas. For many writers of the nineteenth century, the spectral voices of Romanticism were bad ghosts that could threaten basic nineteenth-century values, including in particular "reality," perhaps the most fundamental of all nineteenth-century values. The "unworldly inwardness" of Romantic thinking posed a constant threat to politically engaged writers like Heine and Büchner

because such a perspective runs directly counter to the identification of reality with the world of politics and social history.

The commitment to political and social improvement characteristic of much nineteenth-century writing is also a commitment to the living world of the here and now. Romanticism, on the other hand, was often concerned with the world of the dead and gone, and thus often seemed steeped in melancholy and nostalgia for an irrecoverable past. Although this romantic nostalgia tended to express itself in fantasies of continuity with the past that were inhospitable to bourgeois political engagement, this nostalgia returns again and again in realistic fiction of the nineteenth century. A literature that claims to mirror the world without distortion finds in its mirrors not only the real social and political world it wants to represent but also fantastic “uncanny, secret presences” that seem to sneak in from the romantic past. Even at the very end of the century, at the greatest apparent distance from the Romantic age, we find in a work apparently belonging entirely to the age of bourgeois realism, Thomas Mann’s *Buddenbrooks*, what Webber calls “a longing for a lost or inaccessible place” that would seem more at home in Novalis or Eichendorff.

Webber shows that the Romantic impulse not only continues throughout the century but that it develops a new function: it reasserts the claims of subjectivity and the mysterious in life against the false security of nineteenth-century positivism. Romanticism thus becomes the essential “other” of an optimistic and confident sense of what constitutes reality. The most successful and nuanced of nineteenth-century writing thus necessarily incorporates the voice of this spectral other as a necessary, cautionary undercurrent, even in the most concerted attempts to mirror a world of social and political progress.

Indeed, as Lilian Furst indicates, the nineteenth century is “a paradoxical time of contrasts, changes, and reversals that defy reduction to a simple scenario.” One of the most striking of nineteenth-century paradoxes actually begins in the eighteenth century, when German Romantic ideas were spreading to the rest of Europe. The figures most Europeans associated with German Romanticism were names like Goethe and Schiller, writers who, because they did not apparently participate in the most radical Romantic experiments in the manner of Friedrich Schlegel or Jean Paul Richter, were not normally classified as Romantic by literary historians. This Romantic iconoclasm was peculiar to Germany, where the aftermath of the French Revolution proved surprisingly hospitable to aesthetic experimentation. Post-revolutionary France found artistic novelty somewhat suspect, but the ruling powers in the German states encouraged radicalism in the arts as a safety valve that could help to prevent radical political ideas from taking root. Ironically, the writers who were thus encouraged, among them Novalis, Wackenroder, and Friedrich Schlegel, believed seriously in the possibility of transforming the political landscape through poetry and

hoped to bring about just the sort of political upheaval the tolerant authorities most feared. This Romantic belief in the political effectiveness of literature is one of the most important legacies left to the nineteenth-century realists by Romanticism.

Furst points out that German realism parallels its European counterparts in its opposition to transcendental idealism and its commitment to the here and now. But the “here and now” most prominently displayed in German realist writing tended to be particularized into extreme forms of regionalism. Unlike French realism, which always used standard French as its medium of expression, German realism often chose regional dialects as the most effective way to emphasize the particularity of its subject matter. One result was that French realistic writing was accessible to all Europeans able to read French, whereas much German realistic writing required an intimate knowledge of local variations in spoken German. The extremely sharp focus of German realism during the mid-nineteenth century can also be seen in the rise of peasant literature as an important sub-genre. Although it was immensely popular in its home territory, it did not travel well and had little influence on the rest of Europe. The same could be said of German Poetic Realism, which found complex and often moving ways to depict the human consequences of the small happenings in life. As sophisticated and successful as some of this literature was, it too did not travel well and never became part of the larger European cultural scene.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, as Furst explains, Germany began to become more prominent in the rest of Europe. Although French was still the most frequently taught second modern language in England, German began to gain ground, especially after the marriage of Victoria to a German prince, Albert, in 1840. At the same time, German scholarship was flourishing and attracting attention all over the world, so that those who desired access to the knowledge available in German scientific literature sought access to the language. Germany was thus becoming increasingly integrated into European culture; German literature of the latter part of the century reflects this. German naturalism was very much in the mainstream of European thought: its guiding spirits (Ibsen, Darwin, Marx, Comte, and Taine) were the same for Germans as for the rest of Europe. Germany at the end of the century is thus very different from the relatively isolated Germany of mid-century; it becomes once again nearly as much a part of the larger European context as it was at the beginning, in the splendid Age of Goethe.

Koch sharpens the geo-political context of Furst’s literary parallels and disparities by focusing on the many transformations that mark the political life of the times. Perhaps the most prominent of these was the increasing dominance of large nation-states in central Europe where for centuries relatively small entities had maintained their independence. Of particular

concern to Koch is the *Deutsche Bund* (German Confederation), a group of states ranging from the great (Prussia, Austria) to the very small (Liechtenstein), comprising territory roughly coincident with the old Holy Roman Empire. Within the Bund there was a great deal of diversity, politically and ethnically; and outside the confederation there were German-speaking communities, such as Switzerland, that exercised a decisive influence on the members and their relations with each other. Although events in Prussia understandably had powerful repercussions in smaller nations like Switzerland we find a surprisingly strong influence moving in the other direction too, as Swiss democratic institutions and experience with multi-ethnic communities shaped political developments within the Bund.

Expansion of democratic principles was an important element in transforming the German political scene in the nineteenth century, but economic changes were perhaps even more decisive. The Customs Union (*Zollverein*) instituted by Prussia in the 1830s quickly succeeded in establishing Prussian domination in the area covered by this free trade agreement and helped to overcome centuries of insistence on local control. The need to gain access to the rich markets in the states belonging to the Customs Union forced those on the margins to join and thus to bring themselves within the Prussian political sphere. Prussia was thus able to create a kind of economic empire in advance of the political empire that would emerge later in the century. The fact that Austria remained outside the Union had enormous consequences, for it led ultimately to the split between Prussia and Austria that brought with it war in 1866.

In the midst of all this, at the center of the century, came the revolutions of 1848. The forced abdication of Louis Philippe of France in February of 1848 ignited a series of revolutionary uprisings in central Europe with diverse grievances and goals. Although these multiple revolutions failed to bring about any immediate change, they did sow the seeds for a long-term transformation of the political landscape in German-speaking lands. And it sparked a new interest in the problem of German unity, now recognized as an enduring “German question” to be debated for decades to come and made more urgent by the emergence of two competing German powers, Prussia and Austria.

By the end of the century, Prussia and Austria were not just two competing political units; they were two very different cultures. Prussia was dominated by a military aristocracy and developed a politico-social structure equipped to run a large, centralized military-industrial state that could — and, in the Franco-Prussian War, did — dominate its neighbors. Austria, on the other hand, became the multi-national Austro-Hungarian Empire, with a far less centralized system of authority and an ethnically diverse, polyglot population. These differences are reflected in the literary works of the two regions, culminating in a Thomas Mann in the Prussian north and a Franz Kafka in the Austro-Hungarian south.

Part II examines in detail the major literary movements of the years between 1830 and 1900. In his essay on the literary period between 1830 and 1848, Robert C. Holub confronts head on the aesthetic and ideological presuppositions implicit in defining the post-Romantic, pre-realist period by these dates, and in choosing either the rather conservative rubric “Biedermeierzeit,” the more leftist-oriented term “Vormärz,” or the more apparently neutral “Restaurationszeit” to describe the literature of this one span of literary history. While prudently declining to settle on any one such designation, Holub does note that the difficulties that literary historians face today in defining the period tend to reflect the same struggles that German-language authors themselves faced in defining the role of literature in the early nineteenth century. Holub focuses especially on the competition among authors of this period for profit and control of the literary heritage of Romanticism at a time of rapidly changing political and cultural traditions. In this, he characterizes the period as equally defined by the afterlife of Romanticism, which Andrew Webber discusses in his essay, and by the imperatives of Realism, which Gail Finney makes the subject of hers.

Finney begins her article on German Realism and Naturalism with a thoughtful consideration of the difficulties involved in defining the Poetic Realist movement that dominated German letters during the mid to late nineteenth century. She recalls the two models that have dominated most literary historical analyses: that developed by Erich Auerbach in his widely influential study, *Mimesis* (1946), a model that approaches realism as basically an ahistorical style or orientation that has manifested itself throughout the course of Western literature; and that preferred by Georg Lukács and others that focuses on realism as it manifested itself in the French and English literature of the second half of the nineteenth century, as the serious, verisimilar representation of social, political, and cultural conditions and how they impinge on individual lives. Finney rightly has reservations about both these models: the former tends to overlook the distinctive formal and stylistic features privileged by the German realists, while the latter tends to hold the German tradition to standards by which it can only appear rather second rate, and to ignore the quite different set of interests that shaped the literary endeavors of its most important practitioners. Finney does insist on foregrounding stylistic concerns as central to German realism, and this leads her to an approach that diverges noticeably from that taken in Todd Kontje’s *Companion to German Realism* (Camden House, 2002), and to focus on three canonical authors who go largely unmentioned in the Companion volume: Gottfried Keller, Theodor Storm, and Conrad Ferdinand Meyer. While Kontje’s volume reflects a view that implicitly applies to its material the more or less extra-literary focus on social, political, and historical conditions that has characterized French and English models of realism, without regard for specifically literary qualities, Finney’s article focuses on the innovations in literary

technique that peculiarly characterized the work of these German-language authors, innovations that reflected their response to the linguistic skepticism they inherited from the German idealist philosophers, shared with their great contemporary, Friedrich Nietzsche, and shaped into the literary heritage that would become modernism. Like Holub, she sees the idealist inheritance as crucial to the course of German literature in the later nineteenth century, and, like Holub, she sees the seeds for the following dominant literary paradigm already germinating in the present one.

Although Finney's discussion of realism emphasizes the distinctiveness of the German tradition and primarily stresses its literary qualities, her treatment of naturalism focuses instead on its self-conscious ties to the broader European movements of naturalism in literature, Darwinism in science, and socialism and feminism in politics. This does not prevent her from continuing to trace the effects of the realists' linguistic skepticism in the narrative experiments of the German naturalists. It does, however, allow her to discuss alongside the prominent figures of Arno Holz, Johannes Schlaf, and Gerhart Hauptmann the lesser known woman writer, Elsa Bernstein.

Ernst Grabovszki's article suggests much of the continuing force of naturalism in the plurality of literary styles that emerged in its wake at the turn of the century, including the radicalization of its social concerns in the *Arbeiterdichtung* (literature by or about workers) and *Heimatsliteratur* (literature about the homeland of the author) of the period, and of its linguistic skepticism in the work of the impressionists and symbolists. Although Grabovszki delineates some basic differences between the various literary trends of the 1890s, he is careful not to push the distinctions between impressionism, symbolism, aestheticism, or *décadence* too hard, nor to insist on their all-encompassing coverage. Too many of the most interesting authors of this period display influences that could be attributed to a variety of these movements, without being easily situated within any one; and too, many of its most interesting authors, including Karl Kraus and Arthur Schnitzler, do not seem to fall within the literary historian's categories at all. Similarly, while Grabovszki affirms the common perception of the withdrawal of literature from political and social concerns as a hallmark of the several *l'art pour l'art* movements of the *fin de siècle*, he does not push the issue to the point that it blinds us to other matters. Among those other matters are the broadly international orientation of many of these artists, their engagement with the literature of not only France and England but also Russia and Scandinavia, and the self-conscious influence of other cultural spheres on literature at this time, including painting, architecture, science, journalism, philosophy, and medicine. Like both Holub and Finney, Grabovszki manages to display the distortions as well as the clarity that literary history can bring to its literary material.

In Part III, the center of attention shifts from movements to genres. One might expect the points of contention regarding the literary historian's

categories to be less prominent in relation to the discussion of the genres of drama, the novel, and lyric, but one would be wrong. Benjamin Bennett's essay on nineteenth-century German drama starts out with the provocative claim that there *is* no drama in this period. His argument is in part that literary historians have tended to approach drama as an exclusively literary phenomenon, and in so doing have fundamentally misrepresented the genre, which is by its nature split between a literary or poetic art and a theatrical, enacted one. Treating drama only as a distinct type of literature has fostered a reading of nineteenth-century drama that privileges some of its most *undramatic* authors: in particular, Friedrich Hebbel, Franz Grillparzer, and Otto Ludwig. Like Holub, Bennett does suggest that the miscomprehensions that characterize the definitions of literary historians today tend to reflect the confusions of the nineteenth-century authors themselves. Hebbel especially is shown to miss the necessarily double, or split, nature of drama, and to suppress its theatrical identity in order to present it as the literary equivalent of systematic philosophy in its claims to wholeness and unity. To counter the distortions of this "literary" tradition, Bennett offers readings of three authors whose works more honestly confront both the poetic and theatrical dimensions of the dramatic art: Georg Büchner, Johann Nestroy, and Gerhart Hauptmann. Bennett's point is not that these authors thereby achieve a more complete, encompassing, or perfect mode of drama, but that they display the essentially incomplete, disrupted, and defective nature of the genre itself. The admonition against the fantasy of comprehensiveness that Bennett explicitly aims at the dramatist's enterprise he implicitly directs at the literary historian's as well.

In his essay on the novel, Jeffrey Sammons openly laments the distortions and occlusions that literary history has imposed on the rich and varied prose fiction of the German nineteenth century. He identifies two particular tendencies as most responsible for these obfuscations, both of which he associates with a misguided desire to distinguish a peculiarly German literature from that of other contemporary European nations. The first is the enduring critical inclination to view the Bildungsroman as the definitive form of the German novel throughout the nineteenth century, an inclination that has led to a neglect of the broad range of novel types, and especially realist ones, in German that do not differ in any substantial way from those written in French, English, or Russian at this time. The second is the tendency to define a "poetic Realist" tradition in Germany that is fundamentally different from the social realism of other, more worldly and cosmopolitan nations and, as part of that, to emphasize the novella as *the* German prose form in contrast to the novel form that dominated in other literatures. Sammons questions the usefulness of both these claims, arguing for the novelistic quality of many of the best nineteenth-century German novellas, and urging an abandonment of any concept of realism that both isolates and privileges one of its strains over

other equally viable ones that existed, and thrived, at the same time. In order to counter the distortions he sees literary history to have inflicted on nineteenth-century German prose fiction, Sammons organizes his own essay in such a way as to discourage notions of either orderly sequence or unified agenda at work in the literature under review. His essay stresses instead the diversity of novel types, and focuses attention on many works that have for the most part been neglected by more canon-oriented contemporary critics. It is, as it were, literary history *contra* literary history.

Thomas Pfau's exposition of the course of lyric poetry over the nineteenth century echoes many of the points made by other contributors regarding other genres or specific periods. Like Bennett's reading of drama, Pfau's reading of lyric proceeds from a counterintuitive starting point — that is, from a sense that lyric poetry was at an end before the period under consideration began. This sense was partly a result of the overwhelming yet no longer useful lyric heritage of the *Goethezeit* that Holub describes. It was also partly a result of the influence of Hegel's aesthetic theory, which seemed to claim that Romantic poetry had been the culmination of a two-thousand year historical process, after which the emotional basis of the lyric was to be superseded by the more abstract form of speculative philosophy — giving rise to a disregard of the material basis in lyric poetry in a manner strictly analogous to the disregard of the theatrical basis in drama described by Bennett. Pfau does not, however, consider that this position only led to an absence of genuine lyric in the changed literary, cultural, and historical landscape of nineteenth-century German-speaking countries. He does note the rash of inferior poetry based on a misguided attempt simply to continue the emotion-based poetry of the Romantic era, as if such poetry had not already ended. He also acknowledges other, equally inferior poetry that tried to enact in lyric poetry itself the Hegelian imperative to overcome emotion with speculative thought (here, too, Friedrich Hebbel serves as whipping boy); and still other all-but-forgotten poetry that abandoned the focus on both emotions and abstract thought and opted for subject matter that was either topically political or historical. But he also calls attention to the truly significant poetry that worked to thematize its own belatedness, its own incongruity in the new, equally incongruent cultural territory. Such poetry also worked to realize lyric emotion as its own, distinct form of self-reflexive cognition, and (of most lasting importance) it strove to overcome the inherited association of lyric poetry and emotional expression in the name of a new, proto-modernist aesthetic of objective constructions, impressionist language, and radically attenuated subject positions. Like Finney, Pfau sees the dominant tendencies of the early twentieth century already far developed in the nineteenth, which is shown to have overcome its own literary history even before it was over.

On the margin of the literary scene — and yet also somehow still at the heart of it — was the music drama of Richard Wagner. As a composer, Wagner has a reputation that seems unassailable as one of the giants of European opera, but as a literary and cultural figure he still stirs controversy. The cult of Wagner seems to go on without any signs of abatement — at the beginning of the twenty-first century there is a seven-year wait for tickets to the Bayreuth festival — in spite of the hostility he engenders among many. His relation to German aesthetics and literature, as Christopher Morris explains, is as complex and troubling as it is vitally important to an understanding of the German nineteenth century.

Although we tend to think of Wagner primarily as a composer, he was also a man of letters. Not only did he write the libretti for his operas, but also wrote numerous prose works setting forth the basis for his great project, the “total work of art” (*Gesamtkunstwerk*). Morris reminds us that Wagner’s aim was, in fact, the radical transformation of German culture. The ambition of this project staggers the imagination, for the Wagnerian “total work of art” intended to do nothing less than heal the breach between man and nature by displaying on the stage a “representation of perfect human nature.” The music drama, drawing on the primal material of myth, could even transcend history by tapping into a reservoir of mythic truth that was eternally true and eternally fresh. Wagner’s operas were thus diametrically opposed to the bourgeois realist novel of the time, with their emphasis on everyday travails and on the details of the quotidian world. Wagner meant to lead his audience back to the roots of Western civilization, to the world of primal myth, a world like the ancient Greece somewhat poetically described by the influential eighteenth-century critic J. J. Winckelmann, as one in which man and nature existed harmoniously.

Also essential to the program was a disturbing political agenda. Wagner’s goal of returning to the primal mythic roots of ancient Greece depended on his belief that the Germans were the inheritors of classical civilization and that the German language had a special status as somehow more firmly rooted in authenticity. Wagner’s anti-Semitism was part of this same syndrome, in spite of his avowed commitment to what he called the “purely human” elements in German culture. As Wagner made explicitly clear, he considered everything Jewish to be the opposite of what was pure and indeed what was human. “Jewishness” (*Judentum*) needed to be purged from music, if music were to serve appropriately in the great cultural program Wagner had in mind.

Music was essential to this program because of its special status among the arts. Wagner, later in his career, enthusiastically endorsed Schopenhauer’s contention that music was closer to the Will, thus to the ground of all being, than any of the other arts. Wagner shared Schopenhauer’s belief that music could penetrate through the veil of representations and bring the listener to a state of mind that bypassed normal perception. Music could thus

communicate in ways unavailable to the text of the libretto. Even before he read Schopenhauer, Wagner was already composing music that went far beyond the strict demands of the libretto. Morris cautions us to remember, though, that Wagner always ultimately relies on words to ground the meaning of the score. Wagner the musician thus never entirely effaces Wagner the man of letters.

It remains only to say a word about Part IV. The list of Primary Sources, which includes the most important works of the period, together with data on English translations to the extent they exist, is a standard feature in all the *Camden House History of German Literature* volumes. For secondary sources, the reader will benefit, we think, from the expert guidance offered by John Pizer's bibliographical essay. Pizer not only knows his way around the relevant literature, he knows what is likely to be helpful to readers of a work like the *Camden House History of German Literature*. The editors specifically asked him to select only those works which most clearly illuminate the central issues of contemporary scholarship, so there is no comprehensive list on offer. Instead, the reader should learn not only what further reading there is to do, but what the important problems and debates in the field are at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Philosophy and Other Matters Beyond the Scope of This Volume

Even further removed from the literary center than Wagner's musico-dramatic project was the philosophical writing of the nineteenth century, and here the editors decided to set the boundary of our literary history. It would seem in a sense an easy decision to exclude philosophical writing from a book about literature, since there appears to be as clear a disciplinary boundary between philosophy and literature as there is between, say, physics and literature. But in the case of nineteenth-century Germany the situation is by no means so clear.

The difficulty of separating philosophical discourse from literary or critical discourse had begun in the late eighteenth century, when the two fields were not so distinct. Poets could and did write philosophical essays, and philosophers wrote what would today be called literary criticism. Romantic philosophy and Romantic literature were closely bound together by personal as well as cultural links, since the philosophers and poets were in many cases part of the same social circle. The philosopher Schelling felt not the slightest hesitation in writing about Shakespeare and Dante, and that not in exceptional excursions into literary matters but as a central part of his philosophical discourse. Fichte wrote an important essay "On the Spirit and the Letter in Philosophy" that is just as much a literary as a philosophical text.

The nineteenth century inherited this comfort with an intimate mixing of philosophy and literature. Even philosophers who did not share the literary ambiance of a Schelling expressed important ideas about poetry. Hegel, in his Berlin lectures on aesthetics of the 1820s, proposed a way of understanding drama in terms of conflict that influenced both the theory and practice of stagecraft for more than a century. As Pfau shows in his chapter on lyric poetry, German poets of the decades after 1830 were in many cases responding to Hegelian ideas about emotion. And that most anti-Hegelian of all philosophers, Schopenhauer, not only discussed literature as part of his great work *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Idea, 1819) but presented a literary genre, tragedy, as the ultimate expression of the wisdom to be found in his philosophy.

Schopenhauer's work, important as it is for the history of European philosophy, had perhaps its greatest impact in the literary world. We have already discussed the importance of his notions about music to the mature Wagner. Later in the century, with the help of Nietzsche, his influence spread to the young Mann and to others of that generation, such as Hermann Hesse and the somewhat younger Franz Kafka. It is even likely, as Mann himself suggested, that Freud's notion of the unconscious owes something to the Schopenhauerian Will. If Mann's suggestion is correct, then Schopenhauer's influence worked its way through Freud to much of the literature of the twentieth century.

Just how closely philosophy allied itself with literature in the nineteenth century can be seen clearly in no less radical a thinker than Karl Marx, whose work is rarely thought of as particularly literary. Further, it is true that the main line of Marx's thought has little to say about literary matters and that Marx's influence on European letters has been largely mediated through the writings of other theorists who followed him. But it is worth noting that Marx, like other writers of his day, understood poetic texts as having a special claim on truth. When Marx presents his case for the evil effects of money, for example, he marshals as powerful evidence extensive quotations from Shakespeare and Goethe. These citations are not simply rhetorical embellishments intended to spice up an otherwise dry document; they are a vital part of the argument. He understands these poets as colleagues in the enterprise in which he is engaged. Marx would agree with Shelley, a writer whom he greatly admired, that great poets are also great philosophers.

The opposite, we have to acknowledge, has rarely been true. Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, even Marx (with some notable exceptions) do not write with anything like poetic flair. One of the few philosophers who might lay claim to a true poetic talent was Nietzsche, one of the most linguistically gifted philosophers since Plato. Some of Nietzsche's writings, such as *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Thus Spake Zarathustra, 1883–85), are so poetic in both form and content that they could just as readily be classified as literature as philosophy.

Unlike Marx, who received formal university training in philosophy, Nietzsche received his doctorate in classical philology. It is not surprising, then, that his first important philosophical work, *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music, 1872), was intended to inaugurate his career as a professor of Classics at the University of Basel or that the basic thesis of this work is an attempt to answer some fundamental questions about the origin of Greek drama. But from the outset this work shows itself to be as much philosophy as philology, using some of Schopenhauer's ideas about tragedy as a springboard for a reworking of aesthetics into the foundation of a world view. Nietzsche starts by accepting Schopenhauer's fundamentally pessimistic view of human life, claiming that such an existence as ours can only be justified aesthetically. The ultimate human wisdom would be the advice offered by the Greek demi-god Silenus, who proposes that the best possible thing for a human being would be never to be born, the second best thing to die soon. Greek culture, Nietzsche claims, both accepts and inverts this wisdom. It presents in the god Dionysus a force that celebrates the obliteration of individuality in intoxication and ultimately in death; but it also presents in the god Apollo the vision of a life of individual greatness, beauty, and immortality.

The dark, erotic, and deadly world of Dionysus meets the bright, clear world of Apollo on the Athenian tragic stage, where a single Apollonian individual, the actor, confronts a Dionysian mass entity, the chorus. This balanced confrontation is the birth of tragedy. It is the moment in the history of Western culture when two forces, the dark Dionysian wisdom of Silenus and the Apollonian golden dream-world of the immortal Olympian gods, exist together in harmony. In only a single generation, Nietzsche argued, the rise of Socratic philosophy and its reflection in the overwhelmingly Apollonian drama of Euripides would mark the loss of that harmony.

Nietzsche's idea of the two forces, one dark and erotic, the other clear and rational, found its way into the psychology of Sigmund Freud. Although Freud vigorously denied having been influenced by Nietzsche's writings, it seems likely that Mann was right to see in the confrontation between Freud's concept of the Ego and the Id an unmistakable intellectual descendant of the Apollo-Dionysus tension. And both Freud and Nietzsche owe a debt to Schopenhauer's distinction between the world as Will and the world as Representation (*Vorstellung*). Freud's participation in the literary culture of the nineteenth century goes much further, however, as is evident in some of the most famous of his theoretical formulations. Shakespeare and Sophocles are centrally important figures in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and Freud named perhaps his most daring conjecture about childhood sexuality after Oedipus, a literary character. The core of his notion of the "uncanny" as the return of the repressed is based

on a reading of E. T. A. Hoffmann's fantastic tale "Der Sandmann" (The Sandman, 1816). Indeed, one could argue that Freud is perhaps the most literary of all the non-belletristic writers in recent European history.

Thus it would not be difficult to argue that much of the literary and cultural history of the nineteenth century is bound up with the history of its philosophy. One could argue as well that an account of that philosophy properly belongs in a literary history of the period. Granting that, however, it is still necessary for a volume such as this to draw the line somewhere, and we have chosen to put philosophy on the other side of that line. The brief indications in the paragraphs above may perhaps give the reader interested in pursuing matters across the line some notion of where to look.

Part I

Contexts

The Afterlife of Romanticism

Andrew Webber

GERMAN ROMANTICISM is a complex and slippery phenomenon, resisting any straightforward cultural historical periodization or localization. From an early stage in the historiography of the movement, the precocious flourishing of Romantic ideas in the movement's early period (*Frühromantik*) was contrasted with the more mature literary hey-day of high Romanticism (*Hochromantik*) and the often wistfully self-ironic developments of late Romanticism (*Spätromantik*.) In fact, though, the three stages of the life of German Romanticism, broadly spanning the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first three of the nineteenth, are not synchronized in their sequence; the naïve energy of the first often jostles with the more self-conscious, even parodic, disposition of the last, even within individual works. At the same time, a number of groups vied for the proper site of the movement's center, from Jena to Heidelberg, Leipzig, and Berlin; this was a movement that moved, dissolving and reforming in a new location on more than one occasion. Nor does the sequence of phases encompass the full lifespan of the movement: there are distinct trends in eighteenth-century Germany that prefigure Romanticism (both *Empfindsamkeit* and the *Sturm und Drang* can be seen as having proto-Romantic tendencies), and its afterlife, part of which forms the subject of this essay, is extensive and often potent.

The thematic concerns, formal techniques, and political interests of the movement also present a complicated picture. It seems to pursue a quest for metaphysical ends, after the model of the “blaue Blume,” the mystical blue flower that is the emblematic object of Romantic yearning in Novalis's fragmentary novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802), but it also invokes the often grossly physical monsters of the Gothic (*Schauerromantik*) tradition. It embraces both a sentimental cult of domesticity, finding special significance in everyday life, and the terrorizing aesthetics of the sublime in the most inaccessible reaches of the experiential world. It celebrates the simplicity of folk culture and yet converts the *Märchen* (fairy tale) and the *Volkslied* (folk-song) into their more artful, even esoteric, counterparts — the *Kunstmärchen* (artistic fairy tale) and *Kunstvolkslied*. And it makes a cult of medievalism as a fantasy model of primal forms of social relation and aesthetic practice, but comes to complicate that model with the contradictory political and

aesthetic demands of contemporary existence. Romanticism is often branded as reactionary, and some of its principal figures were indeed politically conservative, but there were also more liberal, even socialist, tendencies in the movement. If one of the defining aesthetic principles of Romanticism is its attachment to the anti-genre of the fragment, then this signals its resistance to any sustained definition, any grand narrative of its own character and development. It puts emphasis on processes of becoming rather than on established identity. As the principal theorist of early Romanticism, Friedrich Schlegel, has it in the course of his axiomatic definition of the Romantic as “progressive Universalpoesie,” the essential nature of Romantic literature is “im Werden,” a persistent state of becoming or incompleteness.¹

The process of becoming is not, however, to be mistaken for boundless vitality. While Romanticism pursues a cult of origins, of childhood and the childhood of man, an aspect of it is, more or less from the start, prematurely aged, caught in melancholic or mocking attitudes of looking back at itself. We might consider a description of dreams, taken from *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, which Freud cites in his *Traumdeutung* (The Interpretation of Dreams, 1899) as an example of the understanding of dreams as refreshing and therapeutic in the manner of a child’s game. While Freud sees in this Romantic account of dreaming a position that is appealing in its untroubled, poetic innocence, he fails to note the end of the quotation, which sets the playfulness of dreams against the “Wallfahrt zum Grabe” (pilgrimage to the grave),² a journey which is defined from the start by its mortal end. Novalis’s text is, in fact, ambiguously cast between recuperation and desolation, the affirmation of creative vitality and a darker view of irredeemable mortality, and the dreams in the text work in both directions. Thus, Heinrich has an anxious dream of his Mathilde being drowned beyond his reach in a whirlpool, awakes into another dream that reunites him with her in death, and then awakes in turn from this, desperately unable to recover the key dream word that she whispered in his ear.³ Dreams shift dialectically between separation and union in a way that is emblematic for the narrative as a whole, which never reaches the resolution for which it is programmed. Notwithstanding Freud’s benign reading of it, Novalis’s version of the Romantic view of dreaming might equally well be seen as the more restrained counterpart of the nightmarish account of fantasy that came to inform the Freudian theory of the uncanny in E. T. A. Hoffmann’s fantastic novella, *Der Sandmann* (The Sandman, 1817). Novalis’s whirlpool has a certain affinity with the circles of fire that are a leitmotif in Hoffmann’s text. As we shall see, the afterlife of Romanticism incorporates both the recuperative and the nihilistic versions of the movement’s dream-life; the legacies of Novalis and Hoffmann are dialectically intertwined.

Novalis’s framing of childlike pleasure through the perspective of death indicates that Romanticism is never fully present or settled in its

identity. It seeks to cast itself as a movement of originality, with transcendental reach, but its cult of immediacy is complicated by reliance on forms of mediation, whether in the shape of received cultural models (especially from medieval romance traditions) or of structures of ironic distance. The disposition of Romantic Irony, marking the knowing disjuncture between ideal or fantasy and actual conditions, which becomes such a key element in the writings of late Romantics like Hoffmann, is already anticipated in the earliest stirrings of the movement. While the Idealist philosophy of Fichte could construct the “Ich” as an absolute, sovereign category, its irony a mark of autonomy from the other, subsequent developments in the thinking of Novalis and others drew out the idea of the subject as mobile in its definition, constituted as self-conscious through processes of reflection. The subject, in other words, comes to be the object of its own irony, and this condition, which, on the one hand, promotes the playfulness and creative fantasy of much Romantic writing is also one which is prone to become destructive, following the pathological model of the “chronic dualism” that afflicts so many of Hoffmann’s protagonists.⁴ Ironic vitality is in contest with ironic morbidity, so that Romanticism was already, while apparently alive, also in its own post-Romantic afterlife. As such, it was peculiarly prepared to live on after its apparent historical demise as a cultural revenant, set to fascinate and to haunt the post-Romantic age proper.

The spirit and rhetoric of Romanticism is a regular, if often marginal, presence in the culture of nineteenth-century Germany when it comes under the sway of Realism, the dominant cultural ideology of the period under review here. The topoi and tropes of Romantic writing, the moonlit magic forest or the architectural ruin, the fantastic transportations and transfigurations, are recurrently in evidence, albeit often ambiguously charged, even disavowed. They are widespread in the popular culture of the period, but they also make themselves felt in some of its most canonical writings, working against their apparent Realist grain. In the current essay, the trajectory of the afterlife of Romanticism will be traced through texts by a number of the most significant writers of nineteenth-century Germany: from Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), through Georg Büchner (1813–37), Annette von Droste-Hülshoff (1797–1848), Theodor Storm (1817–88), Theodor Fontane (1819–98), and Thomas Mann (1875–1955). In each case, the Romantic persists as an intertextual recall: Romantic narratives, poems, and dramas are read by Realist readers, and their haunting effects are felt in the texts that play host to them.

The afterlife began before the movement was properly dead with its unofficial collective obituary, Heinrich Heine’s *Die romantische Schule* (1835). This essay is fraught with Heine’s own deeply ambivalent attachment to the Romantic. It collects together the principal proponents and exponents of Romantic writing in order at once to create a school after the

fact and then to show how inwardly split and moribund that school is. Many of the writers are dead, and Heine supplies their epitaphs in a recurrent rhetorical gesture. And those that are still alive are typically represented as the living dead and furnished with premature epitaphs of their own, so that the spirit of August Wilhelm Schlegel is described as already deceased and his body a spook.⁵ While Heine metes out judgments of various kinds, venomous critique, wry mockery, or guarded admiration, the whole is characterized by an overarching version of Romantic irony, a modulation between identification with, and distance from, his object. Heine describes the Romantic school as at base melancholic in attitude, attached to a yearning for what is intrinsically already lost to it. The “blaue Blume” is thus superseded by the passionflower, described as ghostly and melancholic, which elicits the voluptuous cultivation of suffering “in unserer Seele” (in our souls, 126). The first person plural is telling here: Heine shares in the mortified Romantic passion that he exposes. He mocks Friedrich Schlegel for his flight into the “zitternden Ruinen der katholischen Kirche” (trembling ruins of the Catholic Church), but he too in his obsessive necrology seems unable to embrace the suffering of his times as “Schmerzen der Wiedergeburt” (pains of rebirth) rather than as the “Agonie des Sterbens” (agony of dying) (166). He recognizes the vampiric character of the cult of medievalism, but again has to include himself in the circle of victims of the undead ghost that “saugt uns das rothe Leben aus der Brust” (sucks the red life out of our breast, 241). The post-Romantic Heine cannot help but be a parasite upon the parasitic affliction of the Romantics, compulsively re-enacting the return of the vampire in his own works much as he revives the ghosts and golems of the Romantic school in his essay.

Heine’s morbid preoccupation with Romanticism incorporates both the ghost and the golem, the supernatural or transcendental aspects of the movement and its more earth-bound fantasies. The dichotomy is nicely in evidence in the encounter that he organizes between Novalis and Hoffmann. Behind the ethereal disposition of the former and the dogged attachment to materialism of the latter, even in his most esoteric fantasies, Heine diagnoses a shared condition of pathology: Novalis the consumptive meets Hoffmann the febrile fantasist. But the diagnostic role of the doctor-critic irks with Heine, who is bound to see in his “patients” indications of a disease that is endemic in the age and not least in the symptomatic shape of his own poetic writings. Instead, Heine reads *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* through a strategy of identification or, in psychoanalytic terms, transference, inhabiting through projection the text under scrutiny. Novalis’s tubercular muse takes on the form of the girl, called Sophia (after Novalis’s beloved Sophie), who introduces Heine to the text, and is found living with her sister, a very physical postmistress whose passion is reading Hoffmann. When Heine revisits this house inhabited by the two forms of

Romantic reading, he finds both touched by death. The vitality of the postmistress has been lost, her powerful breasts now in Romantic ruins, and she has ceased to read Hoffmann. The very touch of the physical object of a Hoffmann text is like death for the ethereal Sophia, but she also contracts her eventual death from the Novalis book, reading her consumption out of the consumptive text: “sie hatte sich die Schwindsucht herausgelesen” (196). Heine meanwhile transcribes the poetry in the style of Novalis that this Romantic reader speaks. He becomes a medium for a revived but death-marked embodiment of the muse of Novalis, thus spreading the consumptive contagion into newborn texts. Sophia’s spirit passes into death, but she passes on her copy of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* to the necrologist of the Romantic movement, who has this physical embodiment of the transcendental death-cult on his desk as he writes over her dead body.⁶ The spirit of Novalis is thus introduced intertextually into the writing practices of his necrologist as ghostwriter. Heine, the would-be post-Romantic, remains intimately involved in the reading and writing network of Romantic fantasy.

For Heine, Romanticism, implicitly including his own Romanticism, remains politically suspect, regressive in its tendencies. He sees the Romantic School as following the reverse tide of restoration politics in the Germany of that time, the “Strom, der nach seiner Quelle zurückströmte” (river that flowed back to its source, 141). This is also how the rhetoric of Romanticism appears in the works of the later Heine’s chief political mentor, Karl Marx. In the *Eighteenth Brumaire* (1852), written in response to the dictatorship of Louis Bonaparte, Marx famously arrogates the supernatural language of the “rotes Gespenst,” the red ghost that Communism represents for the *ancien regime*, as his leitmotif to describe the failure of the 1848 revolution, which he sees as reviving not the spirit of the French Revolution but its phantom.⁷ He invokes figures from the Romantic repertory to describe the revolutionary struggles of 1848–1851 as a mock-Gothic theatre: its protagonists are inverted Schlemihls,⁸ shadows that have lost their bodies (136), or the victims of the bourgeois order as a vampire which sucks the blood from their hearts and the marrow from their brains in order to cast it into the alchemical cauldron of capital (201). The ghost of empty, theatrical repetition that Marx sees as the great counter-revolutionary danger at work in history is figured as a return of the repressive potential of Romanticism, its otherworldly fantasies and demons. Not for nothing does he represent the art historian and poet Gottfried Kinkel (1815–82), the first of his targets for opprobrium amongst the émigré figures of 1848, in *Die großen Männer des Exils* (The Great Men of Exile, written 1852, first published 1930), as playing the role of a latter-day Heinrich von Ofterdingen in a pseudo-Romantic amateur theatre.⁹ Marx’s mobilization of Romantic tropes to figure the repetitive character of history also implies that the Romantic itself may have a constitutional tendency toward repetition.