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THE CONCEPT OF "ROMANTICISM" IN LITERARY HISTORY

RENÉ WELLEK

I. The Term "Romantic" and Its Derivatives

THE terms "romanticism" and "romantic" have been under attack for a long time. In a well-known paper, "On the Discriminations of Romanticisms," Arthur O. Lovejoy has argued impressively that "the word 'romantic' has come to mean so many things that, by itself, it means nothing. It has ceased to perform the function of a verbal sign." Lovejoy proposed to remedy this "scandal of literary history and criticism" by showing that "the 'Romanticism' of one country may have little in common with that of another, that there is, in fact, a plurality of Romanticisms, of possibly quite distinct thought-complexes." He grants that "there may be some common denominator to them all; but if so, it has never been clearly exhibited."¹ Moreover, according to Lovejoy, "the romantic ideas were in large part heterogeneous, logically independent, and sometimes essentially antithetic to one another in their implications."²

As far as I know, this challenge has never been taken up by those who still consider the terms useful and will continue to speak of a unified European romantic movement. While Lovejoy makes reservations and some concessions to the older view, the impression seems widespread

¹ *PMLA* XXIX (1924), 229-253. Reprinted in *Essays in the History of Ideas* (Baltimore, 1948), pp. 228-253, especially pp. 232, 234, 235, 236.

² "The Meaning of Romanticism for the Historian of Ideas," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, II (1941), 261.

today, especially among American scholars, that his thesis has been established securely. I propose to show that there is no basis for this extreme nominalism, that the major romantic movements form a unity of theories, philosophies, and style, and that these, in turn, form a coherent group of ideas each of which implicates the other.

I have tried elsewhere to make a theoretical defense of the use and function of period terms.³ I concluded that one must conceive of them, not as arbitrary linguistic labels nor as metaphysical entities, but as names for systems of norms which dominate literature at a specific time of the historical process. The term "norms" is a convenient term for conventions, themes, philosophies, styles, and the like, while the word "domination" means the prevalence of one set of norms compared with the prevalence of another set in the past. The term "domination" must not be conceived of statistically: it is entirely possible to envisage a situation in which older norms still prevailed numerically while the new conventions were created or used by writers of greatest artistic importance. It thus seems to me impossible to avoid the critical problem of evaluation in literary history. The literary theories, terms, and slogans of a time need not have prescriptive force for the modern literary historian. We are justified in speaking of "Renaissance" and "Baroque," though both of these terms were introduced centuries after the events to which they refer. Still, the history of literary criticism, its terms and slogans affords important clues to the modern historian, since it shows the degree of self-consciousness of the artists themselves and may have profoundly influenced the practice of writing. But this is a question which has to be decided case by case, since there have been ages of low self-consciousness and ages in which theoretical awareness lagged far behind practice or even conflicted with it.

In the case of romanticism the question of the terminology, its spread and establishment, is especially complicated because it is contemporary or nearly contemporary with the phenomena described. The adoption of the terms points to an awareness of certain changes. But this awareness may have existed without these terms, or these terms may have been introduced before the actual changes took place, merely as a program, as the expression of a wish, an incitement to change. The situation differs in different countries; but this is, of course, in itself no argument that the phenomena to which the terms refer showed substantial differences.

The semantic history of the term "romantic" has been very fully studied in its early stages in France, England, and Germany, and for the

³ Cf. "Periods and Movements in Literary History," *English Institute Annual 1940* (New York, 1941), pp. 73-93, and *Theory of Literature*, with Austin Warren (New York, 1949), especially pp. 274ff.

later stages in Germany.⁴ But, unfortunately, little attention has been paid to it in other countries and, even where materials are abundant, it is still difficult to ascertain when, for the first time, a work of literature and which works of literature were designated as "romantic," when the contrast of "classical-romantic" was introduced, when a contemporary writer referred to himself first as a "romanticist," when the term "romanticism" was first adopted in a country, etc. Some attempt, however imperfect in detail, can be made to straighten out this history on an international scale and to answer some of these questions.

We are not concerned here with the early history of "romantic" which shows an expansion of its use from "romance-like," "extravagant," "absurd," etc., to "picturesque." If we limit ourselves to the history of the term as used in criticism and literary history, there is little difficulty about its main outlines. The term "romantic poetry" was used first of Ariosto and Tasso and the mediæval romances from which their themes and "machinery" were derived. It occurs in this sense in France in 1669, in England in 1674,⁵ and certainly Thomas Warton understood it to mean this when he wrote his introductory dissertation to his *History of English Poetry* (1774), "The Origin of Romantic Fiction in Europe." In Warton's writings and those of several of his contemporaries a contrast is implied between this "romantic" literature, both mediæval and Renaissance, and the whole tradition of literary art as it came down from classical antiquity. The composition and "machinery" of Ariosto, Tasso, and Spenser are defended against the charges of neoclassical criticism with arguments which derive from the Renaissance defenders of Ariosto (Patrizzi, Cinthio) and which had been repeated by such good neoclassicists as Jean Chapelain.⁶ An attempt is made to justify a special taste for such "romantic" fiction and its noncompliance with classical standards and rules, even though these are not challenged for

⁴ Fernand Baldensperger, "‘Romantique’—ses analogues et équivalents," *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature*, XIV (1937), 13-105, is the fullest list. Unfortunately there is no interpretation and it goes only to 1810. Richard Ullmann and Helene Gotthard, *Geschichte des Begriffs "Romantisch" in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1927), *Germanische Studien*, I, is most valuable and tells the story to the 1830s. But the arrangement is confusing and confused. Logan P. Smith, *Four Words, Romantic, Originality, Creative, Genius* (Society for Pure English Tract no. 17, London, 1924), reprinted in *Words and Idioms* (Boston, 1925), is still the only piece on English developments and is for this purpose valuable; the comments on the further story in Germany are injudicious.

⁵ Jean Chapelain speaks of "l'épique romanesque, genre de poésie sans art" in 1667. In 1669 he contrasts "poésie romanesque" and "poésie héroïque." René Rapin refers to "poésie romanesque du Pulci, du Boiardo, et de l'Arioste" in 1673. Thomas Rymer translates this as "Romantick Poetry of Pulci, Boiardo, and Ariosto" a year later. Baldensperger, *loc. cit.*, pp. 22, 24, 26.

⁶ For the antecedents of Warton's and Hurd's arguments, see Odell Shepard's review of Clarissa Rinaker's *Thomas Warton* in *JEGP* XVI (1917), 153, and Victor M. Hamm, "A Seventeenth Century Source for Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*," *PMLA*, LII (1937), 820.

other genres. The dichotomy implied has obvious analogues in other contrasts common in the eighteenth century: between the ancients and moderns, between artificial and popular poetry, the "natural" poetry of Shakespeare unconfined by rules and French classical tragedy. A definite juxtaposition of "Gothic" and "classical" occurs in Hurd and Warton. Hurd speaks of Tasso as "trimming between the Gothic and the Classic," and of the *Faerie Queene* as a "Gothic, not a classical poem." Warton calls Dante's *Divine Comedy* a "wonderful compound of classical and romantic fancy."⁷ Here the two famous words meet, possibly for the first time, but Warton probably meant little more than that Dante used both classical mythology and chivalric *motifs*.

This use of the term "romantic" penetrated into Germany. In 1766, Gerstenberg reviewed Warton's *Observations on the Fairy Queen*, considering them far too neoclassical, and Herder used the learning, information, and terminology of Warton and his English contemporaries. He distinguished sometimes between the "romantic" (chivalric) and the "Gothic" (Nordic) taste, but mostly the words "Gothic" and "romantic" were used by him interchangeably. He could say that from the mixture of the Christian religion and chivalry "wird der italienische, geistliche, fromme, romantische Geschmack geboren."⁸ This usage then penetrated into the first handbooks of general history of literature: into Eichhorn's *Literär-geschichte* (1799) and into the first volumes, devoted to Italian and Spanish literature, of Friedrich Bouterwek's monumental *Geschichte der Poesie und Beredsamkeit seit dem Ende des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts* (1801-05). There the term "romantisch" is used in all combinations: style, manners, characters, poetry are called "romantisch." Sometimes Bouterwek uses the term "altromantisch" to refer to the Middle Ages, and "neuromantisch" to refer to what we would call the Renaissance. This usage is substantially identical with Warton's except that its realm has been expanded more and more: not only mediæval literature and Ariosto and Tasso but also Shakespeare, Cervantes and Calderón are called "romantic." It simply means all poetry written in a tradition differing from that descended from classical antiquity. This broad historical conception was later combined with a new meaning: the typological, which is based on an elaboration of the contrast between "classical" and "romantic" and is due to the Schlegels. Goethe, in a conversation with Eckermann in 1830, said that Schiller invented the distinction "naïve and sentimental" and that the Schlegels merely renamed it "classical and romantic."⁹ At that time Goethe had

⁷ Examples from L. P. Smith, cited in note 4. Warton's *History of English Poetry*, III (London, 1781), 241, on Dante.

⁸ Herder's *Werke*, ed. Bernhard Suphan, XXXII, 29. Other examples in Ullmann-Gotthard.

⁹ Goethe to Eckermann, March 21, 1830.

become very antagonistic to recent literary developments in France and Germany and had even formulated the contrast: "Klassisch ist das Gesunde, romantisch das Kranke."¹⁰ He disliked the Schlegels for personal and ideological reasons. But his pronouncement is certainly not accurate history. Clearly Schiller's *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* was a statement of a typology of styles which did influence Friedrich Schlegel's turn towards modernism from his earlier Hellenism.¹¹ But Schiller's contrast is not identical with that of the Schlegels, as is obvious from the mere fact that Shakespeare is "naiv" in Schiller and "romantische" in Schlegel.

Much attention has, comprehensibly, been paid to the exact usage of these terms by the Schlegels.¹² But, if we look at the history of the word "romantic" from a wide European perspective, many of these uses must be considered purely idiosyncratic, since they had no influence on the further history of the term and did not even determine the most influential statement formulated by August Wilhelm Schlegel himself in the *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* (1809-11), which has rightly been called the "Message of German Romanticism to Europe."¹³ The terms "Romantik" and "Romantiker" as nouns were apparently inventions of Novalis, in 1798-99. But, with Novalis, "Romantiker" is a writer of romances and fairy tales of his own peculiar type, "Romantik" is a synonym of "Romankunst" in this sense.¹⁴ Also the famous fragment, No. 116, of the *Athenaeum* (1798) by Friedrich Schlegel, which defines "romantic poetry" as "progressive Universalpoesie" connects it with the idea of such a romantic novel. In the later "Gespräch über die Poesie" (1800), however, the term assumed again its concrete historical meaning: Shakespeare is characterized as laying the foundation of romantic drama and the romantic is found also in Cervantes, in Italian poetry, "in the age of chivalry, love and fairy tales, whence the thing and the word are derived." Friedrich Schlegel, at this time, does not consider his own age romantic, since he singles out the novels of Jean Paul as the "only romantic product of an unromantic age." He uses the term also

¹⁰ Goethe, *Werke*, Weimarer Ausgabe, I, 42 (2), p. 246.

¹¹ The best analysis is in A. O. Lovejoy, "Schiller and the Genesis of German Romanticism," *MLN*, XXXV (1920), 1-10, 136-146; reprinted in *Essays in the History of Ideas* (Baltimore, 1948), pp. 207-227.

¹² See A. O. Lovejoy, "The Meaning of 'Romanticism' in Early German Romanticism," *MLN*, XXXI (1916), 385-396 and XXXII (1917), 65-77; reprinted, *op. cit.* pp. 183-206.

¹³ Josef Körner, *Die Botschaft der deutschen Romantik an Europa* (Augsburg, 1929), a sketch of the reception of A. W. Schlegel's lectures outside of Germany.

¹⁴ Cf. "Der Romantiker studiert das Leben wie der Maler, Musiker und Mechaniker Farben, Ton und Kraft." *Schriften*, ed. Samuel-Kluckhohn, III, 263; "Romantik," III, 74-75, 88. These passages date from 1798-99, but only the first saw the light in the 1802 edition of Novalis' *Schriften*, ed. F. Schlegel and L. Tieck, II, 311.

quite vaguely and extravagantly as an element of all poetry and claims that all poetry must be romantic.¹⁵

But the descriptions and pronouncements which were influential, both in Germany and abroad, were those of the older brother, August Wilhelm Schlegel. In the lectures on aesthetics, given at Jena in 1798, the contrast of classical and romantic is not yet drawn explicitly. But it is implied in the lengthy discussion of modern genres, which include the romantic novel culminating in the "perfect masterwork of higher romantic art," *Don Quixote*, the romantic drama of Shakespeare, Calderón, and Goethe, and the romantic folk poetry of the Spanish romances and Scottish ballads.¹⁶

In the Berlin lectures, given from 1801 to 1804, though not published until 1884,¹⁷ Schlegel formulated the contrast, classical and romantic, as that between the poetry of antiquity and modern poetry, associating **romantic with the progressive and Christian**. He sketched a history of romantic literature which starts with a discussion of the mythology of the Middle Ages and closes with a review of the Italian poetry of what we would today call the Renaissance. Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio are described as the founders of modern romantic literature, though Schlegel, of course, knew that they admired antiquity. But he argued that their form and expression were totally unclassical. They did not dream of preserving the forms of antiquity in structure and composition. "Romantic" includes the German heroic poems such as the *Nibelungen*, the cycle of Arthur, the Charlemagne romances, and Spanish literature from *Cid* to *Don Quixote*. The lectures were well attended and from them these conceptions penetrated into print in the writings of other men than the Schlegels. Schlegel printed parts in his *Spanisches Theater* (1803). In the unpublished lectures of Schelling on *Philosophie der Kunst* (1802-03),¹⁸ in Jean Paul's *Vorschule der Aesthetik* (1804), and in Friedrich Ast's *System der Kunstlehre* (1805)¹⁹ we find the contrast elaborated. But the most important formulation was in the *Lectures* of A. W. Schlegel delivered at Vienna in 1808-09 and published in 1809-11. There romantic-classical is associated with the antithesis of organic-mechanical and plastic-picturesque. There clearly the literature

¹⁵ Reprinted in Friedrich Schlegel's *Jugendschriften*, ed. J. Minor, II, 220-221, 365, 372.

¹⁶ *Vorlesungen über philosophische Kunstlehre* (Leipzig, 1911), pp. 214, 217, 221.

¹⁷ *Vorlesungen über schöne Literatur und Kunst*, 3 vols., ed. J. Minor, (Heilbronn, 1884); see especially I, 22.

¹⁸ Printed only in *Sämmtliche Werke*, Erste Abtheilung, vol. V (Stuttgart, 1859). Schelling had read the MS of Schlegel's Berlin lectures.

¹⁹ Ast had attended A. W. Schlegel's lectures at Jena in 1798. His very imperfect transcript was published as *Vorlesungen über philosophische Kunstlehre*, ed. A. Wünsche (Leipzig, 1911).

of antiquity and that of neoclassicism (mainly French) is contrasted with the romantic drama of Shakespeare and Calderón, the poetry of perfection with the poetry of infinite desire.

It is easy to see how this typological and historical usage could pass into the designation of the contemporary movement, since the Schlegels were obviously strongly anticlassicist at that time and were appealing to the ancestry and models of the literature they had designated as romantic. But the process was surprisingly slow and hesitant. Jean Paul speaks of himself as "Biograph von Romantikern" in 1803, but seems only to refer to figures in his novels. In 1804 he refers to "Tieck und andere Romantiker," meaning writers of fairy tales. But the designation of contemporary literature as romantic was apparently due only to the enemies of the Heidelberg group which today we are accustomed to call the Second Romantic School. J. H. Voss attacked them for their reactionary Catholic views in 1808 and published a parodistic *Klingelklingelalmanach* with the subtitle: *Ein Taschenbuch für vollendete Romantiker und angehende Mystiker*. The *Zeitschrift für Einsiedler*, the organ of Arnim and Brentano, adopted the term with alacrity. In the *Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Kunst* (1808), the merit of "our Romantiker" seems to be praised for the first time. The first historical account of "die neue literarische Partei der sogenannten Romantiker" can be found only in the eleventh volume (1819) of Bouterwek's monumental *Geschichte*, where the Jena group and Brentano are discussed together. Heine's much later *Romantische Schule* (1833) included Fouqué, Uhland, Werner, and E. T. A. Hoffmann. Rudolf Haym's standard work, *Die romantische Schule* (1870) is limited to the first Jena group: the Schlegels, Novalis, and Tieck.²⁰ Thus, in German literary history, the original broad historical meaning of the term has been abandoned and "Romanistik" is used for a group of writers who did not call themselves "Romantiker."

The broad meaning of the term as used by August Wilhelm Schlegel, however, spread abroad from Germany in all directions. The northern countries seem to have been the first to adopt the terms: Jens Baggesen, as early as 1804, wrote (or began to write) a parody of *Faust* in German, of which the subtitle runs *Die romantische Welt oder Romanien im Tollhaus*.²¹ Baggesen was, at least formally, the editor of the *Klingelklingelalmanach*. Adam Öhlenschläger brought conceptions of German romanticism to Denmark in the first decade of the nineteenth century. In Sweden the group around the periodical *Phosphoros* seems to have

²⁰ See Ullmann-Gothard, pp. 70, etc.

²¹ Apparently published only in Jens Baggesen's *Poetische Werke in deutscher Sprache*, vol. III (Leipzig, 1836). A statement on date of composition is given there.

discussed the terms first. In 1810, a translation of part of Ast's *Aesthetik* was published and was extensively reviewed in *Phosphoros* with references to Schlegel, Novalis, and Wackenroder.²² In Holland we find the contrast between classical poetry and romantic poetry elaborated by N. G. Van Kampen in 1823.²³

In the Latin world, and in England as well as in America, the intermediary role of Madame de Staël was decisive. For France it can be shown, however, that she was anticipated by others, though far less effectively. Warton's usage of the term was apparently rare in France, though it occurs in Chateaubriand's *Essai sur les révolutions* (1797), a book written in England, where the word is coupled with "Gothique" and "tudesque," and spelled in the English way.²⁴ But with the exception of such small traces, the word is not used in a literary context until the German influence was felt directly. It occurs in a letter by Charles Villers, a French emigrant in Germany and first expounder of Kant, published in the *Magasin Encyclopédique* in 1810. Dante and Shakespeare are spoken of as "sustaining *La Romantique*" and the new spiritual sect in Germany is praised because it favors "*La Romantique*."²⁵ Villers' article was hardly noticed: a translation of Bouterwek's *Geschichte der spanischen Literatur* by Phillipe-Albert Stapfer, in 1812, also elicited no interest, though it was reviewed by the young Guizot. The decisive year was 1813: then Simonde de Sismondi's *De la littérature du midi de l'Europe* was published in May and June. In October Madame de Staël's *De l'Allemagne* was finally published in London, though it had been ready for print in 1810. In December 1813, A. W. Schlegel's *Cours de littérature dramatique* appeared in a translation by Madame Necker de Saussure, a cousin of Madame de Staël. Most importantly, *De l'Allemagne* was reprinted in Paris in May 1814. All these works, it need hardly be shown, radiate from one center, Coppet, and Sismondi, Bouterwek, and Madame de Staël are, as far as the concept of "romantic" is concerned, definitely dependent on Schlegel.

There is no need to rehearse the story of A. W. Schlegel's associations with Madame de Staël. The exposition of classical-romantic in chapter XI of *De l'Allemagne*, including its parallel of classical and sculptural, romantic and picturesque, the contrast between Greek drama of

²² *Phosphorus* (Upsala, 1810), pp. 116, 172-173.

²³ "Verhandeling over de vraag: welk is het onderscheidend verschil tusschen de klassische poezy der Ouden en de dus genoemde Romantische poezy der nieuwere?" *Werken der Hollandsche Maatschappij van Fraaije Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, VI (Leyden, 1823), 181-382.

²⁴ See Baldensperger, *loc. cit.*, p. 90.

²⁵ Reprinted in Edmond Egli-Pierre Martino, *Le Débat romantique en France*, I (Paris, 1933), 26-30. A continuation of this excellent collection, which goes only to 1816, is much to be desired.

event and modern drama of character, the poetry of Fate versus the poetry of Providence, the poetry of perfection versus the poetry of progress, clearly derive from Schlegel. Sismondi disliked Schlegel personally and was shocked by many of his "reactionary" views. In details, he may have drawn much more from Bouterwek than from Schlegel, but his view that the Romance literatures are essentially romantic in spirit, and that French literature forms an exception among them, is definitely derived from Schlegel, as are his descriptions of the contrast between Spanish and Italian drama.²⁶

These three books, Sismondi's, Madame de Staël's, and Schlegel's, were reviewed and discussed very heatedly in France. M. Edmond Eggli has collected a whole volume of almost 500 pages of these polemics, covering only the years 1813-16.²⁷ The reaction was fairly mild to the scholarly Sismondi, violent to the foreign Schlegel, and mixed and frequently baffled to Madame de Staël. In all of these polemics, the enemies are called *Les romantiques*, but it is not clear what recent literature is referred to except these three books. When Benjamin Constant published his novel *Adolphe* (1816), he was attacked as strengthening "*le genre romantique*." The melodrama also was called contemptuously by this name and German drama identified with it.²⁸

But up to 1816 there was no Frenchman who called himself a romantic nor was the term "romantisme" known in France. Its history is still somewhat obscure: curiously enough, "Romantismus" is used as a synonym of bad rhyming and empty lyricism in a letter written by Clemens Brentano to Achim von Arnim in 1803,²⁹ but so far as I know this form had no future in Germany. In 1804 Senancour refers to "romantisme des sites alpestres,"³⁰ using it thus as a noun corresponding to the use of

²⁶ Best accounts of these relationships are Comtesse Jean de Pange, *Auguste-Guillaume Schlegel et Madame de Staël* (Paris, 1938), and Jean-R. de Salis, *Sismondi, 1773-1842* (Paris, 1932).

²⁷ See note 25.

²⁸ The definition of "Romantique" by E. Jouy in 1816, quoted by Eggli, *op. cit.*, p. 492, sums up the contemporary view of the history very neatly: "*Romantique*: terme de jargon sentimental, dont quelques écrivains se sont servis pour caractériser une nouvelle école de littérature sous la direction du professeur Schlegel. La première condition qu'on y exige des élèves, c'est de reconnaître que nos Molière, nos Racine, nos Voltaire, sont de petits génies empêtrés dans les règles, qui n'ont pu s'élever à la hauteur du beau idéal, dont la recherche est l'objet du genre romantique. Ce mot envahisseur n'a d'abord été admis qu'à la suite et dans le sens du mot pittoresque, dont on aurait peut-être dû se contenter; mais il a passé tout à coup du domaine descriptif, qui lui était assigné, dans les espaces de l'imagination."

²⁹ "Es ist aber auch jetzt ein solch Gesinge und ein solcher Romantismus eingerissen, dass man sich schämt auch mit beizutragen." Reinhold Steig, *Achim von Arnim und die ihm nahe standen*, I (Stuttgart, 1894), 102. Letter, dated Frankfurt, Oct. 12, 1803. This item is not mentioned in the very full collections of Ullmann-Gothard or by any other student of the history of the term.

³⁰ *Obermann*, Lettre LXXXVII. Quoted by Eggli, p. 11.

"romantic" as "picturesque." But, in literary contexts, it does not seem to occur before 1816 and then it is used vaguely and jocularly. There is a letter in the *Constitutionnel*, supposedly written by a man residing near the Swiss frontier, within sight of Madame de Staël's castle, who complains of his wife's enthusiasm for the "romantic" and tells of a poet who cultivates "le genre tudesque" and has read to them "des morceaux pleins de romantisme, les purs mystères du baiser, la sympathie primitive et l'ondoyante mélancolie des cloches."³¹ Shortly afterwards, Stendhal, then at Milan, who had read Schlegel's lectures immediately after the publication of the French translation, called Schlegel in letters a "petit pédant sec" and "ridicule" but complained that, in France, they attack Schlegel and think that they have defeated "le Romantisme."³² Stendhal seems to have been the first Frenchman who called himself a romantic: "Je suis un romantique furieux, c'est-à-dire, je suis pour Shakespeare contre Racine et pour Lord Byron, contre Boileau."³³

But that was in 1818 and Stendhal was then voicing adherence to the Italian romantic movement. Thus Italy enters importantly into our story, since it was the first Latin country to have a romantic movement which was aware of its being romantic. There, of course, the controversy had penetrated also in the wake of Madame de Staël's *De l'Allemagne*, which was translated as early as 1814. H. Jay's violently antiromantic *Discours sur le genre romantique en littérature*, published in 1814, appeared immediately in an Italian translation.³⁴ The role of Madame de Staël's article on translations from German and English is well known. It elicited Lodovico di Breme's defense, who refers, however, to the whole dispute as a French affair, and obviously thinks of "romantic" in terms which would have been comprehensible to Herder or even Warton. He quotes Gravina's arguments in favor of the composition of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and sees that the same criteria apply to "Romantici settentrionali, Shakespeare e Schiller," in tragedy.³⁵ Giovanni Berchet's *Lettera semiseria di Grisostomo*, with its translations from Bürger's ballads, is usually considered the manifesto of the Italian romantic movement; but Berchet does not use the noun nor does he speak of an Italian romantic movement. Tasso is one of the poets called "ro-

³¹ July 19, 1816. Reprinted in Eggli, pp. 472-473.

³² Letters to Louis Crozet, Sept. 28, Oct. 1, and Oct. 20, 1816, in *Correspondance*, ed. Divan (Paris, 1934), IV, 371, 389, and V, 14-15. Marginalia to Schlegel in *Mélanges intimes et marginalia*, ed. Divan (Paris, 1936), I, 311-326. Most are malicious and even angry.

³³ Letter to Baron de Mereste, Apr. 14, 1818, *ibid.* p. 137.

³⁴ Originally in *Le Spectateur*, no. XXIV (1814), III, 145; reprinted in Eggli, *op. cit.*, pp. 243-256. In Italian in *Lo Spettatore*, no. 24, III, 145, apparently a parallel publication.

³⁵ "Intorno all'ingiustizia di alcuni giudizi letterari italiani" (1816), in *Polemiche*, ed. Carlo Calcaterra (Torino, 1923), pp. 36-38.

mantici," and the famous contrast between classical poetry and romantic poetry as that between the poetry of the dead and the living is suggested.³⁶ The peculiarly "contemporaneous," political character of the Italian romantic movement is here anticipated. In 1817 Schlegel's *Lectures* were translated by Giovanni Gherardini, but the great outburst of pamphlets—the whole battle—came only in 1818, when the term "romanticismo" is used first by antiromantic pamphleteers, Francesco Pezzi, Camillo Piciarelli, and Conte Falletti di Barolo, who wrote *Della Romanticomachia*, and there draws the distinction between "genere romantico" and "il romanticismo."³⁷ Berchet, in his ironical comments, professes not to understand the distinction.³⁸ Ermes Visconti, in his formal article on the term, uses shortly afterwards only "romantismo."³⁹ But "romanticismo" seems to have been well established by 1819, when D. M. Dalla used it in the title of his translation of the thirtieth chapter of Sismondi's *Literature of the South*, as *Vera Definizione del Romanticismo*, though the French original shows no trace of the term. Stendhal, who had used the term "romantisme" and continued to use it, was now temporarily converted to "romanticisme," obviously suggested by the Italian term. Stendhal wrote two small papers "Qu'est-ce que le romantisme?" and "Du romantisme dans les beaux arts" which, however, remained in manuscript.⁴⁰ The first paper of *Racine et Shakespeare*, published in the *Paris Monthly Review* (1882), uses "romanticisme" for the first time in French.

But, in the meantime, "romantisme" seems to have become general in France. François Mignet used it in 1822, Villemain and Lacretelle in the following year.⁴¹ The spread and acceptance of the term was assured when Louis S. Auger, director of the French Academy, launched a *Discours sur le Romantisme*, condemning the new heresy in a solemn session of the Academy on April 24, 1824. In the second edition of *Racine et Shakespeare* (1825), Stendhal himself gave up his earlier form "romanticisme" in favor of the new "romantisme." We shall not try to re-

³⁶ In Giovanni Berchet, *Opere*, ed. E. Bellorini (Bari, 1912), II, 19, 20, 21.

³⁷ See *Discussioni e polemiche sul romanticismo* (1816-1826), ed. Egidio Bellorini (Bari, 1943), I, 252, 358-359, 363. Bellorini was unable to procure the pamphlet by Piciarelli. The first occurrence of the word is in an article by Pezzi on Byron's *Giaur* in *Gazzetta di Milano* (Jan. 1818).

³⁸ *Il Conciliatore*, no. 17 (Oct. 29, 1818), pp. 65-66.

³⁹ "Idee elementari sulla poesia romantica" in *Il Conciliatore*, no. 27 (Nov. 3, 1818), p. 105.

⁴⁰ These papers were published only in 1854 and 1922, respectively. See *Racine et Shakespeare*, ed. Divan (Paris, 1928), pp. 175, 267.

⁴¹ *Courrier français*, Oct. 19, 1822, quoted by P. Martino, *L'Époque romantique en France* (Paris, 1944), p. 27. Mignet says that Scott "a résolu selon moi la grande question du romantisme." Lacretelle, in *Annales de la littérature et des arts*, XIII (1823), 415, calls Schlegel "le Quintilien du romantisme"; quoted in C. M. Des Granges, *Le Romantisme et la Critique* (Paris, 1907), p. 207.

count the familiar story of the romantic "*cénacles*," the romantic periodicals of the twenties, all leading up to the Preface to *Cromwell* and the great battle of *Hernani*.⁴² Clearly, just as in Italy, a broadly typological and historical term, introduced by Madame de Staël, had become the battle cry of a group of writers who found it a convenient label to express their opposition to the ideals of neoclassicism.

In Spain the terms "classical" and "romantic" occurred in newspapers as early as 1818, once with a specific reference to Schlegel. But apparently an Italian exile, Luigi Monteggia, who came to Spain in 1821, was the first to write elaborately on "Romanticismo" in *Europeo* (1823), where shortly afterward López Soler analyzed the debate between "románticos y clasicistas." The group of Spanish writers who called themselves "Románticos" was, however, victorious only around 1838 and it soon disintegrated as a coherent "school."⁴³

Among Portuguese poets, Almeida Garrett seems to have been the first to refer to "nos românticos" in his poem, *Camões*, written in 1823 in Le Havre during his French exile.⁴⁴

The Slavic countries received the term in about the same time as the Romance. In Bohemia the adjective "romantický" in connection with a poem occurs as early as 1805, the noun "romantismus" in 1819, the noun "romantika," a formation from the German, in 1820, the noun "romantik" (meaning romanticist) only in 1835.⁴⁵ But there never was a formal romantic school.

In Poland, Casimir Brodzinski wrote a dissertation concerning classicism and romanticism in 1818. Mickiewicz wrote a long preface to his *Ballady i Romanse* (1822) in which he expounded the contrast of classical and romantic, referring to Schlegel, Bouterwek, and Eberhard, the author of one of the many German aesthetics of the time. The collection contains a poem, "Romantyczność," a ballad on the theme of *Lenore*.⁴⁶

In Russia, Pushkin spoke of his *Prisoner from the Caucasus* as a "romantic poem" in 1821, and Prince Vyazemsky, reviewing the poem during the next war, was apparently the first to discuss the contrast

⁴² The most useful account is René Bray, *Chronologie du romantisme* (Paris, 1932).

⁴³ E. Allison Peers, "The Term Romanticism in Spain," *Revue Hispanique*, LXXXI (1933), 411-418. Monteggia's article is reprinted in *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, VIII (1931), 144-149. For the later history, see E. Allison Peers, *A History of the Romantic Movement in Spain*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1940), and Guillermo Díaz-Plaja, *Introducción al estudio del romanticismo español* (Madrid, 1942).

⁴⁴ Theophilo Braga, *Historia do Romantismo em Portugal* (Lisbon, 1880), p. 175.

⁴⁵ These dates come from the very complete collections of the Dictionary of the Czech Academy. I owe this information to the kindness of Professor Antonín Grund of Masaryk University at Brno, Czechoslovakia.

⁴⁶ *Poezje*, ed. J. Kallenbach (Kraków, 1930), pp. 45, 51.

between the new romantic poetry and the poetry still adhering to the rules.^{46a}

We have left the English story, the most unusual development, for the conclusion. After Warton there had begun in England an extensive study of mediæval romances and of "romantic fiction." But there is no instance of a juxtaposition of "classical" and "romantic," nor any awareness that the new literature inaugurated by the *Lyrical Ballads* could be called romantic. Scott, in his edition of *Sir Tristram*, calls his text, "the first classical English romance."⁴⁷ An essay by John Forster, "On the Application of the Epithet Romantic,"⁴⁸ is merely a commonplace discussion of the relation between imagination and judgment with no hint of a literary application except to chivalrous romances.

The distinction of classical-romantic occurs for the first time in Coleridge's lectures, given in 1811, and is there clearly derived from Schlegel, since the distinction is associated with that of organic and mechanical, painterly and sculpturesque, in close verbal adherence to Schlegel's phrasing.⁴⁹ But these lectures were not published at that time, and thus the distinction was popularized in England only through Madame de Staël, who made Schlegel and Sismondi known in England. *De l'Allemagne*, first published in London, appeared almost simultaneously in an English translation. Two reviews, by Sir James Mackintosh and William Taylor of Norwich, reproduce the distinction between classical and romantic, and Taylor mentions Schlegel and knows of Madame de Staël's indebtedness to him.⁵⁰ Schlegel was in the company of Madame de Staël in England in 1814. The French translation of the *Lectures* was very favorably reviewed in the *Quarterly Review*,⁵¹ and in 1815 John Black, an Edinburgh journalist, published his English translation. This was also very well received. Some reviews reproduce

^{46a} N. V. Bogoslovski, ed., *Pushkin o literature* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1934), pp. 15, 35, 41, etc. Vyazemsky's review in *Synotechestva* (1822) was reprinted in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* (Petersburg, 1878), I, 73-78.

⁴⁷ Edinburgh, 1804, p. xlvii.

⁴⁸ *Essays in a Series of Letters* (London, 1805).

⁴⁹ Coleridge's *Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. Thomas M. Raysor (Cambridge, Mass., 1930), I, 196-198, II, 265; and *Miscellaneous Criticism*, ed. T. M. Raysor (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), pp. 7, 148. Coleridge himself says that he received a copy of Schlegel's *Lectures* on Dec. 12, 1811; see S. T. Coleridge's *Unpublished Letters*, ed. Earl L. Griggs (London, 1932), II, 61-67. A MS by Henry Crabb Robinson, written about 1803, "Kant's Analysis of Beauty," now in the Williams Library, London, contains the distinction of classical-romantic; see my *Immanuel Kant in England* (Princeton, 1931), p. 158.

⁵⁰ *Edinburgh Review*, XXII (Oct. 1813), 198-238; *Monthly Review*, LXXXII (1813), 421-426, LXXXIII (1814), 63-68, 352-365, especially 364.

⁵¹ *Quarterly Review*, XX (Jan. (1814), 355-409. I do not know the author: he is not given in the list of contributors in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1844, or in W. Graham's *Tory Criticism in the Quarterly Review* (New York, 1921).

Schlegel's distinction quite extensively: for instance, Hazlitt's in the *Edinburgh Review*.⁵² Schlegel's distinctions and views on many aspects of Shakespeare were used and quoted by Hazlitt, by Nathan Drake in his *Shakespeare* (1817), by Scott in his *Essay on Drama* (1819), and in *Ollier's Literary Magazine* (1820), which contains a translation of Schlegel's old essay on *Romeo and Juliet*. The use to which Coleridge put Schlegel in his lectures given after the publication of the English translation, needs no repetition.

The usual impression that the classical-romantic distinction was little known in England seems not quite correct.⁵³ It is discussed in Thomas Campbell's *Essay on Poetry* (1819), though Campbell finds Schlegel's defense of Shakespeare's irregularities on "romantic principles" "too romantic for his conception." In Sir Edgerton Brydges' *Gnomica* and *Sylvan Wanderer*, there is striking praise of romantic mediæval poetry and its derivations in Tasso and Ariosto in contrast to the classical abstract poetry of the eighteenth century.⁵⁴ We find only a few practical uses of these terms at that time: Samuel Singer, in his introduction to Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, says that "Musæus is more classical, Hunt more romantic." He defends Marlowe's extravagancies which might excite the ridicule of French critics: "but here in England their reign is over and thanks to the Germans, with the Schlegels at their head, a truer philosophical method of judging is beginning to obtain among us."⁵⁵ De Quincey in 1835 attempted a more original elaboration of the dichotomy by stressing the role of Christianity and the difference in the attitudes toward death; but even these ideas are all derived from the Germans.⁵⁶

But none of the English poets, we must stress, recognized himself as a romanticist or recognized the relevance of the debate to his own time and country. Neither Coleridge nor Hazlitt, who used Schlegel's *Lectures*, made such an application. Byron definitely rejects it. Though he knew (and disliked) Schlegel personally, had read *De l'Allemagne*, and even tried to read Friedrich Schlegel's *Lectures*, he considered the distinction "romantic-classical" as merely a Continental debate. In a planned dedication of *Marino Falieri* to Goethe he refers to "the great struggle, in Germany, as well as in Italy, about what they call 'classical' and 'romantic'—terms which were not subjects of classification in England, at least when I left it four or five years ago." Byron contemptu-

⁵² Feb. 1816. Reprinted in *Complete Works*, ed. Howe, XVI, 57-99.

⁵³ Further examples in Herbert Weisinger, "English Treatment of the Classical-Romantic Problem," in *Modern Language Quarterly*, VII (1946), 477-488.

⁵⁴ Issues dated Apr. 20, 1819, and Oct. 23, 1818.

⁵⁵ London, 1821 p. lviii.

⁵⁶ Cf. a full discussion in my "De Quincey's Status in the History of Ideas," *Philological Quarterly*, XXIII (1944), 248-272.

ously says of the enemies of Pope in the Bowles-Byron controversy, "nobody thought them worth making a sect of." "Perhaps there may be something of the kind sprung up latterly, but I have not heard of much about it, and it would be such bad taste that I shall be very sorry to believe it." Still, during the next year, Byron used the concepts in what seems to be a plea for the relativity of poetic taste. He argues that there are no invariable principles of poetry, that reputations are bound to fluctuate. "This does not depend upon the merits [of the poets] but upon the ordinary vicissitudes of human opinion. Schlegel and Mme de Staël have endeavoured also to reduce poetry to two systems, classical and romantic. The effect is only beginning." But there is no consciousness in Byron that he belongs to the romantics. An Austrian police spy knew better. He reported that Byron belongs to the *Romantici* and "has written and continues to write poetry of this new school."⁵⁷

The actual application of the term "romantic" to English literature of the early nineteenth century is much later. Also the terms, "a romantic," "a romanticist," "romanticism," are very late in English and occur first in reports or notes on Continental phenomena. An article in English by Stendhal, in 1823, reviews his own book, *Racine et Shakespeare*, singling out the section on "Romanticism" for special praise.⁵⁸ Carlyle entered in his notebook, in 1827, that "Grossi is a romantic"—translating from the *Revue encyclopédique*. In his "State of German Literature" (1827) he speaks of the German "Romanticists." "Romanticism" occurs in his article on Schiller (1831), where he says complacently that "we are troubled with no controversies on romanticism and classicism—the Bowles controversy having long since evaporated without result."⁵⁹ There are, it seems, no instances of the application of these terms by Carlyle to the history of English literature. As late a book as Mrs. Oliphant's *Literary History of England between the End of the Eighteenth and the Beginning of the Nineteenth Centuries* (1882) shows no trace of the terms and their derivatives. She speaks merely of the Lake School, the Satanic School, and the Cockney Group. W. Bagehot used "romantic" with "classical" in a way which shows that they were not associated

⁵⁷ There is a copy of *De l'Allemagne*, with a long note by Byron, in the Harvard Library. Madame de Staël sent Byron Schlegel's *Lectures*; see Byron's *Letters and Journals*, ed. Lord Prothero, II, 343. On Friedrich Schlegel's *Lectures*, cf. *Letters*, V, 191-193. The dedication of *Marino Falieri*, dated Oct. 17, 1820, *ibid.*, V, 100-104. The letter to Murray on Bowles, Feb. 7, 1821, *ibid.*, V, 553-554n. The police spy, Sept. 10, 1819, quoted *ibid.*, IV, 462.

⁵⁸ In the *New Monthly Magazine*, III (1823), 522-528, signed Y. I. See Doris Gunnell, *Stendhal et l'Angleterre* (Paris, 1909), pp. 162-163.

⁵⁹ *Two Notebooks*, ed. C. E. Norton (New York, 1898), p. 111. *Miscellanies* (London, 1890), I, 45 and III, 71. Cf. also II, 276. The *NED* gives much later examples of first occurrences: for "a romantic," 1882; for "romanticist," 1830; for "romanticism," 1844.

in his mind with a definite, established period of English literature: he speaks of Shelley's "classical imagination" (1856) and in 1864 contrasts the "classical Wordsworth" with the "romantic" Tennyson and the "grotesque" Browning.⁶⁰

But this does not seem to be the entire story. Among the handbooks of English literature, Thomas Shaw's *Outlines of English Literature* (1849) is the earliest exception. He speaks of Scott as the "first stage in literature towards romanticism" and calls Byron the "greatest of romanticists," but separates Wordsworth for his "metaphysical quietism."⁶¹ It may be significant that Shaw compiled his handbook originally for his classes at the Lyceum in St. Petersburg, where by that time, as everywhere on the Continent, the terms were established and expected.

In David Macbeth Moir's *Sketches of the Poetical Literature of the Past Half Century* (1852), Matthew Gregory Lewis is set down as the leader of the "purely romantic school" of which Scott, Coleridge, Southey, and Hogg are listed as disciples, while Wordsworth is treated independently. Scott is treated under the heading "The Revival of the Romantic School," though the term is not used in the text of the chapter.⁶² W. Rushton's *Afternoon Lectures on English Literature* (1863) discusses the "Classical and Romantic School of English Literature as represented by Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Scott and Wordsworth."⁶³ The further spread and establishment of the term for English literature of the early nineteenth century is probably due to Alois Brandl's *Coleridge und die romantische Schule in England*, translated by Lady Eastlake (1887), and to the vogue of Pater's discussion of "Romanticism" in *Appreciations* (1889); it is finally established in books such as those of W. L. Phelps and Henry A. Beers.

If we survey the evidence assembled we can hardly escape several conclusions which seem important for our argument. The self-designation of writers and poets as "romantic" varies in the different countries considerably; many examples are late and of short duration. If we take self-designation as the basic criterion for modern use, there would be no romantic movement in Germany before 1808, none in France before 1818 or (since the 1818 example was an isolated instance, Stendhal) before 1824, and none at all in England. If we take the use of the word "romantic" for any kind of literature (at first mediæval romances, Tasso, and Ariosto) as our criterion, we are thrown back to 1669 in France, 1673 in England, 1698 in Germany. If we insist on taking the contrast between the terms "classical and romantic" as decisive, we arrive at the

⁶⁰ *Literary Studies*, ed. R. H. Hutton (London, 1905), I, 231 and II, 341.

⁶¹ *A Complete Manual* (New York, 1867), pp. 290ff, 316, 341, 348, 415.

⁶² Second ed., Edinburgh, 1852; six lectures delivered in 1850-51; cf. pp. 17, 117, 213.

⁶³ London, 1863. The lectures were given in Dublin.

dates 1801 for Germany, 1810 for France, 1811 for England, 1816 for Italy, etc. If we think that a realization of the quality of romanticism is particularly important, we would find the term "Romantik" in Germany in 1802, "Romantisme" in France in 1816, "Romanticismo" in Italy in 1818, and "Romanticism" in England in 1823. Surely, all these facts (even though the dates may be corrected) point to the conclusion that the history of the term and its introduction cannot regulate the usage of the modern historian, since he would be forced to recognize milestones in his history which are not justified by the actual state of the literatures in question. The great changes happened, independently of the introduction of these terms either before or after them and only rarely approximately at the same time.

On the other hand, the usual conclusion drawn from examinations of the history of the words, that they are used in contradictory senses, seems to me greatly exaggerated. One must grant that many German aestheticians juggle the terms in extravagant and personal ways, nor can one deny that the emphasis on different aspects of their meaning shifts from writer to writer and sometimes from nation to nation. But, on the whole, there was really no misunderstanding about the meaning of "romanticism" as a new designation for poetry, opposed to the poetry of neoclassicism, and drawing its inspiration and models from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The term is understood in this sense all over Europe, and everywhere we find references to August Wilhelm Schlegel or Madame de Staël and their particular formulas opposing "classical" and "romantic."

The fact that the convenient terms were introduced sometimes much later than the time when actual repudiation of the neoclassical tradition was accomplished does not, of course, prove that the changes were not noticed at that time.

The mere use of the terms "romantic" and "romanticism" must not be overrated. English writers early had a clear consciousness that there was a movement which rejected the critical concepts and poetic practice of the eighteenth century, that it formed a unity, and had its parallels on the continent, especially in Germany. Without the term "romantic" we can tract, within a short period, the shift from the earlier conception of the history of English poetry as one of a uniform progress from Waller and Denham to Dryden and Pope, still accepted in Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, to Southey's opposite view in 1807, that the "time which elapsed from the days of Dryden to those of Pope is the dark age of English poetry." The reformation began with Thomson and the Wartons. The real turning point was Percy's *Reliques*, "the great literary epocha of the present reign."⁶⁴ Shortly afterwards, in Leigh Hunt's

⁶⁴ Introduction to *Specimens of the Later English Poets* (London, 1807), pp. xxix and xxxii.

Feast of the Poets (1814) we have the view established that Wordsworth is "capable of being at the head of a new and great age of poetry; and in point of fact, I do not deny that he is so already, as the greatest poet of the present."⁶⁵ In Wordsworth's own postscript to the 1815 edition of the *Poems*, the role of Percy's *Reliques* is again emphasized: "The poetry of the age has been absolutely redeemed by it."⁶⁶ In 1816, Lord Jeffrey acknowledged that the "wits of Queen Anne's time have been gradually brought down from the supremacy which they had enjoyed, without competition, for the best part of a century." He recognized that the "present revolution in literature" was due to the "French revolution—the genius of Burke—the impression of the new literature of Germany, evidently the original of our Lake School of poetry."⁶⁷ In Nathan Drake's book on *Shakespeare* (1817) the role of the revival of Elizabethan poetry is recognized. "Several of our bards," he says, "have in great degree reverted to the ancient school."⁶⁸ In Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Poets* (1818) a new age dominated by Wordsworth is described quite clearly, with its sources in the French revolution, in German literature, and its opposition to the mechanical conventions of the followers of Pope and the old French school of poetry. An article in *Blackwood's* sees the connection between the "great change in the poetical temper of the country" and the Elizabethan revival. "A nation must revert to the ancient spirit of its own. The living and creative spirit of literature is its nationality."⁶⁹ Scott uses Schlegel extensively and describes the general change as a "fresh turning up of the soil" due to the Germans and necessitated by the "wearing out" of the French models.⁷⁰ Carlyle in his introduction to selections from Ludwig Tieck draws the English-German parallel quite explicitly:

Neither can the change be said to have originated in Schiller and Goethe: for it is a change originating not in individuals, but in universal circumstances, and belongs not to Germany, but to Europe. Among ourselves, for instance, within the last thirty years, who has not lifted his voice with double vigour in praise of Shakespeare and Nature, and vituperation of French taste and French philosophy? Who has not heard of the glories of old English literature, the wealth of Queen Elizabeth's age: the penury of Queen Anne's and the inquiry whether Pope was a poet? A similar temper is breaking out in France itself, hermetically sealed as that country seemed to be against all foreign influence; and doubts are beginning to be entertained, and even expressed, about Corneille and the Three Unities. It seems sub-

⁶⁵ Page 83.

⁶⁶ Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, ed. Grosart, II, 118, 124.

⁶⁷ Review of Scott's edition of Swift, in *Edinburgh Review*, Sept. 1816; *Contributions to Edinburgh Review* (2nd ed., London, 1846), I, 158-160.

⁶⁸ London, 1817, p. 600.

⁶⁹ *Blackwood's Magazine* (1818), IV, 264-266.

⁷⁰ In "Essay on Drama," contributed to *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Supplement, vol. III, 1819; *Miscellaneous Prose Works* (Edinburgh, 1834), VI, 380.

stantially the same thing which has occurred in Germany . . . only that the revolution, which is there proceeding, and in France commencing, appears in Germany to be completed.⁷¹

All of this is broadly true and applicable even today and has been wrongly forgotten by modern sceptics.

Scott, in a retrospect, "Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballads" (1830), also stressed the role of Percy and the Germans in the revival.

As far back as 1788 a new species of literature began to be introduced into the country. Germany . . . was then for the first time heard of as the cradle of a style of poetry and literature much more analogous to that of Britain than either the French, Spanish or Italian schools.

Scott tells of a lecture of Henry Mackenzie where the audience learned that the "taste which dictated the German compositions was of a kind as nearly allied to the English as their language." Scott learned German from Dr. Willich, who later expounded Kant in English. But, according to Scott, M. G. Lewis was the first who attempted to introduce something like German taste into English composition.⁷²

Probably the most widely read of these pronouncements was T. B. Macaulay's account in his review of Moore's *Life of Byron*. There the period of 1750-80 is called the "most deplorable part of our literary history." The revival of Shakespeare, the ballads, Chatterton's forgeries, and Cowper are mentioned as the main agents of change. Byron and Scott are singled out as the great names. Most significantly, Macaulay realizes that

Byron, though always sneering at Mr. Wordsworth, was yet, though, perhaps unconsciously, the interpreter between Mr. Wordsworth and the multitude . . . Lord Byron founded what may be called an exoteric Lake School—what Mr. Wordsworth had said like a recluse, Lord Byron said like a man of the world.⁷³

Macaulay thus long before he knew a term for it, recognized the unity of the English romantic movement.

James Montgomery, in his *Lectures on General Literature* (1833), described the age since Cowper as the third era of modern literature. Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge are called the "three pioneers, if not the absolute founders, of the existing style of English literature."⁷⁴

The most boldly formulated definition of the new view is again in Southey, in the "Sketches of the Progress of English Poetry from

⁷¹ "German Romance," in *Miscellanies* (London, 1890), I, 246.

⁷² In new edition of *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1830), ed. T. Henderson (New York, 1931), pp. 535-562, especially pp. 549-550. On Willich, see my *Kant in England* (Princeton, 1931), pp. 11-15.

⁷³ *Edinburgh Review*, June 1831. Reprinted in *Critical and Historical Essays* (Everyman ed.), II, 634-635.

⁷⁴ Lectures given in 1830-31.

Chaucer to Cowper" (1833). There the "age from Dryden to Pope" is called "the worst age of English poetry: the age of Pope was the pinchbeck age of poetry." "If Pope closed the door against poetry, Cowper opened it."⁷⁵ The same view, though less sharply expressed, can be found with increasing frequency even in textbooks, such as Robert Chambers' *History of the English Language and Literature* (1836), in De Quincey's writings, and R. H. Horne's *New Spirit of the Age* (1884).

None of these publications use the term "romantic," but in all of them we hear that there is a new age of poetry which has a new style inimical to that of Pope. The emphasis and selections of examples vary, but in combination they say that the German influence, the revival of the ballads and the Elizabethans, and the French Revolution were the decisive influences which brought about the change. Thomson, Burns, Cowper, Gray, Collins, and Chatterton are honored as precursors, Percy and the Wartons as initiators. The trio, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, are recognized as the founders and, as time progressed, Byron, Shelley, and Keats are added in spite of the fact that this new group of poets denounced the older for political reasons. Clearly, such books as those of Phelps and Beers merely carry out, in a systematic fashion, the suggestions made by the contemporaries and even the actual protagonists of the new age of poetry.

This general scheme is, to my mind, still substantially valid. It seems an unwarranted nominalism to reject it completely and to speak, as Ronald S. Crane does, of "the fairy tales about neoclassicism and romanticism"⁷⁶ in the eighteenth century. Not much seems accomplished by George Sherburn when he avoids the term in an excellent summary of what is generally called the romantic tendencies of the late eighteenth century, since he is admittedly confronted with the same problems and facts.⁷⁷

One must grant, of course, that many details of the books of Phelps and Beers are mistaken and out of date. The new understanding of neoclassical theory and the new appreciation of eighteenth-century poetry, especially of Pope, have led to a reversal of the value judgments implied in the older conceptions. Romantic polemics give frequently a totally distorted picture of neoclassical theory, and some modern literary historians seem to have misunderstood the eighteenth-century meaning of such key terms as "Reason," "Nature," and "Imitation." Investiga-

⁷⁵ In Southey's ed. of *The Works of Cowper*, II, 109, 142.

⁷⁶ *Philological Quarterly*, XXII (1943), 143, in a review of an article by Curtis D. Bradford and Stuart Gerry Brown, "On Teaching the Age of Johnson" in *College English* III (1942), 650-659.

⁷⁷ In a *Literary History of England*, ed. A. C. Baugh (New York, 1948), p. 971n. The "Part" is called "The Disintegration of Classicism," the chapter "Accentuated Tendencies," terms which give away the argument against preromanticism.

tions have shown that the revival of Elizabethan, mediæval, and popular literature began much earlier than has been assumed. Objections against slavish imitation of the classics and strict adherence to the rules were commonplaces of English criticism, even in the seventeenth century. Many supposedly romantic ideas on the role of genius and imagination were perfectly acceptable to the main neoclassical critics. Much evidence has been accumulated to show that many of the precursors of romanticism—Thomson, the Wartons, Percy, Young, Hurd—shared the preconceptions of their age and held many basic neoclassical critical convictions, and cannot be called "revolutionaries" or "rebels."

We grant many of these criticisms and corrections of the older view. We may even side with the modern neoclassicists who deplore the dissolution of their creed and the extravagancies of the romantic movement. One should also grant that the hunt for "romantic" elements in the eighteenth century has become a rather tiresome game. A book such as Eric Partridge's *Eighteenth Century English Poetry* (1924) tried to identify "romantic" lines in Pope with great self-assurance. Partridge tells us that "nearly one-fifth of the total number of lines in *Eloisa to Abelard* are indisputably either markedly romantic in themselves or clearly romantic in tendency." He singles out lines in Dyer's *Fleece* as "romantic."⁷⁸ There are several German theses which break up an eighteenth-century critic or poet into his wicked pseudoclassical and his virtuous romantic halves.⁷⁹

Nobody has ever suggested that the precursors of romanticism were conscious of being precursors. But their anticipations of romantic views and devices are important, even if it can be shown that these pronouncements, taken in their total context, need to be interpreted differently and were innocuous from a neoclassical point of view. The fact that a later age could fasten on certain passages in Young or Hurd or Warton is relevant—not the intentions of Young, Hurd, or Warton. It is the right of a new age to look for its own ancestors and even to pull passages out of their context. One can prove, as Hoyt Trowbridge has done,⁸⁰ that Hurd's total theory was neoclassical; but, in the perspective of a new age, only a few passages from the *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* mattered—Hurd's saying that the *Faerie Queene* "should be read and criticised under the idea of a Gothic, not a classical poem" and his plea for the "pre-eminence of the Gothic manners and fictions as adapted to

⁷⁸ London, 1924, pp. 72, 172. Lines 209-213, 385-389 of Dyer's poem are called "romantic."

⁷⁹ E.g., J. E. Anwander, *Pseudoklassizistisches und Romantisches in Thomsons Seasons* (Leipzig, 1930); Sigyn Christiani, *Samuel Johnson als Kritiker im Lichte von Pseudo-Klassizismus und Romantik* (Leipzig, 1931).

⁸⁰ "Bishop Hurd: A Reinterpretation," *PMLA*, LVIII (1943), 450-465.

the end of poetry, above the classic."⁸¹ The argument against the very existence of romanticism in the eighteenth century is based on the prejudice that only the totality of a writer's works is the criterion of judgment, while in the many instances which are constantly being produced to show that individual romantic ideas can be traced to the seventeenth century or beyond, the opposite method is employed—an atomistic view which ignores the question of emphasis, place in a system, frequency of occurrence. Both methods have been manipulated interchangeably.

The best solution seems to say that the student of neoclassical literature is right in refusing to see every figure and idea merely in terms of the role it may have played in the preparation of romanticism. But this refusal should not amount to a denial of the problem of the preparation of a new age. One could also study the new age for its survivals of the neoclassical norms,⁸² a point of view which could prove illuminating, though it could hardly be considered of equal standing. Time flows in one direction and mankind for some reason (craze for novelty, dynamism, creativity?) is interested more in origins than in residues. If there were no preparations, anticipations, and undercurrents in the eighteenth century which could be described as preromantic, we would have to make the assumption that Wordsworth and Coleridge fell from heaven and that the neoclassical age was unperturbedly solid, unified, and coherent in a way no age has ever been before or since.

An important compromise has been propounded by Northrop Frye.⁸³ He argues that the second half of the eighteenth century is a "new age" which has "nothing to do with the Age of Reason. It is the age of Collins, Percy, Gray, Cowper, Smart, Chatterton, Burns, Ossian, the Wartons and Blake." "Its chief philosopher is Berkeley and its chief prose writer Sterne." "The age of Blake," he concludes, "has been rather unfairly treated by critics, who have tended to see in it nothing but a transition with all its poets either reacting against Pope or anticipating Wordsworth." Mr. Frye unfortunately ignores the fact that Hume rather than Berkeley dominated the philosophy of the age and that Dr. Johnson was then very much alive. Blake remained totally unknown in his time. In Thomas Warton, certainly, we have a recognition of classical standards and a tempered appreciation of Gothic picturesqueness and sublimity, a theory of a double standard of poetry which apparently was held by him without a feeling of contradiction.⁸⁴ Still, the contradic-

⁸¹ Ed. Edith Morley (Oxford, 1911), pp. 115 and 128.

⁸² Suggested by Louis Landa in *Philological Quarterly*, XXII (1943), 147. Cf. Pierre Moreau, *Le Classicisme des romantiques* (Paris, 1932).

⁸³ In *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton, 1947), especially p. 167.

⁸⁴ Cf. fuller discussion in my *Rise of English Literary History* (Chapel Hill, 1941), especially pp. 185-186.

tions are inherent in the whole position and it is hard to see what can be objected to calling it "preromantic." One can observe a process by which these scattered and underground tendencies strengthen and collect; some writers become "doubles," houses divided, and thus, seen from the perspective of a later time, can be called "preromantic." We can, it seems, go on speaking of "preromanticism" and romanticism, since there are periods of the dominance of a system of ideas and poetic practices which have their anticipations in the preceding decades. The terms "romantic" and "romanticism," though late by the dates of their introduction, were everywhere understood in approximately the same sense and are still useful as terms for the kind of literature produced after neoclassicism.

In the second half of this paper I shall attempt to show that this body of literature forms a unity if we apply a few simple criteria and that the same criteria are valid for all the three major romantic movements—English, French, and German.

(To be concluded)

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