

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

# GERMAN LITERATURE

*Frederic Will, Ph.D.*

## Contents

German Literature Overview

### MEDIEVAL

Overview

Poetry

    Epic (Nibelungenlied, Parzifal - Wolfram von Eschenbach)

    Lyric (Minnesingers, Meistersingers)

Essay – Theology (Meister Eckhart)

### 16<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

Overview

Essay - Theology (Luther, Erasmus)

### 17<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

Overview

Essay - Theology (Boehme)

Fiction (Grimmelshausen)

Poetry (Silesius)

### 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

Overview

Philosophy (Lessing, Herder)

Essay - Art Criticism (Winckelmann)

Poetry (Klopstock)

Drama (Goethe, Schiller)

### 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

Overview

Drama (Kleist, Grillparzer, Hebbel)

Fiction (Jean Paul, Hoffman, Novalis)

Poetry (Hoelderlin, Heine)

Philosophy (Fichte, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Friedrich Schlegel, Nietzsche)

Opera (Wagner)

### 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

Overview

Poetry (George, Rilke)

Fiction (Hoffmanstahl, Kafka, Hesse, Mann, Grass)

Drama (Brecht)

## OVERVIEW

**Literary History.** Literature itself is but an imaginative mirror of life, which means that the history of a culture's literature will be itself a kind of mirror of a mirror, history being a kind of mirror of what transpires through time. Perhaps the image of a map is better? Perhaps the history of a culture's literature is like a map of that literature? This image might be preferable for people with a spatial imagination.

**Unity.** As a map, German literature extends, century by century, like a series of loosely interrelated islands, which has as its whole form a set of continents such as cover our globe. The mediaeval island of German literature, embedded as it is in archaic pagan and primal Christian tale, and in its poetry open to love and nature, links only difficultly to the literature we find marking the Germany of the 16th century, the period of what for the rest of Europe would be the Renaissance. It is this difficulty of link which makes it difficult, from the start, to grasp the unity of German literature. We need to think back into cultural space in which the archaic Germanic, the mediaeval Christian, and the influences of Latin/French culture are just beginning to shape themselves in German speaking lands. In that space it tracked the profile of a disparate but fermenting German consciousness in literature and the arts.

**16<sup>th</sup> Century.** Adjacent to this grand but still inchoate period of origins, for German literature, is a sixteenth century island which, though florid in painting and architecture, is in literary skills only here and there represented by work in theology. Martin Luther not only triggers the Protestant Reformation—building into it many of the new potentials of the movable type printing press, which was effectively born in 15th century Germany, but in his translations of the Bible stirs the German language to a brilliance on which it has since then depended. Across the border in Holland, Erasmus, writing in Latin and Greek, brings the Humanist movement into the mainstream of the Germanic speaking lands.

**17<sup>th</sup> Century.** The seventeenth century island, not surprisingly, features ongoing maturity of the rich Germanic mystical tradition, which is a vigorous element in the growth of both Germanic thought and writing. Jacob Boehme and Angelus Silesius go with their language, and with its limits, to the portal of God's presence, and bring back thrilling, and to some, then and now, alarming reports of identities between man and God. The seventeenth century island is inhabited by one astounding work of fiction, Grimmelshausen's *Simplizissimus*, a fascinating memoir of the Thirty Years War as seen by a young man.

**18<sup>th</sup> Century.** On the next island we come to the period of greatest ripeness of German thought and culture. During the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century German literary culture both comes into its own, and harvests, especially through the ancient Greek and Roman classics, the finest literature of the European tradition. The greatness of this German moment is clearest in the dramas of Goethe and Schiller, the art criticism of Winckelmann, the philosophical/critical/social thinking of Lessing and Herder. The century is to culminate, for Germany, with moves pregnant with the Romantic future of the next century, the 19th century island; a future heralded in by Weimar Classicism, by Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy, and by the imaginative thinking of F.W. Schlegel. The end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is crowded with genius.

**19<sup>th</sup> Century.** The 19th century island, in Germany as elsewhere in Europe, is surrounded by unfamiliar waters, new influences and developments, and broadly speaking by that turmoil of re-examination—of the meanings of God, society, and nature—which characterizes the passionate but inchoate period between Romanticism and the onset of a 20<sup>th</sup> century in which devastating developments lay ahead for Germany, in which the island becomes volcanic. The following encyclopedia will turn regularly to 19th century figures from philosophy—Fichte, Schelermacher, Hegel, Nietzsche—as touchstones for the German effort, throughout the 19th century, to understand man's destiny in a world where traditional values—from religious to aesthetic—are under question. The literary figures who will light the century for the Germans—Hoelderlin, Novalis, Kleist, Grillparzer—are questers, whose search for the meaning of human existence is sharply inflected by their reading of the philosophers who were shaping the thought of their century.

**20<sup>th</sup> Century.** The final island, in this survey—for we go no further than the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—is one in which unsurpassed political folly, and hopeless acts of genocide, interposed themselves against the rich grain of German culture. Poets of huge prophetic insights, and sensitivity to the fraught social contexts of WWI, the Weimar Republic, and National Socialism were thrown into the light: the work of George and Rilke sees danger only too clearly. Franz Kafka, sees his way to the center of our contemporary anomie, Brecht struggles to make us reexamine our public theater, and Thomas Mann, above all, embraces in powerful fictions the lost but still visible wholeness of

a humanity which shone through the greatest German work of the 18th century. The 20<sup>th</sup> century island is set in a tsunami of new oceans, and is at its most dignified committed to literature for helmsmanship.

### **Suggested paper topics**

Do you see a unity to German literature? This is a huge question, but one worth approaching, at least in small doses. Does the Mediaeval period of German literature seem to flow organically into the age of Luther and Erasmus? How about the *Sattelzeit*—the transitional time—that bridges from Weimar classicism to the early Romantics? Does the 19th century bridge into the 20<sup>th</sup>? Is the century concept meaningful in thinking about German literature?

You note that this encyclopedia presentation has included a number of figures important to philosophy and theology, as well as literature. In each individual case—even in the case of a Schleiermacher or Fichte—do you see the relevance of this particular thinker to the construction of a world in which the literature of the time will most effectively deploy itself?

What role does the long struggle for a nation-concept play in the development of German literature? Bismarck helps Germany to give reality to such a concept, in the late 19th century, but would it have been healthier for German culture to have been nationally fulfilled some centuries earlier, like France and England? Or are there times when the fragmentation of German culture is a source of creative turmoil?

Judging from our readings, what do you see as the place of Christianity in the formation of German culture? At what points was that inspiration especially clear? What German writers do you see most creatively strengthened by their Christian faith?

At what points in its cultural development, does Germany seem most to be a part of Europe, and to inter react with its whole continent? Do certain parts of Germany, at certain times, seem to be especially porous to pan European ideas?

## MINI OVERVIEWS German Literature

The *Nibelungenlied* (compiled 13th century) is an early German epic dealing with the struggles and passions of the German Volk from archaic times—one references here battles with the Burgundians in the 4th century A.D.—up to the time of the text's composition (or compilation.)

Minnesingers ( 12th-13th centuries) were a loosely assembled group of wandering German poets, who traveled from court to court, and took their original inspiration from the troubadours of Southern France. Note especially Walther von der Vogelweide.

Mastersingers ( 14th and 15th centuries) were a craft guild of urban and traveling poets, who worked under strict poetic discipline, and attempted, two centuries later, to recreate the achievements of the Minnesingers. Note especially Hans Sachs.

*Parzifal*, by Wolfram von Eschenbach (1170-1220) is a German reworking of the French epic, *Perceval*, by Chretien de Troyes, and recounts the adventures of an intelligent but inexperienced knight on his search for the mysterious Holy Grail.

Meister Eckhart (1268-1328) was a German priest, professor, and philosophical visionary who though of acknowledged brilliance was eventually the target of a Church inquisition. Of immense subsequent influence on world thinkers and writers.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) was an Augustinian friar, Professor at the University of Wittenberg, and 'religious reformer,' whose criticisms of corruption in the Catholic Church led to excommunication. Founder of dissident movement which became the 'Reformation.'

Desiderius Erasmus (1456-1536). A Dutch scholar, writer, and itinerant intellectual, who is the ultimate in Christian humanism. His Bible translations, into Greek and Latin, set a new standard for scriptural exegesis.

Jacob Boehme (1515-1624) was a German mystic and visionary, who created several books which shocked orthodox religious belief even more gravely than Martin Luther. Dramatic hints of pantheism, in this visionary thinking, have endeared him to innumerable later writers and painters.

Christoph von Grimmelshausen (1621-1676) was kidnapped as a youth, during the Thirty Years War, and drafted into the Hessian army. In mid life he distilled his experiences of brutal war and picaresque adventures into the fascinating early novel, *Simplicissimus*.

Angelus Silesius (1624-1677) was a German mystic and poet, who devised simple but profound poems celebrating the sense of the oneness (but otherness) of the individual with God.

Gottfried von Lessing (1729-1781) was a German art-critic, aesthete, playwright, and social commentator, whose global and unifying perspective on his times established him as the epitome of Enlightenment Humanism.

Johann Winckelmann (1717-1768) was a German art historian, critic of art, and worshipper of the beauty of ancient Greek sculpture. His single greatest work was *On the History of Art in Antiquity* (1764).

Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1723-1803) was a German poet—both of epic and lyric genres—who is best known for his *Messiah*, an epic poem designed to glorify Christ's Redemption of mankind, from the Mount of Olives to the assumption of his place at the right hand of God.

Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) was a German philosopher, social critic, cultural anthropologist, and visionary of nationalism. He was the German of his time who most anticipated the nineteenth century world ahead of him, with its revolutions and growing globalism.

Christian Friedrich Hebbel (1813-1863) was a most innovative playwright, brilliant in the realism, and sense of domestic tragedy, with which he analyzed family crises in the new bourgeois Germany.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) was the greatest figure in the German transition from classicism to the Romantic perspective: a massively brilliant poet and dramatist, an inventive and tireless scientist, and a man immersed in the social political life of his time.

Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) is widely considered Germany's greatest playwright; he wrote extensively on art and aesthetics, and did some of his finest work, in the later years of his life, in collaboration with Goethe at Weimar.

E. T. A. Hoffman (1776-1822) was an exceptionally versatile lawyer, tale writer, composer, drawer, caricaturist, who has left us haunting mystery stories, like 'The Sandman,' and exercised a huge influence on the music of his time, through such fairy stories as *The Nutcracker*.

Jean Paul (Friedrich Richter) (1763-1825) was a free spirited and highly original writer of fiction-tales, which combined the supernatural, the comical, and serious social political critique. The bad boy of early German Romanticism he remains the best of reading—if he is to your whimsical taste

Friedrich Hoelderlin (1778-1843) A visionary poet, powerfully connected with ancient Greek myth, and attempting, in long tales like *Hyperion*, to blend classical with new Romantic possibilities for human development.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1772-1829) A German philosopher, known both for his Speeches to the German Nation, in which he stirs a sense of nationality, and for his enrichment of 18th century philosophy with new Romantic perspectives.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) A German philosopher concerned with the reconciliation of Christianity with the new scientific and skeptical world views of the nineteenth century.

Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) Systematic idealist philosopher; created a widely read and embodied aesthetic, which places each of the arts, literature included, as an expression of Absolute Spirit.

Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) German lyric poet and social critic, famed for his sharp satirical verse, and his active defence of Social Democracy.

Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829). German literary critic and philosopher, influential bridge thinker between the classicism of Goethe and Schiller, and the new Romantic sensibility.

Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811) German dramatist and short story writer, best at exposing the ironic, and ultimately tragic, consequences of judgment errors in daily life.

Novalis (1772-1801) German poet and visionary, famed for his *Hymns to the Night*, in which he opens out his sense of the power and future of death.

Franz Grillparzer (1791-1872) Austrian playwright known for psychological complexity. Brilliantly sensitive to the conflicts between personal love and the demands of a public role.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). A German philosopher and classicist, who struck hard, in his many fierce poetic arguments, against orthodox Christian morality and middle class values.

Richard Wagner (1813-1883). A German opera composer and social critic, who created, out of mediaeval German literary myth, the themes for many of his greatest works. *Parzifal*; *Tannhaeuser*.

Stefan George (1868-1933). A German poet and literary movement leader, who created around him a circle of demanding, and upper class artistic sensibilities. A prophetic poet, deeply aware of the disaster soon impending on his nation.

Hugo von Hofmanstahl (1874-1929). Hugo von Hofmansthal was a German poet, dramatist, and theater producer, who wrote distinguished fictions and librettos for operas, such as those of Richard Strauss.

Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926). Rainer Maria Rilke was a German lyric poet, memoirist, and prolific correspondent, who opened up the potentials of German for profound introspective lyrics. See especially his *Book of Hours* and his *Duino Elegies*.

Franz Kafka (1883-1924) a German novelist and short story writer who explored the labyrinthine confusions of life in menacing new world of uncertain meanings, and disturbing fates. Best examples; the novels, *The Castle* and *The Trial*.

Herman Hesse (1877-1962) A German novelist best known for works like *Siddhartha*, which forms a case for withdrawal and peace as the best path through life, and very different, later works, like *Steppenwolf*, which explore the passion, madness, and genius of the German spirit.

Thomas Mann (1875-1955) Thomas Mann was a German novelist short story writer . and spokesman for the conscience of the German nation, in its darkest WWII hors. He explored these profound issues in novels like *The Magic Mountain*, and *Joseph and his Brothers*.

Berthold Brecht (1898-1956). Berthold Brecht was a German playwright, Marxist, and brilliant theatrical innovator, active in public life in Germany both before and after the War, and in exile in America during the war.

## Medieval German Literature

### Overview

**Origins** The origins of German literature, unlike the origins of the Romance literatures, retreat into the margins of the Roman Empire. In his *Germania*, the Roman historian Tacitus provides us with our first extensive account of the German tribe, the Germani, and gives us the sense of a warlike but socially organized people, whose strength and virtues were in some ways to be emulated by the increasingly decadent Romans. From that first semi primitive exposure to the great world, to the first individual voices of German literature, would require a millenium of tribal jostling, linguistic development and branching out from the native Germanic tongues—which were totally foreign to the Latin language families—and arguably a synthesis of pagan with the gradually adopted Christian culture, from which would come the rich and original textures of the literature we now consider German.

**Epic Poetry** The first genres to meet us, in this new literary world, are epic and lyric poetry. The epic tradition in Middle High German, the Classical period (1180-1250), is of two distinct kinds: court and popular. The court epic is written for the nobility—with noble patronage—and is accordingly polite and cultivated, frequently sprinkling French words; the tales that are told typically—as in the epic *Parzifal*, by Wolfram von Eschenbach (1170-1220)—concern chivalry, and the high honor and courtliness culture implied by chivalry. The popular epic tradition, exemplified by *The Niebelungenlied* (1200 A.D.), blends ancient Germanic tales of warfare, revenge, and court life, with an overlay of Christian values, which blend forcefully, providing a ‘folk epic’ closer to Homer’s work than was anything produced out of the court tradition.

**Lyric Poetry** The traditions of lyric poetry, in mediaeval Germany, are preserved from two major groups: Minnesingers, ‘singers about love,’ who emulated French troubador poetry, and whose greatest exemplar was Walther von der Vogelweide (1170-1230 A.D.); and Mastersingers, who flourished in the 14th and 15th centuries, were best represented by Hans Sachs, and who were an organized guild of professional traveling poets. Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) will stand in here for the brilliance of the German mystical tradition, which expressed itself in a poetry that qualifies it as the highest literature.

## Nibelungenlied

**Archaic German Literature.** The origins of German literature lie in Norse and Icelandic saga, and embody rich traits: powerful mythological forces in conflict, ruling the world; subtle as well as bellicose personal relations embodied inside that mythic dynamic. Some of this material is neither Christian nor drawn from Classical Antiquity and therefore opens us to perspectives on humanity and nature which have not been incorporated in the mainstream of Western culture. These valuable insights take us back to pre-Christian Europe, with its rich cache of ‘pagan’ (largely Norse) myths, and yet that stratum of early Germanic poetry is itself blended with the growing chivalric tradition of Christian poetry, which is by the time of the *Nibelungenlied* proving to be a growing component of the ‘Germanic life view.’ Thus we find, in this epic collated and written down around 1200 A.D., a culturally blended creation, with work of extreme antiquity—dragon-slayer motifs as in the tales of Perseus in Ancient Greece—joined to Romantic chivalric love, jealousy, and vengeance.

**The narrative of the *Nibelungenlied*.** The work in question embodies historical memories that go back to the court of the Burgundians, who in the 4th century A.D. were foes of the declining Roman Empire; and continues on to incorporate elements of different stages of very late German mediaeval culture, as well as a great deal of fairy tale (*Maerchen*) and folk legend. (It might be added that the manuscript itself has been through numerous historical periods: lost entirely by the end of the 16th century; rediscovered in the 18th century in a manuscript dating from the 13th century.) If at times the epic seems to be bursting at its seams, and running over its edges in repetition and randomness, that is because the narrative pays homage to so many different traditions. It is also, incidentally, because the consistent verse structure—four rhyming lines, each divided by a caesura, the fourth line consistently longer by one stress; over an extent of 10,000 lines—serves wonderfully to keep the ear focused on the stanzaic structure.

**The main characters.** The narrative centers on a few main characters—whose force, and sharp profiles, hold the fabric together. Siegfried the dragon slayer is an archaic form, the hero ready for action but prudent and ultimately a tragic victim; the hero who has rendered himself invincible—except for one tiny Achilles’ heel—by bathing in the blood of the dragon he has slain; Siegfried’s eventual bride, Kriemhild, whose beauty and primal sense for revenge—she avenges the murder of her husband, Siegfried—are from archaic legend; the villain hero Hagen, who is both a image of faithful vassalage, and of unreserved brutality; the dwarf Alberich, to whom the treasure of the *Nibelungs* is confided, and who is himself right out of the jester entourage of any mediaeval prince; the crafty Etzel (Attila the Hun, in fact) at his Hungarian court, the center of the intrigue which undergirds the second Part of the poem. In this lengthy and passionate pastiche of plots and sub plots, in which love, treachery, magic and courage compete for our fascination, we are immersed in the world of mediaeval Germanic feeling, nostalgic and contemporary pride mixed, and find ourselves engaging with those fierce archaic virtues of pride, independence, vengeance and stubbornness which were uncompromising to a degree fascinating to our more ‘complex’ age.

**The German *Iliad*?** The material of the *Nibelungenlied* has played to many tunes: Wagnerian opera, National Socialist self-glorification, and today, of course, cartoons and pop Siegfried songs. In the end all of these efforts miss the intra-secular richness of this historical pastiche, which has been called the German *Iliad*, in the sense that like Homer the anonymous author of this German lay brings together historical materials and personages from many different versions of his own culture.

## Reading

### *Primary source reading*

There are numerous excellent translations into English: three are included here:

Hatto, A.T., *The Nibelungenlied*, 1964.

Raffel, Burton, *Das Nibelungenlied*, 2006.

Edwards, Cyril, *The Lay of the Nibelungs*, 2010.

### *Secondary source reading*

McConnell, Winder, ed. *A Companion to the Nibelungenlied*, 1998.

### *Further Reading*



Mueller, Jan-Dirk, *Rules for the Endgame: the World of the Niebelungenlied*, 2007.

### **Original language reading**

Ehrismann, Otfried, *Niebelungenlied: Epoche—Werk—Wirkung*, 1987.

### **Suggested paper topics**

Betrayal, jealousy, and revenge all play central roles in the *Niebelungenlied*. It is as though, even in the fairly 'archaic' literary milieu of this work, the drivers are all drawn from the passions. Can you isolate the elements that seem to you most clearly part of the 'archaic' world? Can you do a little research on the Burgundians, whose role as enemies of the Romans in the 5th century, takes us into classical antiquity?

We noted that the *Niebelungenlied* has been called the *Iliad* of Germany. Do you feel that this German epic, like Homer's, concentrates on a single topic—like *The Battle of Troy*—and makes salient points about that topic, like the moral decision facing Achilles at the end of the epic? Or is the *Niebelungenlied* more diffuse than the *Iliad*? Less in control of its diverse assembled materials?

**EXCERPT** Beginning of *Niebelungenlied* [www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1151](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1151)

In the Netherlands there grew the child of a noble king (his father had for name Siegmund, (1) his mother Siegelind), (2) in a mighty castle, known far and wide, in the lowlands of the Rhine: Xanten, (3) men called it. Of this hero I sing, how fair he grew. Free he was of every blemish. Strong and famous he later became, this valiant man. Ho! What great worship he won in this world! Siegfried hight this good and doughty knight. Full many kingdoms did he put to the test through his warlike mood. Through his strength of body he rode into many lands. Ho! What bold warriors he after found in the Burgundian land! Mickle wonders might one tell of Siegfried in his prime, in youthful days; what honors he received and how fair of body he. The most stately women held him in their love; with the zeal which was his due

men trained him. But of himself what virtues he attained! Truly his father's lands were honored, that he was found in all things of such right lordly mind. Now was he become of the age that he might ride to court. Gladly the people saw him, many a maid wished that his desire might ever bear him hither. Enow gazed on him with favor; of this the prince was well aware. Full seldom was the youth allowed to ride without a guard of knights. Siegmund and Siegelind bade deck him out in brave attire. The older knights who were acquaint with courtly custom, had him in their care. Well therefore might he win both folk and land.

Now he was of the strength that he bare weapons well. Whatever he needed thereto, of this he had enow. With purpose he began to woo fair ladies; these bold Siegfried courted well in proper wise. Then bade Siegmund have cried to all his men, that he would hold a feasting with his loving kindred. The tidings thereof men brought into the lands of other kings. To the strangers and the home-folk he gave steeds and armor. Wheresoever any was found who, because of his birth, should become a knight, these noble youths were summoned to the land for the feasting. Here with the youthful prince they gained the knightly sword. Wonders might one tell of this great feast; Siegmund and Siegelind wist well how to gain great worship with their gifts, of which their hands dealt out great store. Wherefore one beheld many strangers riding to their realm. Four hundred sword-thanes (4) were to put on knightly garb with Siegfried. Many a fair maid was aught but idle with the work, for he was beloved of them all. Many precious stones the ladies inlaid on the gold, which together with the edging they would work upon the dress of the proud young warriors, for this must needs be done.

The host bade make benches for the many valiant men, for the midsummer festival, (5) at which Siegfried should gain the name of knight. Then full many a noble knight and many a high-born squire did hie them to the minster. Right were the elders in that they served the young, as had been done to them afore. Pastimes they had and hope of much good cheer. To the honor of God a mass was sung; then there rose from the people full great a press, as the youths were made knights in courtly wise, with such great honors as might not ever lightly be again. Then they ran to where they found saddled many a steed. In Siegmund's court the hurtling (6) waxed so fierce that both palace (7) and hall were heard to ring; the high-mettled warriors clashed with mighty sound. From young and old one heard many a shock, so that the splintering of the shafts reechoed to the clouds. Truncheons (8) were seen flying out before the palace from the hand of many a knight. This was done with zeal. At length the host bade cease the tourney and the steeds were led away.

## Parzifal (Wolfram von Eschenbach)

**Wolfram von Eschenbach.** Wolfram von Eschenbach (1170-1220), the author of *Parzifal*, was a serving knight—that is a man at arms in the service of a provincial lord, a position on which he prided himself far more than on his role as poet. (As one of the greatest of the minnesingers he was thus by poetic as well as military profession, a creator constantly on the move.) From the little we know of his background, we believe he was born in Bavaria, near the city of Ansbach, that he found his way eventually into vassalage under a certain Hermann von Thuringia--with whom Walther von der Vogelweide was also connected—and that he composed his work—*Parzifal* itself, and two lesser verse pieces, *Willehelm* and *Titurel*-- in the first quarter of the twelfth century. (This work thus belongs to the era of the Minnesingers.)

**Parzifal.** *Parzifal* is the first major work of German imaginative literature to tap directly into the Christian tradition, which, as we see in the *Nibelungenlied* and the work of a Meistersinger like Hans Sachs, was not yet fully at home in German culture. (Christian sacramental symbols are widely scattered throughout that literature, but the background against which we read those symbols seems rural and pagan.) Von Eschenbach's work is vast and ambitious, an extensive tale through the personscape of Arthurian legend, search for the grail (which for the protagonist *Parzifal* is a sacred rock), pregnant encounters with the Fisher King, Amfortas, who suffers from the lance that pierced Christi's side, and that pierces his own, and, throughout it all, a gradual growth in *Parzifal*'s own maturity and insight—though he mocks himself throughout, claiming, for instance, that he is 'illiterate; and permitting himself startling comic digressions. This vast epic stretches to 24, 810 lines, staged in the conventional four stress lines in rhyming couplets. (Though clearly, in fact, von Eschenbach was literate, it is likely that this minnesinger creation was backed up by oral presentation.)

**The Grail background of the epic.** *Parzifal* itself deals with the Grail legend, which refers to the legend of the chalice (or stone, or salver, or jewell) which had been preserved from the time of Christ's Last Supper: a relic worship given its strongest Mediaeval form by Chretien de Troyes, in his *Perceval*. The elaborate story concerns a Knight on a spiritual adventure quest, and in both epics—those of Chretien and Wolfram--ultimately involves a transformative encounter with the Holy Grail, the chalice (or other relic) alleged to have been used by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper. (Though the meaning of the grail itself is cloudy in *Parzifal*, and to a large part this sacred symbol serves as a useful literary quest device.) While in Chretien's *Perceval* we are concerned with the education of a crude young knight, Wolfram introduces us to a quest character who is untutored but not stupid; working his way to self-understanding through a fundamentally 'religious' milieu.

**Wolfram and the meaning of his work.** Read *Parzifal*, please, with an eye for the thriller story in which ultimate Christian mystery is embedded. Do you find this text of contemporary (to us) interest? What is most living in it? To note: Richard Wagner also made *Parzifal* into an opera, loosely but powerfully modeled on the blending of hero quest and sacred symbol

### Reading

#### *Primary Source Reading*

Hatto, A.T, *Parzifal. Wolfram von Eschenbach*, 1980.

#### *Secondary Source Reading*

Hasty, Will, *A Companion to Wolfram's Parzifal*, 1999.

#### *Further Reading*

Groos, Arthur, *Romancing the Grail: Genre, Science, and*

*Quest in Wolfram von Echenbach's Parzifal*, 1995.

#### *Original language reading*

Bumke, Joachim, *Wolfram von Eschenbach*, 1990.

### Suggested paper topics

Does Wolfram's work, in *Parzifal*, reflect the minnesinger tradition to which we customarily assign Wolfram? What connections do you see between the lyrical work of Walther von der Vogelweide and Wolfram? Is the work of either writer deeply infused with Christian motifs?

What do you make of the kind of untutored but intelligent quester to whom Wolfram confides his narrative of a quest for the Holy Grail? Do you take this to be the author's self-portrait? What kind of self-transformation, then, do you take to be implied in the effort to find the grail?

**EXCERPT** <http://products.ilrn-support.com/wawc1c01c/content/wciv1/readings/parzifal.html>

Thus, Parzival parted from them, and courteous he now might bear  
 His knightly garb, and he knew them, the customs of knighthood fair.  
 But alas! He full sore was troubled with many a bitter pain,  
 And the world was too close, and too narrow with width of the spreading plain,  
 And the greenswald he thought was faded, and his harness had paled to white;  
 So the heart of the eye constraineth and dimmeth awhile the sight.  
 For since he had waxed less simple somewhat of his father's lore,  
 The desire of the man for the maiden, in his wakening heart he bore;  
 And he thought but of fair Liassé, that maiden so true and sweet,  
 How never her love she proffered, yet with honour the guest would greet.  
 And wherever his horse, might turn it he took in his grief no heed,  
 And if slowly it paced or swiftly he thought not to guide its speed.  
 Nor many a field well-fenced nor wayside cross he found;  
 Nor chariot-wheel nor horse-hoof had furrowed with tracks the ground;  
 Untrodden the woodland pathway, nor wide was I ween the way,  
 And he knew not the hills and the valleys — Full oft shall yea hear men say,  
 'Who rideth astray, in his wandering the lost axe may often find.'  
 They lay here unnumbered round him, if for axe ye have trees in mind.  
 Yet tho' far was the road he journeyed yet he went in no wise astray,  
 And thus from the land of Graharz he rode through the livelong day,  
 Till he came to the kingdom of Brobarz thro' mountains wild and high —  
 When the shadows of evening lengthened, and red flushed the western sky,  
 Then he came to a mountain torrent, and the voice of the raging flood  
 Rang clear as its waves rushed foaming round the crags that amid them stood.  
 So he rode adown by the waters till he came to the city fair  
 Which a king had bequeathed to his daughter; 'twas the city of Pelrapär,  
 And I wot that tho' fair the maiden who bare of that land the crown,  
 Great grief and small gladness had they who dwelt in that noble town!  
 Like an arrow that swiftly speedeth from the bow by a strong arm bent,  
 The waters onward rushing on their downward pathway went;  
 And a bridge hung high above them with woven work so fair,  
 And the stream it flowed swift to the ocean — Well-guarded was Pelrapär,  
 As children in swings delight them, and swing themselves to and fro,  
 So swung the bridge, yet ropeless, youthful gladness it scarce might know!  
 And on either side were standing, with helmets for battle bound,  
 Of knights e'en more than thirty, and they bade him to turn him round,  
 And with lifted swords, tho' feeble, the strife would they gladly wait,  
 They thought 'twas the King Klamidé whom they oft had seen of late,  
 So royally rode the hero to the bridge o'er the field so wide —  
 And thus to the youth they shouted, and with one voice his arms defied,  
 Tho' he spurred his steed full sharply it shrank from the bridge in fright,  
 But ne'er knew he a thought of terror — To the ground sprang the gallant knight.  
 And he led his horse by the bridle where the bridge hung high in air,  
 Too faint were a coward's courage so bitter a strife to dare!  
 And well must he watch his footsteps for he feared lest his steed should fall —

## Minnesingers

**Minnesang.** The 12th and 13th centuries witnessed the development of a refined poetry, Minnesong or Love Song poetry, promoted within the scattered feudal courts of the many Germanic lords who were vassals of the Holy Roman Emperor; poetry deeply influenced by the contemporary French troubador tradition. (Of nationhood we cannot yet speak, nor will we, in the case of Germany, for another more than 600 years, when Bismarck gives a kind of administrative unity to the scattered elements of the German nation, centered around local princes and their courts; rather the Europe in formation, in the time of the Minnesingers, was porous and truly international, since in fact it was pre national.)

**French troubadours.** While the French singers and musicians were the innovators in their kind of wandering minstrel poetry, by the end of the twelfth century the German minstrel tradition had evolved its own patterns, and the courts and culturescape of the land were crowded with performers—who were of course a substantial element of the ‘entertainment’ any culture requires for itself. You will at once see the distance of this refined lyric tradition-- much of it romantic and inspired by the Troubadour tradition of Southern France-- from the potent epic mind of the *Nibelungenlied*. (Although you may notice a strong resemblance of the two kinds of Germanic texts to one another, oh the question of love and passion. The devoted cult of woman is conspicuous in the German Mediaeval culture mind, as it was throughout Europe—often as a byproduct of the cult of the Virgin Mary—at this time.)

**Von der Vogelweide.** Walther von der Vogelweide (1170-1230 A.D) is a good model of the sophisticated work, which emerged from this movement. The minnesang movement, which lasted over two centuries, eventually playing out into the very different Meistersinger tradition—was while not entirely aristocratic commonly located among the vassals of the princely German courts of the time. Walther, like many of his contemporary wandering court poets, was what we could call a ‘knight,’ not a fighting man but an armed defendant of his court, and, in addition, a noteworthy patriot in the local sense—which included strong antipathy to the Papacy, as well, apparently, as participation in the Crusades.

**Von der Vogelweide, the poet.** Vogelweide was a master of romantic poetry, as well as of nature poetry, epigrams and songs, and like others of his craft he wandered throughout the Europe of the day reciting and presenting his work. (One might think of a kind of mediaeval Rock Star.) If you read the translation of his poetry carefully, and compare it with the original, you will begin to see how close his Middle High German is to English, and how craftily he handles it. Do you see the magic of the particular verse below? The image is of the most common. The beloved, asserts the poet, is locked in his heart, and cannot escape. The key to the heart is lost. Nothing could be more simple. Yet listen to the rhymes interact, as the rhythms plays out:

Middle High German original	Modern German	English
Dû bist mîn, ich bin dîn:des solt dû gewis sîn. dû bist beslozen in mînem herzen. verlorne ist das slûzzelîn: dû muost immer drinne sîn!	Du bist mein, ich bin dein:dessen sollst du gewiss sein. Du bist verschlossen in meinem Herzen. Verloren ist das Schlüsselein: du musst immer darin sein.	You are mine, I am yours, Of that you may be sure. Deep within my heart You're safely locked away. But I have lost the key And there you'll ever stay

### Reading

#### Primary Source Reading

Jackson, B.G., *The songs of the Minnesingers*, 1965.

#### Secondary Source Reading

Sayce, Olive, *The mediaeval German lyric, 1150-1300*, 1982.

#### Further Reading

Taylor, Ronald, *The Art of the Minnesinger*, 1968.

#### Original language reading

Hahn, Gerhard, *Walther von der Vogelweide. Eine Einfuehrung*, 1986.

### Suggested paper topics

Do the Minnesingers, as a group, seem to you closely bound to the nature of the society in which they flourished? Was their mobile, performative life the byproduct of a culture in which small court entertainments, scattered across the German landscape, provided venues and support for 'wandering minstrels'? Do the internationally performing music groups of our day provide some kind of contemporary parallel to the world of the Minnesingers?

In what ways does the work and world of the Minnesingers resemble that of the French troubadours, who were their predecessors and 'models'? Were the social backgrounds of the two styles of minstrelsy significantly different? Were the pervasive themes of the two poetics different? Try to explain what differences you see.

*EXCERPT* <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/under-the-lime-tree/>

Under the lime tree  
On the heather,  
Where we had shared a place of rest,  
Still you may find there,  
Lovely together,  
Flowers crushed and grass down-pressed.  
Beside the forest in the vale,  
Tándaradéi,  
Sweetly sang the nightingale.

I came to meet him  
At the green:  
There was my truelove come before.  
Such was I greeted —  
Heaven's Queen! —  
That I am glad for evermore.  
Had he kisses? A thousand some:  
Tándaradéi,  
See how red my mouth's become.

There he had fashioned  
For luxury  
A bed from every kind of flower.  
It sets to laughing  
Delightedly  
Whoever comes upon that bower;  
By the roses well one may,  
Tándaradéi,  
Mark the spot my head once lay.

If any knew  
He lay with me  
(May God forbid!), for shame I'd die.  
What did he do?  
May none but he  
Ever be sure of that — and I,  
And one extremely tiny bird,  
Tándaradéi,

Who will, I think, not say a word.

## Meistersingers

**Meistersingers as a guild.** The Mastersingers were a guild of craftsman poets, who took their inspiration from the mediaeval minnesingers, desiring to sustain the tradition of public poetry and its entertainment. But the Meistersingers—that is the singers who worked for ‘masters’ in the craft system culture-- attempted to recreate the minnesinger tradition within a later society—that of the Northern Renaissance—which was already home to a middle class economy, and in which the mediaeval traditions of wandering singers, like the French Troubadors or German minnesingers, was far in the past, in effect at least two centuries in the past. The Meistersinger tradition developed into a craft guild organically from local and church choirs as they expressed themselves from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries. It cannot be overstressed that this new tradition was an artificial graft onto the minnesinger tradition.

**The rules of the guild.** For the Meistersingers twelve outstanding Middle High German poets served as exemplars and models—among them the best known to us was Wolfram von Eschenbach (d. 1216). Working from such models, Heinrich Frauenlieb established the first Meistersinger school at Mainz, in the early fourteenth century. By the fifteenth century the movement had spread throughout Germany, and Nuernberg had become the leading nucleus of the movement. By that point the Meistersinger organization was highly developed—as was the case with all guilds in the German craft culture of the time. Each Meistersinger cell consisted of a Meister—the chief in charge of the productions of his ‘unit’—and two degrees of subordinates, who had privileges corresponding to their position on the performance ladder. (For example, the Master alone was permitted to invent new tunes and new verses to fit them, while the two lower ranks of performers were responsible only for ‘copying.’) However the Master himself was not free for much invention. A law book (Tablatur) laid down the kinds of poems that were permissible for the guild, the rhymes that were acceptable, and listed a great number of mistakes to watch for. (When performances were given by the guild, four judges customarily evaluated, from behind a curtain, the correctness, euphony, and freedom from error of the performance.)

**Hans Sachs.** The most renowned of the Meistersingers, for us, is Hans Sachs (1494 A.D.-1576 A.D.), who was born of a humble family in Nuernberg, and at the age of fourteen began his apprenticeship as a shoemaker—thus placing himself inside one of the craft guilds of the city. At the age of seventeen, Hans Sachs began his career as a traveling journeyman, and on one of his journeys he stopped in the city of Wels, in Austria. There he was discovered—for the excellence of his singing—by the Emperor Maximilian, who was passing through town. Thanks to this chance encounter, Hans Sachs was eventually removed to Muenchen, where a linen weaver took him over as a guild craftsworker, and where Hans was able to launch a lengthy and prolific career as shoemaker-poet. (In all he created over 6000 ‘pieces of literature,’ of every sort—for he burst out of the bounds prescribed by the guild—from religious tracts to poems, from epigrams to sacred plays. One of his finest poems was written out of his vast admiration for Martin Luther, *die wuerttembuergische Nachtgall*, the Wuerttemberg nightingale.) Sachs grew from the Meistersinger craft position into an ambitious poet for whom the strict rules of the craft were never far distant, and proves that, even in such a derivative and mechanical tradition as the Mastersingers created, local energy was possible. We also owe the renown of Sachs to the (fairly humorous) treatment of him we find in Wagner’s only comic opera, *Die Meistersinger von Nuernberg*, 1868.

## Reading

### *Primary Source Reading*

Aylett, Robert, *Translations of the Carnival Comedies of Hans Sachs*, 1995.

### *Secondary Source Reading*

Hauser, Arnold, *Social History of Art, Vol. I.*, 1999 (reprint.)

### *Further Reading*

Classen, Albrecht, *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age*, 2009.

### *Original language reading*

Klein, Dorothea, *Bildung und Belehrung. Untrsuchungen zum Dramenwerk des Hans Sachs*, 1988.

## Suggested paper topics

Do you see a continuity between the Minnesingers and the Meistersingers? On the face of it the differences seem dramatic. Do they result from the differences of social milieu between the two literary movements? Was the mobile courtly song/poetry tradition more fitted to poetic creation than the crafts guild people's tradition of two centuries later?

Are you familiar, in your own time, with efforts to include the creation of the finer arts under a 'guild system,' or something like it? Do Writers' Unions, such as they exist today world wide, and such as were prevalent and influential during the Cold War in Eastern Europe and Russia, provide some kind of parallel to the world of the Mastersingers.

*EXCERPT* <http://www.poemhunter.com/hans-sachs/>

Why Art Thou Thus Cast Down, My Heart?

Why art thou thus cast down, my heart?

Why troubled, why dost mourn apart,  
O'er nought but earthly wealth?

Trust in thy God, be not afraid,  
He is thy Friend who all things made.

Dost think thy prayers He doth not heed?  
He knows full well what thou dost need,  
And heaven and earth are His;  
My Father and my God, who still  
Is with my soul in every ill.

Since Thou my God and Father art,  
I know Thy faithful loving heart  
Will ne'er forget Thy child;  
See I am poor, I am but dust,  
On earth is none whom I can trust.

The rich man in his wealth confides,  
But in my God my trust abides;  
Then laugh ye as ye will,  
I hold this fast that He hath taught,--  
Who trusts in God shall want for nought.

Yes, Lord, Thou art as rich to-day  
As Thou hast been and shalt be aye,  
I rest on Thee alone;  
Thy riches to my soul be given,  
And 't is enough for earth and heaven.

What here may shine I all resign,  
If the eternal crown be mine,  
That through Thy bitter death  
Thou gainedst, O Lord Christ, for me--  
For this, for this, I cry to Thee!

All wealth, all glories, here below,  
The best that this world can bestow,  
Silver or gold or lands,  
But for a little time is given,  
And helps us not to enter heaven.  
I thank Thee, Christ, Eternal Lord,  
That Thou hast taught me by Thy word  
To know this truth and Thee;  
O grant me also steadfastness...  
Thy heavenly kingdom not to miss....

## Meister Eckhart

**The challenge of Eckhart.** The Christian theme foregrounded in *Parzifal*, and more or less shallowly foregrounded in the poetry of a minnesinger like Walther von der Vogelweide, is evidence of the subtle pervasion of the new faith into a German culture which is still, in the thirteenth century, in transition from a version of the Middle Ages in which are embedded many elements of the ancient pagan world. The monastic tradition still provides the energy for the evolution of the Christian perspective in Germany.

**Meister Eckhart.** Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) was born of a simple tradesperson family in Thuringia, during a period when a vocation in the church was one of the most promising career paths, but one made especially difficult at Eckhart's time, by the split in the Catholic Church, whereby the power of the Papacy had shifted to Avignon, in France. At the age of eighteen Eckhart entered the Dominican order and became a monk. By this move he made a career decision which would lead to an active institutional role, in his order, conflict of life importance for the monk, and adventures in theological/philosophical thought which would render Eckhart a figure of influence not only in German religious history but in the wider history of contemporary world thought. He would, through his sermons, philosophical position papers, and public debates, become a widely known representative of his order, twice invited to a seminary lectureship in Paris, an honor previously bestowed only on Thomas Aquinas.

**Meister Eckhart's career.** As a member of the Dominican order Eckhart is soon recognized as of remarkable intellectual power. He is sent to lecture in Paris—a center of high intellectual debate among theologians, the intellectual elite of the time—then moves from one seminary or pulpit to another, engaging all the time more deeply with the thought of his time. And he is concerned not only with theology, in which his thought grows increasingly bold, but with administrative matters, like convent management, which kept him fully involved in the world. As he develops his own original thought, however, he moves increasingly into considerations which before he knows it—indeed we don't know just when—begin to attract serious critical concern from certain of his superiors.

**The thought of Eckhart.** It is impossible to encapsulate the metaphysical thought that Eckhart now enters in his forceful determination to further the speculative traditions Catholic orthodoxy found itself in. We know that by 1326 some of Eckhart's superiors have begun to support an inquisitorial campaign against his teaching and writings. The essence of their concern is the implication, considered embedded in his developing thoughts, that a direct and 'mystical' access to God is possible, and is grounded in the nature of our thought. The implications of such a position, for the organized church, are plainly immense. By this kind of suggestion Eckhart would seem to take the experience of God directly onto himself, and, although being a monk, and belonging to the Church, he would seem to be adopting an independent, directly mystical relation to God, which would bypass the institution of the Church. (Martin Luther, the driving force behind Protestantism, is one of many who were struck with the force of Eckhart's thought, and its relevance to the simplification of the Church.)

**Charges against Eckhart.** When one enters the charges against Eckhart, however, the entire matter appears highly complex, and there are reasons to suppose that the inquisition into Eckhart's thought, before the conclusion of which he died, was driven by inner factional rivalries as much as by genuine intellectual insight. The charge against him is based on an interpretation of his view of the nature of thinking, which Eckhart thought to be presuppositionless, identical with its own thought, while God, as the ultimate thought, was the base from which we are as we begin to think. Whether or not this perspective entailed assuming a direct, mediation-free address to God remains open to discussion to this day.

## Reading

### *Primary Source Reading*

Davies, Oliver, *Selected Writings: Meister Eckhart*, 1996.

### *Secondary Source Reading*

Turner, Denys, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Religion*, 1995.

### *Further Reading*

Davies, Oliver, *Meister Eckhart: Mystical Theologian*, 1991.

### *Original language reading*



Ruh, Kurt, *Meister Eckhart. Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker*, 1989.

### **Suggested paper topics**

Reconstruct, in your own language, the thinking of Meister Eckhart which brought down on him at least the initiation of inquisitorial charges. Can you see the view point of the administrative forces aligned against Eckhart? Can you understand the defense Eckhart gave of himself? What is that defense?

Does the Christian thinking of Meister Eckhart seem to you to resemble the thinking of the German literary thinkers one encounters among the minnesingers or in Parzifal? Does Eckhart, for that matter, seem to you have a literary imagination as well as a strong philosophical mind? Would that be one reason for his continuing influence, to our day, over writers?

**EXCERPT** [http://catholicprimer.org/eckhart/eckhart\\_sermons.pdf](http://catholicprimer.org/eckhart/eckhart_sermons.pdf)

Sin is also an eternity of hell, for eternity is in the will, and were it not in the will, it would not be in the consciousness. Now, people say when they commit sin that they do not intend to do so always; they intend to turn away from sin. That is just as though a man were to kill himself and suppose that he could make himself alive again by his own strength. That is, however, impossible; but to turn from sin by one's own power and come to God is still much more impossible. Therefore, whosoever is to turn from sin and come to God in His heavenly kingdom must be drawn by the heavenly Father with the might of His divine power. The Father also draws the Son who comes to help us with His grace, by stimulating our free will to turn away from, and hate sin, which has drawn us aside from God, and from the immutable goodness of the Godhead. Then, if she is willing, He pours the gift of His grace into the soul, which renounces all her misery and sin, and all her works become living. Now, this grace springs from the centre of Godhead and the Father's heart, and flows perpetually, nor ever ceases, if the soul obeys His everlasting love. Therefore He saith in the prophets: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." Out of the overflow of His universal love He desires to draw all to Himself, and to His Only-begotten Son, and to the Holy Ghost in the joy of the heavenly kingdom. Now, we should know that before our Lord Jesus Christ was born, the Heavenly Father drew men with all His might for five thousand, two hundred years; and yet, as far as we know, brought not one into the heavenly kingdom. So, when the Son saw that the Father had thus strongly drawn men and even wearied Himself, and yet not succeeded, He said to the Father: "I will draw them with the cords of a man." It was as though He said, "I see well, Father, that Thou with all Thy might, canst not succeed, therefore will I myself draw them with the cords of a man." Therefore the Son came down from heaven, and was incarnate of a Virgin, and took upon Him all our bodily weaknesses, except sin and folly, into which Adam had cast us; and out of all His words and works and limbs and nerves, He made a cord, and drew us so skillfully, and so heartily, that the bloody sweat poured from His sacred Body. And when He had drawn men without ceasing for three and thirty years, He saw the beginnings of a movement and the redemption of all things that would follow.

## 16th Century German Literature

As we enter the sixteenth century we must note that while England, France, the Netherlands, Spain and Italy were by this stage moving vigorously into the rediscovery of the Classics, and the power of their Romanic tradition, the Germans—but one cannot refer to them as such, for they were still four centuries away from nationhood—were barely starting to harvest their cultural traditions. And yet, complexly enough, there was cultural movement, from with the ‘Germany’ of the sixteenth century, which was to have exceptionally far reaching effect on subsequent centuries throughout Europe, indeed throughout the world.

From the very first, the humanist movement took a unique direction in north-central Europe. In the first place the revival of classical literature, especially Latin, was for Italy—and to some extent for France and Spain—a revival of its own past glories, while for Germany the Renaissance was of foreign origin. Furthermore humanism appealed primarily to the intellectual elite in Germany, who could speak Greek and Latin, whereas it appealed to a far wider audience in the countries where the languages were derived from Latin. Instead of an Italianate Renaissance, it might be said, Germany turned with fervor toward a kind of religious Renaissance, the Reformation.

It should not, though, be assumed that humanism made no headway in Germany. Erasmus of Rotterdam (1455-1522) and others became great scholars of classical languages. The invention of the printing press, in the mid-15th century, did much to stimulate reading and learning, and at least fifteen universities were founded in Germany between 1538-1545 A.D. Martin Luther himself was a friend to classical learning, except where it clashed with his religious beliefs.

## Martin Luther

**Martin Luther.** With Martin Luther, born more than a century after Meister Eckhart, the ‘new modern world’ began to include significant new perspectives in religion. While Eckhart, remaining orthodox, opened the soul to new kinds of direct confrontation with the God within, Luther went farther, and much more publically, toward modifying public understandings of the Christian enterprise. In a word he opened a movement toward reform, in the Catholic Church, which was to have widespread effect on European, we might say world, culture to this day.

**The Reformation.** Martin Luther (1483-1546) was born in Eisleben, the son of a miner, was sent to primary school where he learned the trivium—grammar, rhetoric, and logic; a combination he found equivalent to Hell and Purgatory combined, then entered an Augustinian priory as a monk, in 1505, and three years later accepted a Professorship in theology at Wuerttemberg. (In other words he, like Eckhart or Saint Augustine, was academically precocious.) From this significant post he three years later paid a visit to Rome, which was to be influential for him. He was shocked by the corruption of the clergy, and inwardly formulated careful resentments against the intrusion of the Papal world onto the simple message of Christ. For this priest professor, the turning point was encountering head on the ‘sales of indulgences,’ which were as he saw it being peddled by the Catholic hierarchy—in particular by one Dominican bigwig, Johann Tetzel-- for such purposes as beefing up the building fund for St. Peter’s Cathedral. (The galling instance was the monetary sale to parishioners, by the priesthood, of remissions from time due to be spent in Purgatory.) The events consequent on Luther’s new perception, and rebellion, were to be the first effective steps toward ‘reform’ within Christianity, and though reformers like Jan Hus had preceded Luther, and paid for it with their lives, the Luther world was in significant ways more flexible toward individual expression than had been the late mediaeval world of Eckhart.

**Luther’s boldness and excommunication.** In 1517 Luther reached some kind of expressive crisis, in one way or another ‘posted his 95 theses’ on church and religious matters, for all members of his order to read. Whether or not the posting was done on the Cathedral door is unclear, and is part of the personal mythology that surrounds many of Luther’s actions—like throwing an inkwell and pen at the Devil. The upshot of the posting, for sure, was rapid retribution from the Church hierarchy. In 1520 Pope Leo X demanded that Luther retract all his writings to date—they were already voluminous; both as prof and priest Luther was prolific—and on being rejected the Holy Roman Emperor stepped in and excommunicated Prof. Luther. At this point, not only forbidden the rites of the Church, but considered an outlaw, Luther was saved from serious punishment by a cadre of his supports, especially his influential religious friend, Philip Melancthon, and was spirited away (in a cloak and dagger intervention) to the Castle of the Wartburg in Thuringia, where he was safe and protected. It was in that setting that he started to undertake his translation of the Bible into vernacular German, an achievement of vast importance to the German language, to its literary vigor, and to world culture.

**Luther’s later life.** Luther’s later life is one of vast productivity, as he began to concentrate on the creative religious works that have given their meaning to the Reformation. It must first be said that he renounced his monasticism (1525) and that in 1530 he married a former nun. In 1535 he and many fellow spirited friends founded the Augsburg Confession, in which they formally abandoned Catholicism. Among the many powerful literary texts Luther left behind him were a rich variety of prose tracts and sermons, vigorous in language and thought, and a collection of some thirty seven hymns, which remain as lasting treasures of Christian worship.

## Reading

### *Primary Source Reading*

Dillenberger, John, *Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings*, 1958. (Reprint updates; outstanding.)

### *Secondary Source Reading*

Erickson, Eric, *Young Man Luther*, 1953 (A towering classic of insight.)

### *Further Reading*

Oberman, Heiko, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*, 2006.

### *Original language reading*

Arnold, Heinz Ludwig, ed. *Martin Luther*, 1983.

### Suggested paper topics

Luther was born more than two hundred years after Meister Eckhart. Please indicate some of the major differences between the two thinkers as those differences relate to the conception of God. (Both men were critical of the organized Church, though one remained within it, while Luther staged a ‘rebellion.’) Do the differences in their views of God reflect the huge cultural differences that were occurring in Germany in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries?

Luther’s translation of the Bible into German was immensely influential, as was the King James version of the same book into English, a century later. Why was a Bible translation a text of such great potential cultural importance? Luther’s contemporary, Erasmus (next entry), was famed for his translations of the New Testament into both Greek and Latin. What would you see as the motivation of such a herculean effort? Whom would Erasmus reach by that work?

*Excerpt* Martin Luther Table Talk <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/9841/9841-h/9841-h.htm>

Proofs that the Bible is the Word of God.

That the Bible is the Word of God, said Luther, the same I prove as followeth. All things that have been and now are in the world, also how it now goeth and standeth in the world, the same was written altogether particularly at the beginning, in the First Book of Moses concerning the Creation. And even as God made and created it, even so it was, even so it is, and even so doth it stand to this present day. And although King Alexander the Great, the kingdom of Egypt, the empire of Babel, the Persian, Grecian, and Roman Monarchs, the Emperors Julius and Augustus, most fiercely did rage and swell against this Book, utterly to suppress and destroy the same, yet notwithstanding, they could prevail nothing; they are all gone and vanished; but this Book, from time to time, hath remained, and will remain unremoved, in full and ample manner, as it was written at the first. But who kept and preserved it from such great and raging power; or, Who defendeth it still? Truly, said Luther, no human creature, but only and alone God himself, who is the right Master thereof; and it is a great wonder that it hath been so long kept and preserved, for the devil and the world are great enemies unto it. The devil doubtless hath destroyed many good books in the Church, as he hath rooted out and slain many saints, concerning whom we have now no knowledge. But, no thanks unto him, the Bible he was fain to leave unmeddled with. In like manner Baptism, the Sacrament, and the Office of Preaching have remained among us against the power of many tyrants and heretics that have opposed the same. These our Lord God hath kept and maintained by his special strength. Homer, Virgil, and suchlike are profitable and ancient books; but, in comparison of the Bible, they are nothing to be regarded.

By whom and at what Times the Bible was translated.

Two hundred and forty-one years before the humanity of Christ, the Five Books of Moses, and the Prophets, were translated out of the Hebrew into the Greek tongue by the Septuagint Interpreters, the seventy doctors or learned men then at Jerusalem, in the time of Eleazar the High-priest, at the request of Ptolemeus Philadelphus, King of Egypt, which King allowed great charges and expenses for the translating of the same.

Then, one hundred and twenty-four years after the birth of Christ, his death and passion, the Old Testament was translated out of Hebrew into Greek by a Jew, named Aquila (being converted to the Christian faith), in the time of Hadrian the Emperor.

Fifty and three years after this Aquila, the Bible was also translated by Theodosius.

In the three-and-thirtieth year after Theodosius, it was translated by Symmachus, under the Emperor Severus.

Eight years after Symmachus, the Bible was also translated by one whose name is unknown, and the same is called the Fifth Translation.

## Erasmus

**Desiderius Erasmus.** Desiderius Erasmus, ‘the crowning glory of Christian Humanists,’ was born in the late 1460’s, in Rotterdam. (German literature? Given the proximity of German to Dutch, and the porous proximity of Germany and Holland, in the Renaissance, we might call Erasmus a representative of Germanic rather than German literature. His regional greatness, in any case, ensures his position in the present encyclopedia of German literature.) Orphaned—his parents never married, and remained a lifelong source of shame to Erasmus—Erasmus grew up in poverty, yet thanks to his exceptional ability he qualified for an outstanding primary education. (His school was the first pre University school in Europe at which Greek was taught, and Erasmus’ total familiarity with those two languages, in which he did most of his writing, began at this stage.) By a natural course, given his remarkable gifts, Erasmus took his vows and was ordained at the age of 25, was next entered into an Augustinian monastery, in which he was quickly disgusted, he says, by the crude manners of the monks. Through the intervention of the Bishop of Combray, Erasmus was permitted to leave the cloister, while of course still in full Catholic communion as priest, and to start on what would be a lifetime course of travels, during which he lectured and resided regularly at the best of European Universities, but meantime retained his cherished role as an independent scholar.

**Life of an independent scholar.** An independent, Erasmus was to write incessantly, and voluminously, and to disseminate his ideas widely among the elite of what intellectual environment he was traversing. The ideas he disseminated were those of a humane scholar, ever more aware that he was living through a period of culture-shaping importance—we would later call it the Reformation—but refusing to take a militant stance in the movement. (Erasmus turned away from the Augsburg Confession in which Luther and Melancthon, and other dissident dignitaries of the German church abjured Catholicism, and remained true to his own priesthood.) It was this independent but faithful position that Erasmus maintained, through a seventy year life of writing, teaching, and scholarship.

**Erasmus travels and writes abroad.** In 1492 Erasmus went to study at the University of Paris. Shortly after he accepted an invitation to teach at the University of Cambridge, where he occupied the Chair of Divinity, and collaborated on theological texts and issues with many of the outstanding intellectuals in Britain. (He complained of British weather and ale, and that there was not sufficient wine to reduce his aches and pains, but he remained.

## Reading

### *Primary source reading*

*Collected Works of Erasmus, 1974-*. (Ongoing project, University of Toronto Press.)

### *Secondary source reading*

Betenholz, Peter, *Encounter with a radical Erasmus. Erasmus’ work as a source of radical thought in early modern Europe*, 2009.

### *Further Reading*

Huizinga, Johan, *Erasmus and the Age of the Reformation*, 1952. (Old but classic.)

### *Original language reading*

Garber, Klaus, ed. *Nation und Literatur im Europa der Fruehen Neuzeit.*, 1989.

## Suggested paper topics

Erasmus is the only non German writer—he was Dutch—to be included under German literature in the present Encyclopedia. Not all editors agree on the decision to include him in such a context. What is your feeling? How sharply is the word ‘German’ definable, when it comes to writers of the 14th and 15th centuries?

How would you characterize the attitude of Erasmus vis a vis the ‘Church abuses’ Martin Luther decries? Is Erasmus appalled by those abuses, or more ‘tolerant?’ What is the background for Erasmus’ particular orientation?

*EXCERPT* from Erasmus Colloquies

[http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk\\_files=1494033&pageno=4](http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk_files=1494033&pageno=4)

AN ADMONITORY NOTE OF ERASMUS ON THE TRICKS AND IMPOSTURES OF A CERTAIN DOMINICAN, WHO HAD PUBLISHED IN FRANCE THE COLLOQUIES OF ERASMUS RIDICULOUSLY INTERPOLATED BY HIMSELF. \_A Book of Colloquies had appeared, the material of which was collected partly from domestic talks, partly from my papers; but with a mixture of certain trivialities, not only without sense, but also in bad Latin,--perfect solecisms. This trash was received with wonderful applause; for in these matters too Fortune has her sport. I was compelled therefore to lay hands on these trumperies. At length, having applied somewhat greater care, I added considerable matter, so that the book might be of fair size, and in fact might appear worthy even of the honour of being dedicated to John Erasmus, son of Froben, a boy then six years old, but of extraordinary natural ability. This was done in the year 1522. But the nature of this work is such, that it receives addition as often as it is revised. Accordingly I frequently made an addition for the sake of the studious, and of John Froben; but so tempered the subject-matters, that besides the pleasure of reading, and their use in polishing the style, they might also contain that which would conduce to the formation of character. Even while the book I have referred to contained nothing but mere rubbish, it was read with wonderful favour by all. But when it had gained a richer utility, it could not escape [Greek: tōn sykophantōn dēgmata]. A certain divine of Louvain, frightfully blear of eye, but still more of mind, saw in it four heretical passages. There was also another incident connected with this work worth relating. It was lately printed at Paris with certain passages corrected, that is to say, corrupted, which appeared to attack monks, vows, pilgrimages, indulgences, and other things of that kind which, if held in great esteem among the people, would be a source of more plentiful profit to gentlemen of that order. But he did this so stupidly, so clumsily, that you would swear he had been some street buffoon: although the author of so silly a piece is said to be a certain divine of the Dominican order, by nation a Saxon. Of what avail is it to add his name and surname, which he himself does not desire to have suppressed? A monster like him knows not what shame is; he would rather look for praise from his villany. This rogue added a new Preface in my name, in which he represented three men sweating at the instruction of one boy: Capito, who taught him Hebrew, Beatus Greek, and me, Latin. He represents me as inferior to each of the others alike in learning and in piety; intimating that there is in the Colloquies a sprinkling of certain matters which savour of Luther's dogmas. And here I know that some will chuckle, when they read that Capito is favoured by such a hater of Luther with the designation of an excellent and most accomplished man. These and many things of the like kind he represents me as saying, taking the pattern of his effrontery from a letter of Jerome, who complains that his rivals had circulated a forged letter under his name amongst a synod of bishops in Africa; in which he was made to confess that, deceived by certain Jews, he had falsely translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew. And they would have succeeded in persuading the bishops that the letter was Jerome's, had they been able in any tolerable degree, to imitate Jerome's style.

### **17th Century German Literature**

The historical event of huge importance for Germany, in the seventeenth century, was the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), which was brought on by the Hapsburgs' renewed attempts to stamp out Protestants—thus, by the continuing inter faith conflict opened up Martin Luther, and a century after the Reformation mired in power-turf issues which were decidedly not theological. The Protestants were aided in the war by Denmark, Sweden, and France, and once again they won freedom of worship. Such freedom, however, was dearly bought. Germany was so utterly devastated and so nearly depopulated (about two thirds of the population perished) that it was unable to recover for nearly a century.

The century was for the most part literarily barren, with important exceptions made for the religious/visionary poetries of Jacob Boehme and Angelus Silesius, and the fascinating novel *Simplicissimus* (1669) by Grimmelshausen.

## Jakob Boehme

**Christian tradition in early German literature.** Meister Eckhart, Erasmus, Luther, now Jakob Boehme the true Christian mystic, and not much later Angelus Silesius (1624-1677), who was born in the year Boehme (1515-1624) died: however shaky the engagement of early German literature with Christianity, one can say that by the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance there is complete entanglement between German literature, the topic of this part of our Encyclopedia, and the Christian tradition. The just named authors would be at the top of any reading list of German literature through the seventeenth century.

**Jacob Boehme the individual.** Jacob Boehme was born near Goerlitz, in present day Poland, in what was then the Holy Roman Empire. His father was a well to do Lutheran peasant, but the boy's circumstances dictated a modest career, and he was first assigned to cattle herding, until it was found that his health would not permit such exertions. He then took up shoemaking, was assigned to live with a supportive family, but they were not Christian and Boehme left them, in need of spiritual nourishment. In 1599 he got this nourishment, married, and went on to have four children. But he was no candidate for a settled bourgeois life. In 1600 he had the first of many visions. Though he would live and write profusely around those visions he would continue, for the rest of his life, to reside and work in the communities where he was born.

**Boehme's visions and thought.** The first of Boehme's visions occurred in 1600, when he was watching a beam of sunlight on a pewter dish, and in that perception had a vision of the structure of the universe, and of its inherent order. (He will come to write, at length, about evil as essentially disorder, as nothing but absence of order.) Despite warnings that he should desist from the direction of his thoughts—for Boehme began rapidly to write down and disseminate his visions—Boehme persisted from 1602 on with the text, *Aurora*, which was going to be his first shocking appearance on the religious stage of his time. There was much uproar against what appeared to some to be the pantheism of this early thought, and the uproar grew. Among the notions assuming thematic form in Boehme's extensive writings—particularly in the *Mysterium magnum* and *De signatura Rerum*-- are many which, in the sensitive new religious climate of Reformation, when new movements and affiliations were shaping in the wake of Luther, were extremely unnerving to orthodoxy. Boehme's notion that the Fall (and the Devil) are necessary parts of the Creation touched the Christian sensibility forcefully. Is God then partly evil? Was Christ's sacrifice necessary and 'good'? The counterpart idea that man can become 'as god' by divesting himself of humanity and seeing the world as God sees it, is equally disturbing, and confusing to the orthodox. We are reminded of the daring conflation, in Meister Eckhart, of the perceptions of human and the existence of God. In all of these realms of thought, whether seeing the creation as a vast birth giving field of suffering, or seeing mankind as evil struggling toward the light, and doing so with the power of free will, given by God, Boehme's often 'daring' thought put him at odds with the newly established Lutheran church, and yet his thinking remains inscribed inside the theology of Luther.

**Is Meister Eckhart a literary creator?** Is this work German literature? As we track the development of German literature, from *The Niebelungenlied* to the Reformation, we see that the German cultural imagination staged its first efforts in terms of what we would call religion imagination. Whether we consider this imagination purely fictive, or part of another reality discourse, will depend on the viewpoint toward religion which we bring to reading visionaries like Boehme.

### Reading

#### *Primary source reading*

*An Introduction to Jacob Boehme: Four Centuries of Thought and Reception*, ed. Hessayon and Apetrei, 2013.

#### *Secondary source reading*

Goodrick-Clarke, N., *Jacob Boehme and Theosophy*, 2008.

#### *Further reading*

Weeks, Andrew, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the 17th century Philosopher and Mystic*, 1991.

#### *Original language reading*

Kemper, Hans-Georg, *Deutsche Lyrik der fruehen Neuzeit*, 3 vols., 1986-7.



*Suggested paper topics*

Does Boehme seem to you to break from the spirit of Luther's movement, or to exceed Luther in giving the individual free and direct access to the experience of god? Had the churches, both Catholic and Lutheran, reason to fear the thought of a 'maverick' genius like Boehme? What has been the history of church response to mysticism?

What relation do you see between the mystical imagination and that of the great (but not mystical) writer, like Shakespeare? When Boehme sees the order of the universe in a bowl of water is he having a 'poetic vision'? Consult, in answering, the work of William Blake, who was one of the 'writers' most profoundly indebted to Boehme.

*Excerpt* The Way to Christ <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/boehme/waytochrist.ii.ii.html>

Showing how Man should consider himself.

CHRIST said, Except ye turn and become as Children, ye shall not see the kingdom of God. Again, he said to Nicodemus; Except a Man be born again, of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God; for that which is born of the Flesh is Flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.

2. Also the Scripture positively declareth, that the fleshly natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, for they are Foolishness unto him, neither can he know or conceive them.

3. Now seeing that all of us have Flesh and Blood and are mortal, as we find by Experience, and yet the Scripture saith, that We are the Temples of the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in us, and that the Kingdom of God is within us, and that Christ must be formed in us; also, that He will give us his Flesh for Food, and his Blood for Drink: And that, Whosoever shall not eat of the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood hath no Life in him. Therefore we should seriously consider, what kind of Man in us it is, that is capable of being thus like the Deity.

4. For it cannot be said of the mortal Flesh that turneth to Earth again, and liveth in the Vanity of this World, and continually lusteth against God; that it is the Temple of the Holy Ghost; much less can it be said that the New Birth cometh to pass in this earthly Flesh, which dieth and putrifieth, and is a continual House of Sin.

5. Yet seeing that it remaineth certain, that a True Christian is born of Christ, and that the New Birth is the Temple of the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us, and that the New Man only, that is born of Christ, partaketh of the Flesh and Blood of Christ; it appeareth that it is not so easy a Matter to be a Christian.

6. And that Christianity doth not consist in the mere knowing of the History, and applying the Knowledge thereof to ourselves, saying that Christ died for us, and hath destroyed Death and turned it into Life in us, and that He hath paid the Ransom for us, so that we need do nothing but comfort ourselves therewith, and steadfastly believe that it is so.

7. For we find of ourselves that Sin is living, lusting, strong, and powerfully working in the Flesh, and therefore it must be somewhat else, which doth not co-operate with Sin in the Flesh, nor willeth it, that is the New-Birth in Christ.

8. For St. Paul saith, There is no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. And further, Should we that are Christians be yet Sinners? God forbid, seeing we are dead to Sin in Christ.

9. Besides, the Man of Sin cannot be the Temple of the Holy Ghost; and yet, there is no Man that sinneth not, for God hath shut up all under Sin. As the Scripture saith, No one living is righteous in thy Sight, if thou imputest his Sins to him. The righteous Man falleth seven Times a Day; and yet it cannot be meant that the righteous falleth and sinneth, but his mortal and sinful Man. For the righteousness of a Christian in Christ cannot Sin.

## Grimmelshausen

**Simplicissimus.** By 1668, the year of publication of Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus*, we have encountered nothing in German literature like 'prose fiction.' (What have we encountered, in the realm of high literature or religious-literary thought? We have been reading epic material—*Niebelungenlied* and *Parzifal*—which ties us to archaic Germanic culture worlds; poetries of love and urban guild, which were pronounced factors of German life from the 12th to the 16th centuries; deeply meditative religious philosophical thinking—Eckhart and Boehme; activist religious thought, scholarship, and creativity in the path breaking moves of Luther and Erasmus.) With *Simplicissimus* (1668) we come on full blooded imaginative prose, a novel, one that arises from personal experience, passed through the sieve of wide reading and careful workmanship. This work remains one of the wonders of its time, and takes its place with the work of Smollett and Defoe in the formation of a European novel tradition.

**Grimmelshausen and the Novel.** The novel is just beginning to make its voice heard in Europe: the reading public for popular literature is growing, especially in Germany, where the western printing press was created and book selling and the book industry were starting to take off. The conclusion of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) was only recent, Germany had been left in shambles and disease, and persons like Grimmelshausen (1621-1676) were on all sides, for the most part disoriented and directionless refuse of the War. *Simplicissimus* is a fictionalized autobiography of its author, who grew up among scenes of destruction and havoc, and who captures them in a fascinating fictional canvas; this book before you—and its sequel, *Courage*, which may particularly capture your attention for the vigorous, sympathetic, and sexy picture of the life of a camp-follower during the war.

**Grimmelshausen's own life and the novel.** Whether the present text is an autobiography of not—for certainly it might seem so—we know that Grimmelshausen lived events that intermeshed with the war. At the age of ten he was kidnapped by Hessian soldiery—fighting for the Holy Roman Emperor against the Protestants—and held captive by them throughout his teen years; a time, we can imagine, when he saw some aspects of the brutal war up close. At war's end, still a young man, he was taken into service by the Bishop of Strassbourg, with whom he resided until, in 1665, he was made a Magistrate in Baden, a position, and residence, in which he remained for the rest of his life. In other words, parts of his life suggest the world of the war, others a post-war existence of considerable stability. From hearsay and from his own imagination, at least in part, we have to imagine him bringing forth a tale that includes such events as these: a hero who is left on his own as a child and goes out into the fields to learn religion from a hermit, who went on to become a page to a great man, then a robber, then the discoverer of a significant treasure, who next marries, promptly deserts his wife, heads to Paris where he makes out to be a classy flaneur, returns to the cave of the hermit, whom he discovers to be his father, and then settles down, pipe and slippers, to a comfortable aging process.

**What it all means.** An account like the foregoing, which may seem flip, fails if it leaves out the maturely human tone of the narrator's life. The narration is carried out with some ironic distance, much compassion for the presented world, and a sense of humor which leavens the roughness of the war—one thinks perhaps of the brilliant tone of *Catch-22*. Readers who will love Tom Jones, a century later, can here see one of the seedbeds of that thoughtful and reckless comedy.

### Reading

#### *Primary source reading*

*Simplicissimus*, trans. Mike Mitchell, 1999.

#### *Secondary source reading*

*A Companion to the Works of Grimmelshausen*. Otto, Karl 2003,

#### *Further Reading*

*Grimmelshausen, Life of Courage*, 2001. (Grimmelshausen's fascinating sequel to *Simplicissimus*.)

#### *Original language reading*

Meid, Volker, *Grimmelshausen: Epoche—Werk—Wirkung*, 1984.

#### *Suggested paper topics*

Suggestion: look into the Spanish novel tradition of the picaresque—check the prototype novel, *Lazarillo de Tormes*, from the mid 16th century, some plays of Quevedo, or for that matter *Don Quixote* of Cervantes—and then check out some of the collateral work being done, in the 17th century, by writers like Grimmelshausen, who display a picaro character in circumstances which are often full of human meaning. Is this a genre of writing we understand and appreciate today?

Courage is a star player in *Simplicissimus*, then reappears as the main figure in a continuation fiction, written by Grimmelshausen a couple of years later, *Courage*. What is Grimmelshausen's attitude toward this 'woman of the road,' this easy going but long suffering figure of strength? Take a look at Defoe's *Moll Flanders* for a characterization of the same kind of rough and ready, and witty, street woman—from the standpoint of contemporary British society.

### **EXCERPT**

[http://books.google.co.ve/books?id=7cq85KGmb3sC&dq=grimmelshausen&printsec=frontcover&source=in&hl=en&ei=kkCNS538DovcNtTglW4&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=&f=false](http://books.google.co.ve/books?id=7cq85KGmb3sC&dq=grimmelshausen&printsec=frontcover&source=in&hl=en&ei=kkCNS538DovcNtTglW4&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=&f=false) So far and no further could I get with my song: for in a moment was I surrounded, sheep and all, by a troop of cuirassiers that had lost their way in the thick wood and were brought back to their right path by my music and my calls to my flock. "Aha," quoth I to myself, "these be the right rogues! these be the four-legged knaves and thieves whereof thy dad did tell thee!" For at first I took horse and man (as did the Americans the Spanish cavalry) to be but one beast, and could not but conceive these were the wolves; and so would sound the retreat for these horrible centaurs and send them a-flying: but scarce had I blown up my bellows to that end when one of them catches me by the shoulder and swings me up so roughly upon a spare farm horse they had stolen with other booty that I must needs fall on the other side, and that too upon my dear bagpipe, which began so miserably to scream as it would move all the world to pity: which availed nought, though it spared not its last breath in the bewailing of my sad fate. To horse again I must go, it mattered not what my bagpipe did sing or say: yet what vexed me most was that the troopers said I had hurt my dear bagpipe, and therefore it had made so heathenish an outcry. So away my horse went with me at a good trot, like the "primum mobile," for my dad's farm. Now did strange and fantastic imaginings fill my brain; for I did conceive, because I sat upon such a beast as I had never before seen, that I too should be changed into an iron man. And because such a change came not, there arose in me other foolish fantasies: for I thought these strange creatures were but there to help me drive my sheep home; for none strayed from the path, but all, with one accord, made for my dad's farm. So I looked anxiously when my dad and my mammy should come out to bid us welcome: which yet came not: for they and our Ursula, which was my dad's only daughter, had found the back-door open and would not wait for their guests. \_ HOW SIMPLICISSIMUS'S PALACE WAS STORMED, PLUNDERED, AND RUINATED, AND IN WHAT SORRY FASHION THE SOLDIERS KEPT HOUSE THERE Although it was not my intention to take the peace-loving reader with these troopers to my dad's house and farm, seeing that matters will go ill therein, yet the course of my history demands that I should leave to kind posterity an account of what manner of cruelties were now and again practised in this our German war: yea, and moreover testify by my own example that such evils must often have been sent to us by the goodness of Almighty God for our profit. For, gentle reader, who would ever have taught me that there was a God in Heaven if these soldiers had not destroyed my dad's house, and by such a deed driven me out among folk who gave me all fitting instruction thereupon? Only a little while before, I neither knew nor could fancy to myself that there were any people on earth save only my dad, my mother and me, and the rest of our household, nor did I know of any human habitation but that where I daily went out and in. But soon thereafter I understood the way of men's coming into this world, and how they must leave it again. I was only in shape a man and in name a Christian: for the rest I was but a beast. Yet the Almighty looked upon my innocence with a pitiful eye, and would bring me to a knowledge both of Himself and of myself.

## Angelus Silesius

**Introduction to Silesius.** "I am like God and God like me. I am as large as God. He is as small as I." Angelus Silesius (1624-1677) plays off of the identity of God and man. (Silesius was off and on accused by the Church of pantheism, of believing that the world exists as God, but that God is more (the animating force) than the world.) Who was this 'Silesian Angel,' and why was he such a source of distress for many theologians in his time?

**The life and perspective of Angelus Silesius.** Angelus Silesius, the 'Silesian Angel' as he christened himself later in life, having changed his name from plain German to suggestive Latin, was born in Breslau in 1624, only three years after the death of Grimmelshausen. His father was a military man of some distinction, a member of the lower nobility, and the future Angelus was sent to the prominent Elisabethgymnasium, a promising preparatory school in Breslau; his education was excellent. For higher studies Angelus was sent to the University of Strasbourg and to the Netherlands, where he became aware of the mystic thinking of Jacob Bohme. Meanwhile, following an inclination strong in him since childhood, he had converted to Catholicism, and been ordained; in 1663, he also pursued medical studies on an advanced level. This well credentialed and brilliant young man was then appointed Court Physician to the Duke of Wuertemberg, a position which promised him a good career, but the chemistry of the appointment was not effective. Silesius began to speak out critically against Lutheranism, in this court which had strong Lutheran leanings, and, above all, began to enter more frequently into the visionary condition. In the end Silesius was fired from his court position, and the rumors of heresy, which were quick to follow in such cases—think of Eckhart and Jacob Boehme, both of whom were victims of smear campaigns—and retired to a Jesuit retreat house where he spent the rest of his life.

**The visions of Silesius.** Visionary thinking, among members of the clergy, inevitably leads to official nervousness. (We see, in our own day, the time consuming protocols that proceed any ratification of miracles or the saintly condition.) in the case of Silesius, the records of visions fitted exquisitely into the prosody made available to him in time by the elegant works of Martin Opitz (1597-1639), who had dominated the scene of German poetry in the seventeenth century, and had particularly reshaped the technical direction of the craft, by introducing the French alexandrine line as the standard line for German poetry. Silesius moved directly into this verse form—the translations to be found below, in our excerpts, don't attempt the difficult challenge of putting Silesius into alexandrines in English. In any case, in the 1650's when Silesius decided to ask permission to have his poems published—as a priest he required an imprimatur—he was granted it, and in his 1676 his collection of 1500 short poems, aphorisms, and epigrams, *Der cherubinische Wandersman*, was published. Most of the work there was in rhyming alexandrine couplets, often arranged—through syntactical inversion, wordplay, learned allusions—to conceal a hidden and mystical meaning. The reason for the secrecy can perhaps be sensed from the brief excerpts offered below. 'I am as large as god/ he is as small as I': this leitmotif, with which we opened the entry, pervades Silesius' poems, and contributes even to the simplest of his pieces a paradoxical richness.

**Borges and Silesius.** The brilliant Argentinian writer and poet, Jose Luis Borges, viewed Silesius as a chief inspiration. Put in English, the Silesian verses—'The rose is without a why; it blossoms because it blossoms'—were for Borges the summary of Silesius' (and his own) view of life.

### Reading

#### *Primary source reading*

Angelus Silesius: the Cherubinic Wanderer, trans. Shradly and Schmidt, 1986.

#### *Secondary source reading*

Wehr, Gerhard, Angelus Silesius. The Mystic, 2011.

#### *Further reading*

Sammons, Jeffrey, Angelus Silesius, 1967.

#### *Original language reading*

Walz, Herbert, Deutsche Literatur der Reformationszeit: eine Einfuehrung, 1988.

#### *Suggested paper topics*

What, from your own experience, could be threatening to any church about the kind of ‘pantheism’ or ‘panentheism’ (check the term) attributed to Angelus Silesius? Meister Eckhart and Jacob Boehme, who preceded Silesius, both reviewed, deepened, modified the notion that man and God are intricately interwoven. Does this position, which Silesius reaffirms, leave room for Trinity, Crucifixion, Redemption?

You will have noticed that the high literature of the early period of German literature intersects at many points with religious thinking. Does the Reformation period seem to you especially replete with the religious imagination? Is the impression correct, that the purely literary imagination, the creative force behind art for its own sake, is irrelevant in such a period as the seventeenth century in Germany?

### Excerpts

*en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Angelus\_Silesius*

#### **GODHEAD**

##### **BEING IS NOT MEASURED**

Turn wheresoe'er I will, I find no evidence  
of End, Beginning, Centre or Circumference.

##### **GOD NEVER EXPLORETH HIMSELF**

The Thought and Deed of Deity  
Are of such richness and extent  
That It remaineth to Itself  
An Undiscovered Continent.

##### **IN THE SEA MANY ARE ONE**

A Loaf holds many grains of corn  
And many myriad drops the Sea:  
So is God's Oneness Multitude  
And that great Multitude are we.

##### **ALL INTO ONE AGAIN**

The All proceedeth from the One,  
And into One must All regress:  
If otherwise, the All remains  
Asunder-riven manyness.

### **18th century German Literature**

The 18th century, especially the second half of it, is arguably the richest period in German cultural life, and the period of its influence over world wide culture, to this date. Although the country was still a hodgepodge of more or less independent states bounds together in a loose confederation, Prussia began to emerge as the dominant power, and glimmerings of a national consciousness began to appear. In the Seven Years War (1756-1763) the brilliant leadership of Frederick II (the Great, ruled 1740-1786) enabled Prussia, assisted by troops from Hanover and subsidies from England, to withstand the armies of France, Austria, and Russia.

In Germany, as in most of the other European countries, rationalism and deism were beginning to attract many adherents. These systems of belief were opposed first by pietism (a revival of simple piety, plus religious emotionalism) and later by Rousseauism. The theories of Diderot and Rousseau about democracy, the rights of man, and individual liberty led to no political upheaval in Germany—but in the social and intellectual realms Rousseauism imposed on rationalism helped to foster the indigenous movement known as Sturm und Drang (Storm and Stress) ‘which had as its objectives a reform of political and social life and a regeneration of literature.’ After mid century there was a burst of great writing—one thinks of this as the Classical Age of German literature—Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Herder, and from there, passing into the following century, the rich contributions of Germany to the Romantic movement, and to its philosophic drivers, Kant and a lineage of greats

## Lessing

**Gottfried von Lessing.** Gottfried von Lessing (1729-1781) was the exemplary Enlightenment figure of the German 18th century: a dramatist, public art critic, an art theorist, and a public figure in the new urban art world. As we step into his world, we leave the world of Grimmelshausen (d. 1676) and Silesius (d. 1677), for example, far behind—where ‘behind’ means fifty years closer to the intense world of very early modern Europe, to which still clings much of the late Mediaeval—even the worlds of the Meistersingers or Meister Eckhart. Those two or three generations of difference were of great importance for the cultural environments of all western European societies, and perhaps of greatest importance for Germany, which—as the documentation in this Encyclopedia suggests—barely had a Renaissance, through which the mediaeval could be mediated, and might be said to have substituted a Reformation for a Renaissance. How does this play out in Lessing’s life?

**Lessing’s career and thought.** Gottfried was born in a small village in Saxony. His father was a clergyman at the local Latin School, and Lessing himself was well educated in classical languages, before going on to study theology and medicine at the University of Leipzig. (Noteworthy that among the intelligentsia, of early modern Europe, advanced study of medicine and theology were often coupled; twin skills in understanding personhood, corporeal and spiritual.) Between 1748-1760 Lessing was employed by various opinion journals and art critical papers, which played important roles in the , growing cultural life of major cities like Hamburg. He wrote reviews of plays, art exhibits, and social events, starting to gather the texts which would be part of his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*. While carrying out that urban critic work—a byproduct of the new cultural sophistication of the city, in which bourgeois middle class values, and a new level of expendable income, were changing the landscape—Lessing had been working as a dramaturgical adviser to the Hamburg National Theater. It was during this time that he was also writing, producing, and directing his own path breaking dramas, comedies (like *Minna von Barnhelm*) that opened out the inner ironies of domestic life), bourgeois tragedies (like *Emilia Galotti*), or idea plays—a fresh phenomenon on the German stage (like *Nathan the Wise*, which is one of Lessing’s many eloquent appeals for respect among members of different religions.)

**Lessing’s critical mind.** It was in the course of this active professional and dramaturgical life that Lessing wrote a number of his most remarkable critical works, like *Laokoon* (1766), in which he analyzes a famous piece of sculpture, based on a scene from Virgil’s Aeneid, in order to discriminate between the skills (narrative and depictive, respectively) proper to poetry and sculpture. From such a text we see what an immensely sharp aesthetic perception Lessing brought to his work. This prominence of the aesthetic, in his thinking, is one more indicator of the new cultural world we move into with the German Enlightenment. We have seen powerful artistic skills, like those of the earliest German poetry, epic and love song, but we have not seen critical thinking about the arts.

**Lessing and the Enlightenment.** Lessing was a major voice for toleration and human understanding, one might say a Christian humanism with some resemblance to a much earlier thinker like Erasmus. But there is a difference, and it points to the Enlightenment. Lessing is a friend to humanity and its dignity, and for him the Christian input (which he takes for granted as essential) is a broad civilizing spirit rather than a powerful set of arguments.

## Reading

### *Primary source reading*

Lessing, Gottfried, *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. McCormick, 1984.

### *Secondary source reading*

Harpham, Geoffrey Galt, ‘So...What is Enlightenment?, An inquisition into modernity,’ *Critical Inquiry* 20 (Spring, 1994), 524-556.

### *Further reading*

Luckhurst, Mary, *Dramaturgy: A revolution in Theater*, 2006.

### *Original language reading*

Bahr, E., ed., *Was ist Aufklaerung? Thesen und Definitionen*, 1974.

*Suggested paper topics*

The Enlightenment of course opens attention onto the role of women in literature and the arts, as well as in society. What kind of understanding of women does Lessing show in dramas like *Emilia Galotti* or *Minna von Barnhelm*? Compare his view of women with that of earlier German writers we have met. Or, if you can, with Goethe's treatment of Gretchen in *Faust*. From the strictly aesthetic standpoint, does Lessing put women to good artistic use?

Please reevaluate the argument of *Laocoon* for our own time. What are the issues of lasting interest here? Are we still interested in the difference between the narrative work of language arts like poetry, and the 'static' pictorial quality of works like sculpture? Do those issues go to the heart of the nature of the arts?

**EXCERPT** Laocoon Introduction

[www.archive.org/.../laocoongott00lessuoft/laocoongott00lessuoft\\_djvu.t.](http://www.archive.org/stream/laocoongott00lessuoft/laocoongott00lessuoft_djvu.t.)  
[http://www.archive.org/stream/laocoongott00lessuoft/laocoongott00lessuoft\\_djvutxt](http://www.archive.org/stream/laocoongott00lessuoft/laocoongott00lessuoft_djvutxt)  
 The first person who compared Painting and Poetry with each other was a man of fine feeling, who perceived that both these arts produced upon him a similar effect. Both, he felt, placed before us things absent as present, appearance as reality. Both deceived, and the deceit of both was pleasing. A second person sought to penetrate into the inner nature of this pleasure, and discovered that in both it flowed from one and the same source. The beautiful, the notion of which we first derive from corporeal objects, has general rules applicable to various things; to actions, to thoughts, as well as to forms. A third person, who reflected upon the value and upon the distribution of these general rules, remarked that some of them had prevailed more in Painting and others more in Poetry, and that with respect to the latter rules, Poetry could be aided by the illustrations and examples supplied by Painting; with respect to the former rules, Painting could be aided by the illustrations and examples supplied by Poetry. The first was an amateur; the second was a philosopher; the third was a critic. It was not easy for the two first to make a wrong use either of their feeling or of their reasoning. On the other hand, the principal force of the remarks of the critic depends upon the correctness of their application to the particular case, and it would be astonishing, inasmuch as for one really acute, you will find fifty merely witty critics, if this application had always been made with all the caution requisite to hold the scales equal between the two Arts. Apelles and Protogenes, in their lost writings upon Painting confirmed and illustrated the rules relating to it by the rules of Poetry, which had been already established; so that we may be assured that in them the same moderation and accuracy prevailed, which at the present day we see in the works of Aristotle, Cicero, Horace, and Quintilian, when they apply the principles and experience of Painting to Eloquence and to Poetry. It is the privilege of the Ancients in no one thing to do too much or too little. But we moderns have often believed that in many of our works we have surpassed them, because we have changed their little byways of pleasure into highways, even at the risk of being led by these shorter and safer highways into paths which end in a wilderness.



## Herder

**Johann Gottfried Herder.** Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) was an influential German philosopher, memoirist, social critic, and early stage cultural anthropologist, who contributed deeply to the German Enlightenment, to the movement of *Sturm und Drang* (*Storm and Stress*; the pre-Romantic move toward a freeing of emotions on the stage and in writing: 1760's-1780's), and to Weimar Classicism, which became the prevailing literary development of the German late eighteenth century, centered around Goethe, and was already merging into Romanticism.

**Herder's Life.** Herder was born in Mohrungen, Prussia, and was brought up in an impoverished household, his father a preacher. Extremely studious, as well as hard worked, Herder learned and earned his way to the not distant University of Königsberg, hoping to study medicine. As it turned out he came under powerful influences: the lectures of Immanuel Kant, who was drafting the early stages of his culture shaking 'idealism,' and Johann Georg Hamann, a friend and adviser, who led Herder to read and admire Shakespeare. Already from these influences traces of the Herderian world view become visible. From Shakespeare Herder would go on to discover the powerful nation-uniting force of a great poet, who above all formed and formulated the language of his culture, while from Kant, we sense, Herder deepened his instinctual sense that sense life—the daily empirical life of 'ordinary men and women'—is closely allied to their conceptual ideologies and spiritual achievements.

**Herder's career develops.** In 1764 Herder became a pastor and teacher in Riga, from which, after five years of work, he retired to take a sea voyage to Nantes, in France, and on to Paris. (The account of this trip, *Journal of my Journey in the Year 1769*, is one of his typically brilliant accounts of life as he experienced it—a blend of comparative literature and linguistics, anthropology, and folk nationalism.) By 1770 Herder moved on to Strassbourg, where by great luck he met the young Goethe, with whom he exchanged heady innovative ideas that would lead both men into the *Sturm und Drang* movement. By the mid 1770's Herder would join Goethe, who had helped Herder find a job in Weimar, and with others they worked into writings that constitute the Weimar classicism which was not much later to slip over into the Romanticism of the early 19th century.

**Herder and German Folk Culture.** While Herder was extremely sensitive to the spirit of his time, certain ideas pervade his thinking from beginning to end, and work their way into his numerous writings, of which we might say, today, that they do not peak in any masterwork but contribute consistently, for more than thirty years, to building a national culture for Germany. His early *Fragments on Recent German Literature*, 1766-67, is a creative diatribe against what Herder considers the coldness of French neoclassicism, with its Latinate base; and a plea for a German literature based on German folk and literary traditions. His *On German Ways and Art* (1773) is a eulogy of Shakespeare, who caught the spirit of his own age, and in whose example Germans can read the potential they have in their own cultural traditions for the making of the greatest literature. *Volklieder, Volksongs* (1778-79) is a collection of 182 folksongs from many different cultures, much of the work translated by Herder, and evidence of the creative power residing with the Volk. Herder's *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784-1791) concentrate his many notions of the evolution of mankind toward Humanity, a gradual process through which all nations and peoples, in their different ways, contribute to the making of a worthy human race.

## Reading

### Primary Source Reading

Herder: *Selected Writings on Aesthetics*, ed. G. Moore, 2006.

### Secondary Source Reading.

Herder: *Philosophical Writings*, ed. M.N. Forster, 2002.

### Further Reading

*J.G. Herder on Social and Political Culture* ed. F. M. Barnard, first pub. 1969, reprinted 2010.

### Original language reading

Kiesel, Helmut; Muench, Paul, *Gesellschaft und literatur im 18. Jahrhundert: Voraussetzungen und Entstehung des literarischen Markts in Deutschland*, 1977.

### Suggested paper topics

What seems to you to be the driving center of the many areas of thought in which Herder was prominent? Is he a philosopher, in your opinion, or a nationalist, or a linguist, or an early sociologist? Or is he a thinker who is constantly reforming a new center for himself as he goes along?

Shakespeare plays an important role in Herder's thought. What is that role? Do you see, in Shakespeare's writing, the massive power that Herder is drawn to? Can you see that power in Hamlet, which was the first play of Shakespeare Herder read in English—in his schooldays, under the tutelage of his friend, Hamann. Can you see why Herder preferred Shakespeare to French neoclassicism, and referred to the great alexandrine works of 17th century France as 'sewage from the Seine'?

*Excerpt* [http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Johann\\_Gottfried\\_Herder](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Johann_Gottfried_Herder)

With the greatest possible solicitude avoid authorship. Too early or immoderately employed, it makes the head waste and the heart empty; even were there no other worse consequences. A person, who reads only to print, to all probability reads amiss; and he, who sends away through the pen and the press every thought, the moment it occurs to him, will in a short time have sent all away, and will become a mere journeyman of the printing-office, a compositor.

Calmly take what ill betideth;  
 Patience wins the crown at length:  
 Rich repayment him abideth  
 Who endures in quiet strength.  
 Brave the tamer of the lion;  
 Brave whom conquered kingdoms praise;  
 Bravest he who rules his passions,  
 Who his own impatience sways.

Every one loves his country, his manners, his language, his wife, his children; not because they are the best in the World, but because they are absolutely his own, and he loves himself and his own labours in them.

I am no longer misled, therefore, by the mechanism of revolutions: it is as necessary to our species, as the waves to the stream, that it becomes not a stagnant pool. The genius of humanity blooms in continually renovated youth.

•  
 Air, fire, water and the earth evolve out of the spiritual and material staminibus in periodic cycles of time. Diverse connections of water, air, and light precede the emergence of the seed of the simplest plant, for instance moss. Many plants had to come into being, then die away before an animal emerged.

## Winckelmann

**Winckelmann and Lessing.** Like Gottfried Lessing, and many of his German contemporaries, Johann Winckelmann (1717-1768) took his deepest impulses from the Classical World, which was of course at the center of academic education in eighteenth century Europe and England, and served as the conventional pathway to the higher careers in the University and in the Church. In fact, when you consider Lessing's *Laokoon*, you may say that for both Winckelmann and Lessing the plastic arts of the Greeks and Romans formed the text of supreme importance. For Winckelmann the preoccupation with the Greeks, in particular, became the leitmotif of his life.

**Winckelmann the man.** Who was Johann Winckelmann? He was born in Stendahl, the son of a cobbler, of a mother who was daughter of a weaver; Winckelmann's childhood was hard and simple, but his academic drive to learn was powerful, and prevailed to gain him a solid classical education at two private gymnasia, from where at age 21 he went on to study Theology at the University of Halle. It was obvious, though, that Winckelmann was not a theologian; he turned instead to classical languages, but was unsatisfied with the instruction he found, and moved on, in sequence, to try his hand at a school teaching job, to do private tutoring—where as often he fell in love with a handsome young man, whom he was tutoring, and was rejected—and then to work as curator of the private library of Count von Bunau, an opportunity to extend his reading of contemporary Enlightenment as well as ancient Greek thought. From this point on, Winckelmann's trajectory was to be toward the lands of antiquity, especially Rome, that were targets for all German creators of his time. In 1754, in a well planned move, Winckelmann joined the Catholic Church, and with a grant from the Elector of Saxony left for Rome, and a sequence of posts with Papal dignitaries and Roman noble families. With the support of such agents, for work as a resident art historian and critic, and especially as a brilliant forerunner in archeological methods, Winckelmann remained in Rome until 1768, when he returned to the north, was totally depressed by it, and was in Trieste, on his way back to Italy, when he was murdered.

**Winckelmann's masterwork.** *The History of Art in Antiquity* (1764) was the most influential of Winckelmann's many works on ancient Greek art—especially on the examples of ancient Greek (and fake Greek and Roman) sculpture which were abundant and widely sought out in the Rome of the time. Winckelmann's History was a testimony to the beauty and ideal sensuality of the ancient Greek figure, and artist. In that art Winckelmann found what he called 'a noble simplicity and a quiet greatness,' and from the model of such art he wished to inspire his contemporaries in their quest to honor and depict the beauty of the human form. (Winckelmann stressed the brilliance of the ancient Greek sculptor, in rendering the essence of the depicted figure without any suggestion of the veins, muscles, nerves which lay under the surface, and in place of which the Greek genius like Phidias was able to strike right for the essence of the human, which was like 'the purest water from the center of the well.')

Like Lessing, Winckelmann turned to the ancient world for spiritual direction in the 'modern world.' From the time of these two great pioneers of Enlightenment, German culture was to remain preoccupied with Antiquity, especially with the Greek example. The inspired descriptive writing, with which Winckelmann drives his History, puts him in the first rank of the German literary minds of his time, as it made him the first widely popular German writer throughout European culture.

### Reading

#### *Primary source reading*

North, J.H., *Winckelmann's 'Philosophy of Art': A prelude to German Classicism*, 2012.

#### *Secondary source reading*

Nisbet, ed., *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Winckelmann, Lessing, Hamann, Herder, Schiller, Goethe*, 2009.

#### *Further reading*

Butler, E. M., *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany*, 1935; reprinted in 2012. (A classic study.)

#### *Original language reading*

Stolpe, Heinz, *Aufklaerung, Fortschritt, Humanitaet: Studien und Kritiken*, 1989.

### Suggested paper topics

Winckelmann puts much stress on the 'imitation' (Nachahmung) of the greatest works of Greek art, especially sculpture. In fact his greatest work is consciously devoted to that 'imitation.' What does he mean by that? Does he suggest a creative kind of imitation, by which the imitator raises himself to a higher level of humanity? Or is he following another tradition, by which 'art is thought of as the imitation of nature,' the precise representation?

The Enlightenment is a pan European movement with many meanings, all of which have to do with the modernization of European culture—in science, political and social thought, and art. Why do you suppose the influence of the ancient Classics was so coercive at this time? What was the particular driver behind the German form of this return to the Classical? How does the aesthetic humanism, which bursts out in Germany, relate to the formality of the contemporary French classical theater of Corneille and Racine?

**EXCERPT** On the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture

<http://www.arthistoryspot.com/2009/12/johann-joachim-winckelmann-reflections-on-the-imitation-of-greek-works-in-painting-and-sculpture/>

Good taste, which is becoming more prevalent throughout the world, had its origins under the skies of Greece. Every invention of foreign nations which was brought to Greece was, as it were, only a first seed that assumed new form and character here. We are told that Minerva chose this land, with its mild seasons, above all others for the Greeks in the knowledge that it would be productive of genius.

The taste which the Greeks exhibited in their works of art was unique and has seldom been taken far from its source without loss. Under more distant skies it found tardy recognition and without a doubt was completely unknown in the northern zones during a time when painting and sculpture, of which the Greeks are the greatest teachers, found few admirers. This was a time when the most valuable works of Correggio were used to cover the windows of the royal stables in Stockholm.

One has to admit that the reign of the great Augustus was the happy period during which the arts were introduced into Saxony as a foreign element. Under his successor, the German Titus, they became firmly established in this country, and with their help good taste is now becoming common. An eternal monument to the greatness of this monarch is that he furthered good taste by collecting and publicly displaying the greatest treasures from Italy and the very best paintings that other countries have produced. His eagerness to perpetuate the arts did not diminish until authentic works of Greek masters and indeed those of the highest quality were available for artists to imitate. The purest sources of art have been opened, and fortunate is the person who discovers and partakes of them. This search means going to Athens; and Dresden will from now on be an Athens for artists.

The only way for us to become great or, if this be possible, inimitable, is to imitate the ancients. What someone once said of Homer—that to understand him well means to admire him—is also true for the art works of the ancients, especially the Greeks. ...

## Klopstock

**Klopstock's Work.** Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1723-1803) lives into the century beyond, and in many ways is evidence of energies fermenting the future, in Enlightenment German thinking. It is not that he was fully aware of these gifts fermenting inside himself, for his great passion, from early on in life, was to complete a masterpiece, *Der Messias* (The Messiah), which was to link him to the efforts of John Milton, in *Paradise Lost* (1667), which were part of the great past. What powers Klopstock, as poet, could carry into the future of literature were to come from his lyric poetry—his volume of *Odes* (published in 1771) is today much more appreciated than his *Messias*, of which a distinguished scholar wrote that ‘of all the religious poems of the world, the *Messias* is unquestionably the most monotonous and difficult to read.’ (Of his lyrics, an equally notable critic observed that Klopstock was ‘the greatest lyric poet between Walther von der Vogelweide and Goethe.’) Who was this Klopstock?

**Klopstock's Life.** Klopstock was born in 1724 in Quedlinburg, eldest son of a lawyer. In 1739 he was sent to the outstanding classical gymnasium in Schulpforta, where he made his first acquaintance with Homer's epics—largely through the translation of the Swiss writer, Bodmer—and began conceiving of a long epic poem of his own, which was to gestate into the *Messias*, the thirty cantos of which would not ultimately be published until 1773, although sections of the work were appearing from 1751 on. For University Klopstock went to Jena, where at first he was to study theology, at which he was a brilliant thinker, but one endlessly going back to his epic visions. After Jena he spent some time working as a private tutor, then went to visit Bodmer in Zuerich. At that point a conflict of lifestyles—Klopstock was always the active one, social and expansive, a superb horseman—divided the two men's tastes, and as Klopstock, in the manner of literary men in his time, was sizing up his opportunities for the next move, among the princely court supporters, he drew the attention of King Frederick V of Denmark, and went to Copenhagen. His pleasure, and soon sadness, were wrapped up in this trip north, for on the way he met his wife Margaret Moeller, who died four years later—leaving him, in sadness, with the memory of the happiest years of his life. Not much later, the King of Denmark died, and Klopstock returned to Hamburg, to spend there the remainder of his life.

**The achievement of Klopstock.** The *Messias*, by general agreement, foundered on the impossibility of its theme, to dramatize and hallow Christ's Redemption of the world. (Milton had tried the challenge, in *Paradise Regained*, and by general consent was much less successful than in describing the drama of the Fall.) It is, though, noteworthy that in this huge epic, 20,000 lines, Klopstock made a prosodic decision which was game changing for German poetry. Instead of composing in French alexandrine lines, the ruling Latinized form of French classical literature, Klopstock created in hexameters, the verbal form of Greek and Latin poetry. The result was a greatly invigorated inheritance for future German poetry. In his lyrics, however, he carried his historical presence further, by reaching out, in genuine feeling—that is, relatively free of the neoclassical icing required at the time—to express feelings, about poetry, friendship, love, nature, which are of a very promising freshness, and pervaded by fully realized religious feeling.

**The challenge.** Why was the challenge facing the *Messias* so difficult? Why did Milton struggle to try to deal with the redemption of man, in *Paradise Regained*, and why was he unsuccessful? Can you identify other long poems which attempt to deal with religious matters—not with the religious sentiment but with religious doctrine and sacred history? Would you say that Dante's *Divine Comedy* is an example of what we are talking about? If so, was that work successful, and how?

## Reading

### *Primary source reading*

Hilliard, K., *Philosophy, Letters, and the Fine Arts in Klopstock's Thought*, 1987.

### *Secondary source reading*

Kohl, K. Rhetoric, *The Bible, and the Origins of Free Verse: the early Hymns of Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock*, 1990.

### *Further reading*

Lee, Meredith, *Displacing Authority: Goethe's Poetic Reception of Klopstock*, 1999.

### *Original language reading*

Buerger, Christa, *Tradition und Subjektivitaet*, 1980.

### Suggested paper topics

Take a look at Boileau's *Art Poétique* (1674) to get the spirit of French neo-classical poetry of the 17th century, the poetry of the dramas of Racine and Corneille. You will see the importance of formal issues, many resting on the model use of the alexandrine line. Klopstock first started to write the *Messias* in alexandrines, then switched to hexameters. What was important about that change? What kind of statement was it about the direction of German poetry? What kind of move was Klopstock making, to redirect German poetry away from the French model?

Are there topics which are impossible to write about in imaginative literature? (I reference Klopstock's effort to deal with the Christian Redemption.) Even Milton had trouble with certain aspects of theology, but why? Is 'sacred literature' not accessible to the imagination? Does this issue come up in our time? What about the case of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*? Is the problem there one of 'blasphemy' or one of the misadjustment of theme to literary imagination?

**Excerpt** <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/hermann-and-thusnelda/>

Hermann and Thusnelda

Ha! there comes he, with sweat, with blood of Romans,  
And with dust of the fight all stained! O, never  
Saw I Hermann so lovely!  
Never such fire in his eyes!

Come! I tremble for joy; hand me the Eagle,  
And the red, dripping sword! come, breathe, and rest thee;  
Rest thee here in my bosom;  
Rest from the terrible fight!

Rest thee, while from thy brow I wipe the big drops,  
And the blood from thy cheek! --- that cheek, how glowing!  
Hermann! Hermann! Thusnelda  
Never so loved thee before!

No, not then when thou first, in old oak-shadows,  
With that manly brown arm didst wildly grasp me!  
Spell-bound I read in thy look  
That immortality, then,

Which thou now hast won. Tell to the forests,  
Great Augustus, with trembling, amidst his gods now,  
Drinks his nectar; for Hermann,  
Hermann immortal is found!

'Wherefore curl'st thou my hair? Lies not our father  
Cold and silent in death? O, had Augustus  
Only headed his army, ---  
He should lie bloodier there!'

Let me lift up thy hair; 'tis sinking, Hermann;  
Proudly thy locks should curl above the crown now!  
Sigmar is with the immortals!  
Follow, and mourn him no more.

## Goethe

**Goethe's Life.** Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) was born in Frankfurt, to a prosperous and respected city family. His mother was the daughter of the city mayor, while his father, though living off his capital, was trained in the law—though perhaps never satisfied with what he himself had accomplished, thus ready to lavish any assistance on his young son. (Goethe himself was thus an unusual example, from among German writers, of both a privileged and fostering background.) After a traditional gymnasium education—with a strong start in a variety of languages, stretching from Greek to Hebrew—and upon matriculation Goethe rapidly took charge of his immense intellectual capacities—writing, reading, meeting people—and brought out the text which would make him an overnight celebrity. The Sorrows of Young Werther, published in 1775, touched a powerful sentimental and literary chord with the reading public, and drew attention on the highest levels to this young man of 25. The Duke of the small kingdom of Saxe-Weimar, who was himself only 18, ennobled the 25 year old Goethe, and made him a member of his Privy Council, where Goethe stayed for ten years—while off and on, for the rest of his life, he remained either close to the Weimar court or resident there.

**Goethe's achievement.** It is hard to encompass, even in a profile survey, the many-sidedness and consistent brilliance of Goethe's long life of books, actions, and personal influences. Among the influences on him Herder should be highlighted, for from the time when they met, in Strasbourg in 1770, Goethe realized that an almost national-level literary responsibility was impending on him. Herder saw in Goethe the mind, and linguistic/creative genius, that could give voice to the German historical and now national consciousness, and so he brought Goethe to a specially high sense of his potential and responsibility. What Goethe did with this mandate in some sense satisfied Herder's hopes—Goethe listened carefully to the voices of German literature—writers like Hans Sachs and the 16th century voices that surrounded the Goetz, of his path-breaking early drama, *Goetz von Berlichingen* (1771), as well as to Shakespeare. And throughout his writing life, in poems and plays he reached back into his national traditions—most powerfully in his tragedy of *Faust* (worked and reworked intermittently between 1790-1830; and building from an image of the mediaeval German magus, Dr. Faustus.) But Goethe's achievement went beyond this response to Herder's mandate. So far did it go that one cannot imagine a modern writer with more claims to the achievement of a Renaissance genius.

**Goethe in literature and science.** In the most fragmentary way, we have hinted at the power of Goethe's literary achievement: plays; tales; unique novels like *Wilhelm Meister* (1821-1829), travel accounts like the *Italienische Reise* (1816-1817), which recounts the crossing of the Alps into that Italy which was a kind of artistic promised land; criticism, like *Literary Sansculotism* (1795), which calls on the German people to read and be educated by their own, instead of foreign, authors. The outpouring of powerful and fascinating imaginative works seems to have no end but death! What can we say of a man who has left us more than 10,000 letters, more than 3,000 often very detailed drawings, and who has contributed consequentially to the development of a number of branches of science: the theory of colors; the interpretation of cloud formations; the evolution and morphology of plant forms; the geology of volcanoes and tectonic plates. Nor is it as though Goethe was forever at work on his projects, for he had one period of serious illness, a heart problem, to deal with and rest from, and any number of romantic engagements, in the course of which he enriched his skill set with a keen sensitivity to the emotional tussles of the human condition.

### Reading

#### *Primary source reading*

Boyle, Nicholas, Goethe: *The Poet and the Age*, 2 vols., (1991,2000).

#### *Secondary source reading*

Bruford, W.H., *Culture and Society in Classical Weimar, 1775-1806*, 1962.

#### *Further reading*

Reed, T.J., *The Classical Centre: Goethe and Weimar, 1775-1832*, 1986.

#### *Original language reading*

Chiarini, Paolo, ed. *Bausteine zu einem neuen Goethe*, 1987.

### Suggested paper topics

Does Goethe's activity as a natural scientist seem to you to play a role in his creative work? What about the character of Faust himself, originally a kind of mediaeval magus? Does Faust display the traits of an early modern scientist? Read in Goethe's *Italienische Reise*, the journal of his journey over the Alps to Italy. Does Goethe have the observant eye of a scientist as he travels? Is the scientific eye consistent with the imaginative eye, in the same individual?

Goethe frequently deals with issues of the moral and cultural development of young people, from the unfortunate Werther to the more fortunate Wilhelm Meister. Goethe is also very interested in the evolution of the human being and in the developmental stages of plant life. Do you see a connection there? Does the Bildungsroman—check it again, please—seem to you close to the scientific perspective onto organic and human evolution?

*Excerpt* (from Werther, Book 1) <http://www.bartleby.com/315/1/11.html>

MAY 4.

HOW happy I am that I am gone! My dear friend, what a thing is the heart of man! To leave you, from whom I have been inseparable, whom I love so dearly, and yet to feel happy! I know you will forgive me. Have not other attachments been specially appointed by fate to torment a head like mine? Poor Leonora! and yet I was not to blame. Was it my fault, that, whilst the peculiar charms of her sister afforded me an agreeable entertainment, a passion for me was engendered in her feeble heart? And yet am I wholly blameless? Did I not encourage her emotions? Did I not feel charmed at those truly genuine expressions of nature, which, though but little mirthful in reality, so often amused us? Did I not—but oh! what is man, that he dares so to accuse himself? My dear friend, I promise you I will improve; I will no longer, as has ever been my habit, continue to ruminate on every petty vexation which fortune may dispense; I will enjoy the present, and the past shall be for me the past. No doubt you are right, my best of friends, there would be far less suffering amongst mankind, if men—and God knows why they are so fashioned—did not employ their imaginations so assiduously in recalling the memory of past sorrow, instead of bearing their present lot with equanimity.

Be kind enough to inform my mother that I shall attend to her business to the best of my ability, and shall attend her the earliest information about it. I have seen my aunt, and find that she is very far from being the disagreeable person our friends allege her to be. She is a lively, cheerful woman, with the best of hearts. I explained to her my mother's wrongs with regard to that part of her portion which has been withheld from her. She told me the motives and reasons of her own conduct, and the terms on which she is willing to give up the whole, and to do more than we have asked. In short, I cannot write further upon this subject at present; only assure my mother that all will go on well. And I have again observed, my dear friend, in this trifling affair, that misunderstandings and neglect occasion more mischief in the world than even malice and wickedness. At all events, the two latter are of less frequent occurrence.

In other respects I am very well off here. Solitude in this terrestrial paradise is a genial balm to my mind, and the young spring cheers with its bounteous promises my oftentimes misgiving heart. Every tree, every bush, is full of flowers; and one might wish charming variety, and form the most lovely valleys. The garden is simple; and it is easy to perceive, even upon your first entrance, that the plan was not designed by a scientific gardener, but by a man who wished to give himself up here to the enjoyment of his own sensitive heart. Many a tear have I already shed to the memory of its departed master in a summer-house which is now reduced to ruins, but was his favourite resort, and now is mine. I shall soon be master of the place. The gardener has become attached to me within the last few days, and he will lose nothing thereby himself transformed into a butterfly, to float about in this ocean of perfume, and find his whole existence in it.



## Schiller

**Friedrich Schiller.** Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) was brought up in tightened financial circumstances, the only son of a military doctor—Schiller had five sisters—and obliged to move frequently during his youth. His father, however, favored him and took him along with him, on assignments and missions, and Schiller grew up well educated, with strong gymnasium training in the Classics. In his late teens he seemed destined for the ministry—which appealed to his imagination—but later he shifted these choices toward law and then medicine, finally ending up for a short time, as a military surgeon. (Throughout his brief life Schiller, who died at 45 of tuberculosis, remained fascinated with self-cures for the many ailments that plagued him.) After being fired from that post, he wandered for several years from city to city, relatively poverty stricken. (It is not to be imagined that ‘wandered’ means he was idle, for among other things, Schiller composed his Europe-awakening play, *The Robbers* (1781), during these years, not to mention several other overnight success dramas.) Thanks to his brilliant productivity during these years of no formal occupation, Schiller found himself offered a Professorship at the University of Jena—with Goethe’s assistance—and an annuity which helped him to restore his financial security. In 1794 Schiller received a significant salary to edit a new literary/intellectual journal, *Die Horen*, The Hours, to which he asked Goethe to contribute. That was the beginning of a close friendship between these two masters of ‘aesthetic humanism.’ In 1799 Schiller moved to Weimar to work more closely with Goethe. Schiller died there in 1805.

**Schiller’s themes and masterpieces.** Schiller remained concerned, throughout his writing, with the theme of freedom, and, as he matured in his self-awareness, in the deep relation between freedom and the aesthetic, as well as the ethical. Despite appearances, the fabric of Schiller’s work is more unified and completed than that of Goethe—who was forever undertaking lateral adventures in thought and writing. It should be noted that Schiller was a historian and essayist as well as a dramatist and lyric poet. As a Professor at Jena he wrote a History of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) and a profusion of distinguished essays on topics of Greek art and society. (One of the finest, ‘*How the Ancients depicted Death*,’ characterizes the kinds of bas reliefs left by fifth century Athenian sculptors on the tombs of the departed, in the Kerameikos cemetery. Schiller penetrates deeply into the Greek compromise with death obtained by the Hellenes through beauty.) As a lyric poet, Schiller was prone to deal with ideas—especially ethical ideas—but to tweak them, so that the quality of the language forestalled any aridity in the thought. Schiller’s dramas, of which we mentioned only *The Robbers*, play boldly over events in German history, targeting clash areas where love, honor, and remorse are thrust into forceful interaction. (It may be said that these plays, like *Intrigue and Love* (1784) and *Wallenstein* (1798), are widely considered among his greatest achievements.)

**Schiller and Kant.** The culminating thought for Schiller is his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), in which he sums up many of the drivers of his whole body of expression, and especially his relation to the epoch shaping philosophy of Immanuel Kant, who, in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790), profoundly dissected the interrelation between aesthetic and ethical judgments. (His complex and powerful argument is that the ethical is a far higher category than the aesthetic; which, in a word, is the point Schiller sets out to contest, in his Letters.) In contesting Kant’s position, Schiller develops the notion of the aesthetic as the realm of appearance as liberty, a condition in which we can penetrate to the ethical through the realm of the aesthetic.

## Reading

### Primary source reading

Sharpe, Leslie, *Friedrich Schiller: Drama, Thought, and Politics*, 1991.

### Secondary source reading

Martinson, Steven, *A Companion to the Works of Friedrich Schiller*, 1982.

### Further reading

Will, Frederic, *Intelligible Beauty in Aesthetic thought from Winckelmann to Victor Cousin*, 1958.

### Original language reading

Riedel, Wolfgang, *Der Spaziergang. Aesthetik der Landschaft und Geschichtsphilosophie der Natur bei Schiller*, 1989.

### Suggested paper topics

Does it seem a significant part of Schiller's skill set that he was both an academic historian—a scholar—and a creator of powerful dramas? Consider the fact that Schiller's plays—Don Carlos, Wallenstein—are almost entirely devoted to historical themes. Does Schiller write these plays with the eye of a 'scholar' of history, or does he transmute the raw materials of history into a vision we would call art?

As a student of Immanuel Kant, and of the Greek classics—both literature and sculpture—Schiller is deeply concerned to harmonize the claims of both the aesthetic and the moral dimensions of human nature. How does he attempt to do this, through the category of 'freedom'? Is he on the right track? Can the beautiful and the good co-exist in the same value system?

*Excerpt* <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/columbus-2/>

Amalia

Angel-fair, Walhalla's charms displaying,  
Fairer than all mortal youths was he;  
Mild his look, as May-day sunbeams straying  
Gently o'er the blue and glassy sea.

And his kisses!--what ecstatic feeling!  
Like two flames that lovingly entwine,  
Like the harp's soft tones together stealing  
Into one sweet harmony divine,--

Soul and soul embraced, commingled, blended,  
Lips and cheeks with trembling passion burned,  
Heaven and earth, in pristine chaos ended,  
Round the blissful lovers madly turn'd.

He is gone--and, ah! with bitter anguish  
Vainly now I breathe my mournful sighs;  
He is gone--in hopeless grief I languish  
Earthly joys I ne'er again can prize!

Columbus

Steer on, bold sailor--Wit may mock thy soul that sees the land,  
And hopeless at the helm may droop the weak and weary hand,  
Yet ever--ever to the West, for there the coast must lie,  
And dim it dawns, and glimmering dawns before thy reason's eye;  
Yea, trust the guiding God--and go along the floating grave,  
Though hid till now--yet now behold the New World o'er the wave!  
With genius Nature ever stands in solemn union still,  
And ever what the one foretells the other shall fulfil.

### 19th century German Literature

The conquests of Napoleon Bonaparte dealt a severe blow to the hopes of the German patriots and those who were beginning to make Germany aware of herself as a nation. French domination lasted from 1803-1813. As usually is the case, military attacks did not extinguish nationalist zeal, but fanned the flames higher; and uniting against the common enemy helped to bring the loosely confederated states closer together. Some of the dramas and lyrics of the great poets—especially *Minna von Barnhelm* by Lessing, Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, and Goethe's *Faust (Part I)*; published 1808—gave the German speaking states an illustrious common heritage and emphasized the idea of a common fatherland.

The German armies that helped defeat Napoleon in 1813 had been promised various reforms, including more political liberty and a constitutional government. Their expectations were disappointed. A policy of reaction, inaugurated by Metternich in Austria, was adopted by most of the states; and participation in the government and freedom of the press and of speech were denied to the people. The period of reaction and absolutism continued for several decades, but popular discontent grew so strong that it became open rebellion in 1848. Then some steps toward constitutional government were taken, and some of the absolutist policies were abolished. In 1871 the German people were given quite modern social legislation, under Chancellor Otto Bismarck.

In the meantime, tremendous progress toward national unity was made. In 1815 Austria allied itself with some of the other states in the German confederation; in 1834 the formation of the Zollverein began real unification; and in 1866 the North German Confederation was formed. Finally Germany defeated France in the Franco-Prussian War (1870), and William I was declared Emperor of the German Empire in 1871.

## Heinrich von Kleist

**The Life of Kleist.** Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811) was a German poet, dramatist, and novella writer who contributed richly to the formation of the new Romantic imagination. He was born in Frankfurt am Oder, showed very little interest in schooling, and in 1792, at the age of seventeen, he entered the Prussian army. He took part in the Rhein campaign (1796) and in 1799, at the age of twenty two, he retired from the Army. He went for a while to Viadrina University, to study law and philosophy, then took a minor functionary position with the Prussian Finance Ministry. From that position he requested and received a leave of absence, during which he began what we would have to describe as a fairly brief life full of wanderings. (As a young man he told his sister that ‘life must be lived according to plan,’ and yet Kleist’s life seems, to the outsider anyhow, to be a vivid counter example to this maxim.) Kleist paid a visit to Paris, then went to Switzerland, where he stayed for a while. A trip to Weimar brought him acquaintance with Goethe, Schiller, and Wieland, and then, when he had returned to his regular post, he was sent on extended assignment to Koenigsberg. By this time his life, but not his writing, was nearly at an end. (His writing, we see below, was continuous throughout his career and wandering life.) The end of the life continues to haunt us. Captivated by the pessimism and cultural despair of his lover, Henriette Vogel, he joins her in a suicide pact, and carries through.

**The Work of Kleist.** The dramatist and novella writer, Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811), shares a deep psychological insight with his contemporary and fellow dramatist Franz Grillparzer, but unlike Grillparzer, who was interested in bourgeois psychological tragedy, Kleist develops his themes with an eye to their objective correlatives, in particular the workings of the law. *The Broken Jug* (1808) is a comedy with a serious twist. A local judge—who is clubfooted and resembles Sophocles’ Oedipus—has been harassing a pretty young girl. As he leaves her bedroom one evening he knocks off and breaks a treasured water jug belonging to the girl’s mother. The tale involves the skein of events by which the judge finds himself in the position of trying the case of the ‘broken water jug.’ The comic/humiliating consequences, of this turn of events, turn the law on its head, and ‘justify virtue’ and the integrity of the young girl’s fidelity to her fiancé. The novella *Michael Kohlhaas* (1811), written toward the end of Kleist’s life, takes a subtle look at the integrity of the law. Michael is a farmer who has been seriously mistreated by a local landowner. He turns to the law for redress, but does not receive it. Michael determines to take revenge into his own hands, and with the growing violence of his anger turns to means increasingly violent. The story is yours to interpret. Who is finally in the wrong? The indifference of the law to Michael’s case has inspired him to take action against the law. In the end, but subtly, the law wins the case.

**Kleist as Thinker.** Heinrich von Kleist wrote a number of remarkable essays, in which he penetrated deeply into the issues of human consciousness, reflecting, as did all his major contemporaries, a concern with fundamental philosophical issues. Aside from his fascinating essay on the puppet theater, in which he bemoans the ills brought to humans by their self-consciousness, and according loss of grace, his most remarkable contribution, still in the same vein, is his ‘*On the gradual development of thought in the process of speaking*,’ in which he presents a thoroughly modern analysis of the disadvantages of self-awareness in the thought and speech process.

### Reading

#### *Primary source reading*

*The Major Works of Heinrich von Kleist*, ed./trans. Robert Helbling, 1975.

#### *Secondary source reading*

Brown Meldrum, Hilda, Heinrich von Kleist. *The Ambiguity of Art and the Necessity of Form*, 1998.

#### *Further reading*

Lampert, F. J., *German Classical Drama: Theatre, Humanity, Nation*, 1990.

#### *Original language reading*

Ohff, Heinz, *Heinrich von Kleist: ein preussisches Scicksal*, 2004.

### Suggested paper topics

Read and review Kleist's essay on the puppet theater. Consider what he is trying to report, concerning the problem of self-consciousness. Does he see value in self-consciousness, which is often considered a hallmark of the human condition? Does he want us to become like puppets?

In *The Broken Jug*, Kleist introduces a mixture of humor, irony, and tragedy. Do you see this mixture, which also appears in the work and thought of Jean Paul, E.T.A. Hoffman, and Friedrich Schlegel, as characteristic of the imaginative enterprise of Romantic literature?

**Excerpt** [https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/54427.Heinrich\\_von\\_Kleist](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/54427.Heinrich_von_Kleist)

“The kiss and the bite are such close cousins that in the heat of love they are too readily confounded.”

“We see that in the organic world, to the same degree that reflection gets darker and weaker, grace grows ever more radiant and dominant. But just as two lines intersect on one side of a point, and after passing through infinity, suddenly come together again on the other side; or the image in a concave mirror suddenly reappears before us after drawing away into the infinite distance, so too, does grace return once perception, as it were, has traversed the infinite--such that it simultaneously appears the purest in human bodily structures that are either devoid of consciousness or which possess an infinite consciousness, such as in the jointed manikin or the god.”

“Misconceptions are unavoidable now that we've eaten of the Tree of Knowledge. But Paradise is locked and bolted, and the cherubim stands behind us. We have to go on and make the journey round the world to see if it is perhaps open somewhere at the back.”

“In M---, an important town in northern Italy, the widowed Marquise of O---, a lady of unblemished reputation and the mother of several well-brought-up children, inserted the following announcement in the newspapers: that she had, without knowledge of the cause, come to find herself in a certain situation; that she would like the father of the child she was expecting to disclose his identity to her; that she was resolved, out of consideration to her family, to marry him.”

“Does that mean”, I said in some bewilderment, “that we must eat again of the tree of knowledge in order to return to the state of innocence?”

“Of course”, he said, “but that's the final chapter in the history of the world.”

## Grillparzer

**The life of Grillparzer.** Franz Grillparzer (1791-1872), was an Austrian playwright, born in Vienna. He is particularly famed for his on the whole very popular tragedies, and for having given the funeral oration for the composer Ludwig Beethoven. His father was a serious pedant and a lawyer of some standing in Vienna, and his mother came from a distinguished musical family in the city. Franz entered the University of Vienna as a law student in 1807, then passed some years in the usual transitional occupation, tutoring for private families, then went on to assume a Civil Servant post. For the remainder of his work life he remained a middle grade civil servant, concluding his work tenure with the post of Director of Archives at the Hofkammer, the court council. Grillparzer loved to travel, never married—some found him ‘cold and distant-- and led a quiet life until celebrity forced him into the open in his later years. While effectively employed, throughout his life, Grillparzer was known to suffer from periods of depression.

**The Historical Position of the Work of Grillparzer.** Grillparzer like Schiller, Lessing, and Goethe, turned to the stage for his most serious work. (He published some other work, of interest: an autobiography, completed in 1853, and recounting his life through 1836; many fragments of political and social commentary, noteworthy for their insightful remarks on society and politics; some remarkable prose work, such as *The Poor Fiddler* (1847). But there is a difference between Grillparzer and these other classicist dramatists, who preceded him by at least two generations, and who wrote in fervently different times and from cultural perspectives that by Grillparzer’s time were be to beginning to seem outdated, as well as inescapably powerful. There is a psychological modernity, in many of Grillparzer’s plays—say in *Sappho* (1818) or *The Waves of Love and of the Ocean* (1831)—that contributes a ‘realistic’ tone to what is in fact a ‘Romantic’ production. (The closest parallel to Grillparzer’s work would be that of Heinrich von Kleist.)

**The character of Grillparzer’s work.** Grillparzer’s sense of tragedy is grounded in the individual person’s tragic sense and its tragic consequences; a state of affairs frequently driven by the conflict between duty and personal desire. (This is the Romantic dilemma, laid across an inheritance of brilliant classical achievements, in Goethe and Schiller, but aspiring to represent the new zones of passion and personal drive ushered in by the nineteenth century.) The short, classically formed play, *Sappho* (1818), illustrates Grillparzer’s power. Sappho, who is already an ideal of poetic genius, on Lesbos, returns to the island with a younger man, with whom she has fallen in love, longing at last to ‘live life to the fullest,’ to be an ordinary woman around the house. That is the drive of her personal longing. But she finds her goal unrealizable. She is valued and reified as the poetess on a pedestal, the ultimate in her craft, and to her horror she discovers that Phaon, her lover, has fallen for one of Sappho’s maids, happier to love a simple woman than an image. Sappho throws herself off a cliff and drowns, an example of the woman whose role conflicts tragically with her desires.

**Romantic tragedy.** In *The Waves of Love and of the Ocean* (1831) Grillparzere again picks up a classical Greek theme and gives it his own twist, the duty desire conflict. Hero, temple priestess separated by the Bosphorus Strait from her impetuous lover, Leander, plans to flash him a signal, which will guide him across the water to her. However Hero’s superior, the Head Priestess of the temple, gets wind of the plan and realizes that Hero is in the process of losing her ‘composure,’ her *Sammlung*, and extinguishes the lamp that is to guide Leander. Hero dies of a broken heart.

## Reading

### Primary source reading

Franz Grillparzer, *The poor Musician*, trans. Remy, ed. Andrew Moore.

### Secondary source reading

Bernd, Clifford, ed., *Der arme Spielmann: New Directions in Criticism*, 1988.

### Further reading

Nemoianu, Virgil, *The Taming of Romanticism: European Literature and the age of Biedermeier*, 1984.

### Original language reading

Lorenz, Dagmar, *Franz Grillparzer: Dichter des sozialen Konflikts*, 1986.

### **Suggested paper topics**

Grillparzer's '*Der arme Spielmann*,' 'The Poor Fiddler,' is as fatalistic and psychologically inexorable as are his plays. Review that text closely, to see what kind of discord is set up between the narrator of the story, and the counter narration carried on, within the story, by the Fiddler himself. What kind of special depth is achieved by this technique? Does the technique seem startling 'modern' to you?

What kinds of tragedy does Grillparzer write into *Hero and Leander* and *Sappho*? Would you call this psychological tragedy, generated in the minds of the tragic losers? Or is the fate the driver of these bitter outcomes? Pay especially close attention to the mindset of Hero herself, as she vacillates in her mind between desire and duty. Does she have it in her power to negate her desire?

*Excerpt en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Franz\_Grillparzer*

- "Human life, old and young, takes place between hope and remembrance. The young man sees all the gates to his desires open, and the old man remembers—his hopes."
- "They are miserly, the princes of Austria, you need not grieve about it; they may not donate anything, but they allow themselves to be fleeced, the good lords."
- "What raises great poetry above all else—it is the entire person and also the entire world."

## Hebbel

**Hebbel's Life.** Christian Friedrich Hebbel (1813-1863) was born at Ditmarsch, in Holstein. He was brought up in poverty—the son of a bricklayer, yet despite hindrances proved unusually studious, and made his way to the University of Hamburg. From that University, in the typical fashion of German University students, who tend to follow Professors from one institution to another, he moved on to the University of Munich, where he studied philosophy, literature, and history. In 1839 he left Munich to return to Hamburg—he walked the distance, to be again with the woman who loved him—and in that year saw the publication of his first drama, *Judith*, which like most of his subsequent plays—is set either in Biblical times or in the German Age of Knights. For the next two years he traveled in Italy and France, on a stipend from King Christian of Denmark, then made his way to Vienna, where he was to find a new life—a glamorous and wealthy change for him—and a future in Austrian comfort and high society. Only one regret continued to eat at this complicated man, that he had left the faithful-to-the-end woman whom at one point he had walked from Munich to Hamburg to be with.

**Hebbel's drama.** Hebbel picked up the theme of bourgeois drama which had been growing in Germany from the time of Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* and Schillers *Kabale and Liebe*. (It took an eighteenth century of middle class development, before this literary genre would be possible, a genre which we might say would culminate in the great work of Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906). Cultural/social developments plunging back into early modern Europe were the prerequisites of the kind of searing social dramas Hebbel wrote—such developments as the self-conscious family unit, the availability of urban work in the professions, and the domestic conflicts, even tragedies, brought on by the conflict of the old class system with the newer forms of individualist democracy.)

**Maria Magdalena.** *Maria Magdalena* (1844) is the only play of Hebbel's to be set in the present, and arguably the play where his power and sense of social complexity are most forceful. That may be because it is the play in which he most ripely conceives the larger meaning of his work. In the Preface to the play he argues that drama is the highest art, because it reflects the dialectical growth of mankind through ascending stages of culture, a notion he understands in terms of Hegel's philosophy of dialectical history. (He references Greek drama and Shakespeare as earlier examples of the way new levels of human consciousness are virtually worked through to in great drama.) In the present play Hebbel plunges us into a moment of crisis in the family of Meister Anton, an illiterate carpenter, who though fallen in class clings hard to such old fashioned class values as 'honor,' 'family honor.' The clinging to old values is fatal. In the first place Anton's wife, who hears that her son is a thief—the report is later proven false—kills herself for shame. Then Anton's daughter, believing she has been forgotten by a certain secretary she loves, ends up pregnant with a child of a man she scorns, an opportunistic clerk, yet marries him, for only so, she thinks, can she maintain her father's honor. (There is the outdated category of honor again.) As it turns out, her impregnator proves unsatisfied with the dowry she offers him, and abandons her, whereupon she does in fact drown herself, to ensure her father's honor. At the end of the play we see the world through Anton's eyes, a man dazed and confused by the new world around him, in which values he relied on are being transformed.

## Reading

### *Primary source reading*

Gubelman, A., *Studies in the Lyric Poems of Friedrich Hebbel: the sensuous in his lyric poetry*, 2013.

### *Secondary source reading*

Schwarz, E., ed. *Nineteenth Century German Plays*, 1990.

### *Further reading*

Garland, Mary, *Hebbel's Prose Tragedies*, 1973.

### *Original language reading*

Hohendahl, Peter Uwe, *Literarische kultur im Zeitalter des Liberalismus 1830-1870*, 1985.



### Suggested paper topics

Hebbel believed that drama is the highest art, because it embodies new and upward developing stages of culture—as had been the case in Ancient Greece and now in the work of Shakespeare. Do you find this a plausible account of the importance and greatness of drama? Can you add examples, of cases in which drama seems to play the historical role Hebbel attributes to it?

The middle class family drama became prominent and popular in 18th century Germany. (Lessing and Schiller were creative in this direction.) What reason would you give for the development of this form? What is necessary to raise this form above the level of popular amusement concerning middle class families? Where does the tragic element enter in this kind of drama—for it does enter, regularly—to give depth and meaning to the genre?

**Excerpt** <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13030/13030-8.txt>

MOTHER. When one is very sick, as I was, and does not know whether one is going to get well again or not, a great many things revolve in one's head. Death is more terrible than you think--oh, it is awful! It casts a shadow over the world; one after the other it blows out all the lights that shine with such cheerful brightness all around us, the kindly eyes of husband and children cease to sparkle, and it grows dark everywhere. But deep in the heart it strikes a light, which burns brightly and reveals a great deal one does not care to see. I am not conscious of ever having done a wrong; I have walked in God's ways, I have done my best about the home, I have brought you and your brother up to fear God, and I have kept together the fruits of your father's hard work. I have always managed to lay aside an extra penny for the poor, and if now and then I have turned somebody away, because I felt out of sorts or because too many came, it wasn't a very great misfortune for him, because I was sure to call him back and give him twice as much. Oh, what does it all amount to? People dread the last hour when it threatens to come, writhe like a worm over it, and implore God to let them live, just as a servant implores his master to let him do something over again that he has done poorly, so that he may not come short in his wages on pay-day. CLARA. Don't talk in that way, dear mother! It weakens you. MOTHER. No, child, it does me good! Am I not well and strong again now? Did not the Lord call me merely to let me know that my festal robe was not yet pure and spotless? And did he not permit me to come back from the very edge of the grave, and grant me time to prepare myself for the heavenly wedding? He was not as kind as that to those five Virgins in the Gospel, about whom I had you read to me last night. And that is the reason why today, when I am going to the Holy Communion, I put this dress on. I wore it the day I made the best and most pious resolutions of my life; I want it to remind me of those which I have not yet carried out.

## Jean Paul (Friedrich Richter)

**The life of Jean Paul.** Jean Paul (1763-1825) is an original voice in the chorus of German voices that make up the transition from Weimar Classicism to the Romantic tone. He was born in the area of Franconia, in Wunsiedel. His father was an organist, then was hired on as village pastor, but soon after that died, leaving Jean Paul and the rest of the family in serious poverty. By strong learning efforts Jean Paul got into and passed on from the gymnasium in nearby Hof, then moved on to the University of Leipzig. While in University his true interests declared themselves, and he shifted his studies from Theology to Literature. From the outside one would have expected this decision, from the exceptionally labile imagination of the young man. (In 1790, when he was twenty seven, he had had a moving and life-changing vision of his own death.) In any case the first literary publications of Jean Paul, which followed in 1793 (*Die unsichtbare Loge*) and 1795 (*Hesperus*), introduced some of the literary traits which were to dominate the development of his lifetime of writing: prominent use of the Doppelgänger and fake suicides, directive materials for what was to go on to be developed (but always surprising) fictions full of genuine religious sentiment, artifice and trickery, and an edgy humor, which unnerved those who were looking for the ‘classical’ postures of Goethe and Schiller—who did not like Jean Paul—and which were a complex way of bringing formal and individualistic language worlds together.

**The Work of Jean Paul.** Jean Paul breaks sharply from the classicism we see insistent in German literature of the last quarter of the 18th century. We can see this break in the remarkable story, ‘*Die unsichtbare Loge*,’ ‘*The invisible Lodge*,’ 1791, the first work of Jean Paul to attract significant attention. The text is essentially a Bildungsroman, a tale of the education of youth, such as was in vogue in contemporary works like Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister tales, or in certain works of Wieland or Karl Philip Moritz. But the difference is marked, with Jean Paul. Gustav, Jean Paul’s personage elected to be raised to the level of a hoher Mensch, a high exemplar of mankind, lives and is educated, for the first eight years of his life, in a catacomb. (The Pietist individual raising him is called ‘the genius,’ who assures Gustave that in emerging into the upper world he will enter both the realm of death and the realm of God, who will guarantee rebirth. The tale oozes with overtones of the ancient Greek idealist/mystic tradition, especially that of Plotinus.) The actual education of Gustave begins with a blinding experience of the brilliance of the present world, but after that sets in the complexity of educational stages. For a while the tutor of Gustave is Jean Paul, who takes advantage of his role as embedded persona to divagate on many topics of interest to him—government and politics, marriage, pedagogy, even the structure of the narrative which he himself is weaving—until the burden of the narrative structure becomes too much for Jean Paul the narrator and he must be replaced by his sister, while at the same time the primary narrative is enriched by a second narrative about Gustave, introduced by a court poet who has been brought into the tale. Enough? Is the point clear enough? Jean Paul introduces, from the start, a kind of ironic, self-reflective, philosophically speculative, indeed religious tale which has no parallel in the work of his end of century contemporaries.

### Reading

#### *Primary source reading*

Behler, Ernst, *German Romantic Literary Theory*, 1993.

#### *Secondary source reading*

Fleming, Paul, *The Pleasures of Abandonment: Jean Paul and the Life of Humor*, 2006.

#### *Further reading*

Stopp, Elisabeth, *German Romantics in context: Selected essays 1971-86*, 1992.

#### *Original language reading*

Wiethoelter, Waltraud, *Witzige Illuminationen: Studien zur Aesthetik Jean Pauls*, 1979.

### Suggested paper topics

Read Jean Paul’s *Titan*, or one of his other numerous prose fictions available online, and consider what is meant by the humor of Jean Paul. Is it what we might prefer to call irony today? Are there conspicuous elements of satire in

his humor? The Romantic movement in Germany is often associated with the development of paradox and dialectical thinking—two different but related issues. Is Jean Paul's humor related to those issues?

Jean Paul's *'Unsichtbare Loge,'* and many of his other works, deals with 'education,' the growth and maturing of a young person into the social world. We have seen that Goethe, in his works on Wilhelm Meister, is centrally interested in this kind of Bildungsroman. What connection do you see between the Romantic movement and this kind of tale of personal growth? Is there a connection of the Bildungsroman with the notable 'rediscovery of the child' in Romantic thought?

*Excerpt* (from Titan) <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/35664/35664-h/35664-h.htm>

On a fine spring evening, the young Spanish Count Cesara came, with his companions, Schoppe and Dian, to Sesto, in order the next morning to cross over to the Borromæan island, Isola Bella, in Lago Maggiore. The proudly blooming youth glowed with the excitement of travelling, and with thoughts of the coming morrow, when he should see the isle, that gayly decorated throne of Spring, and on it a man who had been promised him for twenty years. This twofold glow exalted my picturesque hero to the form of an angry god of the Muses. His beauty made a more triumphal entry into Italian eyes than into the narrow Northern ones from the midst of which he had come; in Milan many had wished he were of marble, and stood with elder gods of stone, either in the Farnese Palace or in the Clementine Museum, or in the Villa of Albani; nay, had not the Bishop of Novara, with his sword at his side, a few hours before, asked Schoppe (riding behind) who he was? And had not the latter, with a droll squaring of the wrinkle-circle round his lips, made this copious answer (by way of enlightening his spiritual lordship): "It's my Telemachus, and I am the Mentor. I am the milling-machine and the die which coins him,—the wolf's tooth and flattening mill which polishes him down,—the man, in short, that regulates him"?

The glowing form of the youthful Cesara was still more ennobled by the earnestness of an eye always buried in the future, and of a firmly shut, manly mouth, and by the daring decision of young, fresh faculties; he seemed as yet to be a burning-glass in the moonlight, or a dark precious stone of too much color, which the world, as in the case of other jewels, can brighten and improve only by cutting hollow.

As he drew nearer and nearer, the island attracted him, as one world does another, more and more intensely. His internal restlessness rose as the outward tranquillity deepened. Beside all this, Dian, a Greek by birth and an artist, who had often circumnavigated and sketched Isola Bella and Isola Madre, brought these obelisks of Nature still nearer to his soul in glowing pictures; and Schoppe often spoke of the great man whom the youth was to see tomorrow for the first time. As the people were carrying by, down below in the street, an old man fast asleep, into whose strongly marked face the setting sun cast fire and life, and who was, in short, a corpse borne uncovered, after the Italian custom, suddenly, in a wild and hurried tone, he asked his friends, "Does my father look thus?"

But what impels him with such intense emotions towards the island is this: He had, on Isola Bella, with his sister, who afterward went to Spain, and by the side of his mother, who had since passed to the shadowy land, sweetly toyed and dreamed away the first three years of his life, lying in the bosom of the high flowers of Nature; the island had been, to the morning slumber of life, to his childhood's hours, a Raphael's painted sleeping-chamber. But he had retained nothing of it all in his head and heart, save in the one a deep, sadly sweet emotion at the name, and in the other the squirrel, which, as the family scutcheon of the Borromæans, stands on the upper terrace of the island.

## E.T.A.Hoffman

**The achievement of E.T.A. Hoffman.** Ernest Theodor William Hoffman (1776-1822) was one of the most influential and multi sided Romantic artists. He was a writer of fantasy and horror stories—of great sophistication and charm; delights to children—a music critic, a distinguished jurist, and a composer. It was through his influence on the classical music of his period that he most firmly fixed his reputation: the ballet *Coppelia* is based on two stories by Hoffman, Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Ballet* is based on Hoffman's story, 'The Nutcracker and the Mouse King,' and Robert Schumann's *Kreisleriana* is based on a character in a Hoffman story; Jacques Offenbach's suite, *The Tales of Hoffman*, is centered around a reshaped hero, who is basically E.T.A. Hoffman. To speak of these influences is to indicate the kind of popular but fine legacy Hoffman left behind.

**The Life of E.T.A. Hoffman.** The author, born in Koenigsberg in 1776 was child to two barristers, and though they divorced, and he spent his formative years with his mother and her family, including his sisters, he remained imprinted by the earlier exposure to the culture of the law, to which he would turn as the most stable grounding of his career life. Educated at the Burgschule in Koenigsberg, Hoffman established a firm foundation for his multifaceted life. (Already in gymnasium he proved his high level of versatility, in piano playing, drawing, drafting, and sketch writing. His gift for caricature/cartooning was marked from the outset.) From that point he moved through a series of artistic related jobs, and romantic attractions—the most intense to Dora Hart, a married woman ten years his age—and yet despite the instability of his personal life managed to sustain an ever active creative process. That process was jumpstarted, in the midst of financial difficulties, by a visit to the Dresden Art Gallery in 1798, where his experience of the paintings of Correggio and Raphael was hugely inspiring. By 1804 Hoffman acquired a post as artistic director in Warsaw, where he found himself for a while in highly congenial artistic company, which was welcome, for throughout the surrounding years he and his family had been buffeted by the storms of Napoleonic War, its conflicts with Prussia, and the gradual dismantling of the Holy Roman Empire. By 1814 Hoffman was once again back at the practice of law, his security. He died at the age of forty six, after a life of brilliant but fragmentary achievement.

**Kater Murr.** *The Life and Opinions of Murr the Cat* (1820-1822) is one of Hoffman's most careful and deeply expressive stories, and a few words on it may be the easiest portal into Hoffman's imaginative trend. Murr is a cat, who has written his autobiography, to enlighten children. He is naïve and full of himself. However the editor of the autobiography, 'E.T.A. Hoffman,' has made the story complex by (mistakenly) using the proof sheets of another volume, a biography of the Romantic composer Kreisler, as scrap paper, and in the process of printing—during which the cat has clawed into tatters much of the book on the composer-- the autobiography of the cat and the biography of the composer have been randomly mixed up together. The result is a counterpoint and confusion of tales, from which emerges a blend of the seamlessly readable cat story with the shredded and tortured tale of the composer. The self-reflective observation, on the turmoil of the Romantic sensibility, could not have been more cunningly put before us.

### Reading

#### *Primary source reading*

Wittkop-Menardeau, Gabrielle, *E.T.A.Hoffman*, 1991.

#### *Secondary source reading*

Ruprecht, L., *Dances of the Self in Heinrich von Kleist, E.T.A. Hoffman and Heinrich Heine*, 2006.

#### *Further reading*

Peters, U.H., *Studies in German Romantic Psychology: Justinus Kerner as Psychiatric Practitioner, E.T.A. Hoffman as a Psychiatric Theorist*, 1990.

#### *Original language reading*

Feldges, Brigitte; Stadler, Ulrich, *E.T.A. Hoffman, Epoche-Werk-Wirkung*, 1986.

### Suggested paper topics

Does *Kater Murr* seem to you an extraordinarily 'modern' literary construction? Are you familiar with any such structural complexities and play, in literature prior to 1800? What kind of critical and philosophical mindset seems to be implied, by being able to see the world and fiction in that way?

Hoffman is well known for his mystery stories, ghost stories, and tales of the occult. (Edgar Allen Poe is one of those writers most indebted to him.) Do you see this literary genre as an organic element in the Romantic sensibility? We know that the Romantics were concerned with 'spiritual issues,' but do you understand the genesis, in Romanticism, of fascination with the supernatural?

*Excerpt* <http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnLine/46447/>

THE JESUITS' CHURCH IN G——.

BY E. T. A. HOFFMANN.

Packed up in a wretched post-chaise, which the moths had left from instinct—as the rats left Prospero's vessel—I at last, after a break-neck journey, stopped half dislocated, at the inn in the G—— market-place. All the possible misfortune that might have befallen me had lighted on my carriage, which lay, shattered, with the postmaster at the last stage. Four skinny, jaded horses, after a lapse of many hours, dragged up the crazy vehicle, with the help of several peasants and my own servant; knowing folks came up, shook their heads, and thought that a thorough repair, which might occupy two, or even three days would be necessary. The place seemed to me agreeable, the country pretty, and yet I felt not a little horror-struck at the delay with which I was threatened. If, gentle reader, you were ever compelled to stop three days in a little town, where you did not know a soul, but were forced to remain a stranger to every body, and if some deep pain did not destroy the inclination for social converse, you will be able to appreciate my annoyance. In words alone does the spirit of life manifest itself in all around us; but the inhabitants of your small towns are like a secluded orchestra, which has worked into its own way of playing and singing by hard practice, so that the tone of the foreigner is discordant to their ears, and at once puts them to silence. I was walking up and down my room, in a thorough ill-humour, when it at once struck me that a friend at home, who had once passed two years at G——, had often spoken of a learned, clever man, with whom he had been intimate. His name, I recollected, was Aloysius Walter, professor at the Jesuits' college. I now resolved to set out, and turn my friend's acquaintance to my own advantage. They told me at the college that Professor Walter was lecturing, but would soon have finished, and as they gave me the choice of calling again or waiting in the outer rooms, I chose the latter. The cloisters, colleges, and churches of the Jesuits are everywhere built in that Italian style which, based upon the antique form and manner, prefers splendour and elegance to holy solemnity and religious dignity. In this case the lofty, light, airy halls were adorned with rich architecture and the images of saints, which were here placed against the walls, between Ionic pillars, were singularly contrasted by the carving over the doorways, which invariably represented a dance of genii, or fruit and the dainties of the kitchen.

The professor entered—I reminded him of my friend, and claimed his hospitality for the period of my forced sojourn in the place. I found him just as my friend had described him; clear in his discourse, acquainted with the world, in short, quite in the style of the higher class priest, who has been scientifically educated, and peeping over his breviary into life, has often sought to know what is going on there. When I found his room furnished with modern elegance, I returned to my former reflections in the halls, and uttered them to the professor aloud.

"You are right," said he, "we have banished from our edifices that gloomy solemnity, that strange majesty of the crushing tyrant, who oppresses our bosoms in Gothic architecture, and causes a certain unpleasant sensation, and we have very properly endowed our works with the lively cheerfulness of the ancients."

"But," said I, "does not that sacred dignity, that lofty majesty of Gothic architecture which seems, as it were, striving after Heaven, proceed from the true spirit of Christianity, which, supersensual itself, is directly opposed to that sensual spirit of the antique world which remains in the circle of the earthly?"

## Novalis

**The Life of Novalis.** Friedrich von Hardenburg, who later christened himself Novalis (1772-1801), was born on the manor estate at Overwiederstedt, Saxony, in the Harz mountains. (His childhood was spent on that estate, and his fantasy life of oneness with nature was played out on trips into the mountains.) His father administered the inherited estates, which were part of the patrimony of this distinguished family, and managed the salt mine, which was the source of revenue for the region. Novalis' father was a strictly Pietistic Moravian; Novalis was the second of eleven children. He was sent to a local Lutheran school for his primary education. From 1790-1794 Novalis studied Law at Jena, Wittenberg, and Leipzig Universities. During this time he heard and was influenced by Friedrich Schiller's lectures, and while at University he made brief acquaintances with Goethe, Herder, and Jean Paul. It was at this time that he became engaged to Sophie von Kuehn—who was thirteen years old—and, a quite different issue, became passionately interested in Fichte's Wissenschaftslehre. (That this extremely brilliant young man was at the same time writing goes without saying.) In light of this rapid development of his thought and work, we should note that from childhood on Novalis was keenly interested in the natural and physical sciences. He was a trained geologist, and had he not died at the age of 29 he would have completed his vast Romantic Encyclopedia of the sciences.

**The work of Novalis.** The prioritizing of the poetic imagination, by Schlegel and many of his contemporaries—including counterparts like Wordsworth and Lamartine elsewhere in Europe—became the leitmotif of Novalis' work. In his *Hymns to the Night*, 1799, Novalis lets his imagination create from the fixed point of the death of his first fiancée, a death which lured him to follow the beloved. As he contemplates this loss, he sees salvation in poetry, whose magic power can transform all that passes into a metaphor of the spirit. Like Orpheus, dealing with the night, he descends into the center of himself, to the point where he can create a salvation—parallel to Christ's saving—from the deification of love. Building from this perception Novalis conceives the universe as a fusion of nature and spirit in the aura of which he can be truly one with his beloved. In two other characteristic works he continues to work the rich Romantic themes of the Catholic Middle Ages. In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1800) he unfolds, self-reflexively, an account of a mediaeval court poet's education in his trade. Heinrich's youthful dream has been of a passage from self-transcendence, through redemption in nature, and the discovery of love, an ecstatic passage through which his experience leads him, bathed in powerful historical mystery. In the speech *Christianity or Europe* Novalis develops imaginatively his vision of the new Europe to come with Romanticism, a Europe which is romantically Catholic, and in that regard highly conservative, but respectful of the individual, and fit to lead the new post Revolutionary monarchical culture of the new Germany.

**The conservative Novalis.** The early German Romantics, privileging poetry as the visionary weapon for envisaging the new world, turned with frequency to the Middle Ages, and at least the atmosphere of the religious life that flourished at that time. For Novalis in particular the French Revolution was a brutal but necessary stage on humanity's long trek to self-awareness. Mankind's history was a powerful and ongoing education.

### Reading

#### *Primary source reading*

Novalis: *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopedia*, ed. David Wood, 2007.

#### *Secondary source reading*

Novalis, *Henry von Ofterdingen*, trans. Hilty, 1992.

#### *Further reading*

*Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*, ed. Bernstein, 2003.

#### *Original language reading*

Kutzke, Hermann, *Romantik und Konservatismus. Das 'politische' Werk Friedrich von Hardenbergs (Novalis) im Horizont seiner Wirkungs geschichte*, 1983.

### Suggested paper topics

Read through what remains of Novalis' Encyclopedia. What connections do you see between his thinking in the 'sciences,' and his poetic visionary thinking? Review Goethe's conception of the sciences in his time, a few generations earlier, and compare the value of the contributions of the two men toward 'understanding.' How does Novalis's worship of the mediaeval square with his scientific knowledge?

Does Novalis's conservatism spring from a reaction to the French Revolution, which was itself built onto Enlightenment ideas of progress and human perfectibility? Or is it an integral part of the Romantic fascination with the past in general, and specifically with the 'Romance' traditions, often poetic and mysterious, which underlie much German thinking of the early 19th century?

### Excerpts

*en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Novalis*

H

I was still blind, but twinkling stars did dance throughout my being's limitless expanse...

True anarchy is the generative element of religion. Out of the annihilation of all existing institutions she raises her glorious head, as the new foundress of the world.

To romanticize the world is to make us aware of the magic, mystery and wonder of the world...

- There are ideal series of events which run parallel with the real ones. They rarely coincide. Men and circumstances generally modify the ideal train of events, so that it seems imperfect, and its consequences are equally imperfect. Thus with the Reformation; instead of Protestantism came Lutheranism.
- Throughout my being's limitless expanse, Nothing had yet drawn close, only at distant stages I found myself, a mere suggestion sensed in past and future ages.
  - o True anarchy is the generative element of religion. Out of the annihilation of all existing institutions she raises her glorious head, as the new foundress of the world..
- Blood will stream over Europe until the nations become aware of the frightful madness which drives them in circles. And then, struck by celestial music and made gentle, they approach their former altars all together, hear about the works of peace, and hold a great celebration of peace with fervent tears before the smoking altars.
- Poetry heals the wounds inflicted by reason.
- The world must be romanticized. In this way the originary meaning may be found again.

## Friedrich Hoelderlin

**Life of Friedrich Hoelderlin.** Friedrich Hoelderlin (1778-1843) was born in Lauffen am Neckar, in the kingdom of Wuerttemberg. His father, who worked as a church assistant, died when the child was two years old, leaving Hoelderlin to be brought up by his mother, who not long after remarried, to the Mayor of Nuertingen, to which town she moved herself and the family. Friedrich went to school in Neubraun, then went off to the University of Tuebingen, where he decided to study theology. (Two of his classmates were Hegel and Schelling, two of the most remarkable German philosophers of the early Romantic/late classical transition. It is reliably supposed that Hoelderlin exercised life long influence on his two classmates, having inspired Hegel with a fascination for the ancient Greek philosopher Heracleitus, whose theory of a universe of intersecting and self-transforming forces was a foundation for Hegel's dialectical thinking.) During and after leaving University, Hoelderlin realized that he was losing his faith in Christianity—thus in the study of theology—and thus drifted to that last resort activity of the intellectual, a job as a tutor. He was at the same time devoting as much time as possible to writing—which had been his private preoccupation since childhood—and between 83-84, in addition to making a fruitful acquaintance with Schiller and Goethe, he began the writing of what was to be one of his major poetic works, *Hyperion*. (His great love, Gontard, a married woman ten years older than he, entered his life at this point, and would serve as a potent and mythical axis, under the name Diotima, for Hoelderlin's vision of the fusion of Ancient Greek depth with his own quest.) In 1798-1800 Hoelderlin worked on his mythopoetic vision, *Empedokles*, in which, as in *Hyperion*, he returned to archaic and deeply pre rational cult sides of the ancient Hellenic experience. In 1805, however, the condition of his 'hypochondria'—he had had his first episodes in 1800—recurred, more threateningly, and he was obliged to enter a clinic in Tuebingen, from which, after intermittent stays, he was released into the care of a local carpenter friend—a highly educated and well read one—in whose house he remained for the more than three remaining decades of his life.

**Friedrich Hoelderlin's Work.** Though in his last decades, Holderlin composed a wide variety of wonderful smaller poems, epigrams, odes, he had turned in his earlier work to the long narrative, Bildungsroman type poems, *Hyperion* and *Empedokles*, in which he sought, from the depths of his person, to reconcile the Classicism deeply interiorized by German culture during the Weimar period, in fact throughout the Enlightenment, with the sense of new Romantic possibility .

**Hyperion.** This poetic Bildungsroman illustrates well why the readers of Hoelderlin have ranged from bewildered to deeply involved. It is set in modern Greece, around 1770, about the time when the nation was on the verge of finding its own independence—freedom from the Turks. Hyperion quests across the land, in search of the idealized Greece of dream, but instead meets only barbarians and primitives. Totally disillusioned he becomes a mountain hermit, and falls into a deep depression from which only the mistress of beauty, Diotima—she who taught Socrates what beauty means-- is able to rescue him. As lovers they unite, until her death, which leaves Hyperion longing and wandering, until, in a moment of powerful pantheistic empathy, he feels his way back to her, they are united, and her essential Hellenic beauty belongs again to the modern soul.

### Reading

#### *Primary source reading*

Hoelderlin, Friedrich, *Poems and Fragments*, trans. M. Hamburger, 2004.

#### *Secondary source reading*

Heinrich, Dieter, *The Course of Remembrance and other essays on Hoelderlin*, 1997.

#### *Further reading*

Constantine, David, *Hoelderlin*, 1990.

#### *Original language reading*

Heidegger, M., *Eralueterungen zu Hoelderlin's Dichtung*, 1944.



### Suggested paper topics

How does Hoelderlin's quest for the spirit of ancient Greece compare to the longing of older classicist/Hellenists, like Goethe and Winckelmann? Can you see what it might mean to say that Hoelderlin is a 'Romantic'? Look into a poet like Lord Byron, perhaps his Childe Harold? Does his address to ancient Greece at all remind you of Hoelderlin's approach?

Read in Hoelderlin's late shorter poems, like 'Bread and Wine' and 'Patmos' and consider the way this poet experiences Christianity. What kind of symbol of the future does Jesus become for him? Does Hoelderlin work toward a fusion of Christianity with ancient Hellenism?

*Excerpt* [www.poemhunter.com/friedrich-holderlin/](http://www.poemhunter.com/friedrich-holderlin/)

Ages of Life  
 Euphrates' cities and  
 Palmyra's streets and you  
 Forests of columns in the level desert  
 What are you now?  
 Your crowns, because  
 You crossed the boundary  
 Of breath,  
 Were taken off  
 In Heaven's smoke and flame;  
 But I sit under clouds (each one  
 Of which has peace) among  
 The ordered oaks, upon  
 The deer's heath, and strange  
 And dead the ghosts of the blessed ones  
 Appear to me.

## Heine

**Life of Heinrich Heine.** Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) was a German poet, critic, satirist, and influential public critic. He was born in Duesseldorf, of a Jewish family, and although he would later convert to Christianity—largely for political reasons due to the anti-Jewish laws in Prussia, and to the lasting displeasure of Jewish readers of Heine—his Jewish fidelities remained a stalwart part of his life. (And an underlying spur to the critical, outsider view he regularly adopted, toward society and government.) His father was a textile merchant and his mother the daughter of a physician. The life that was to sweep up this young man was different from the University Professorship lives common to the major figures of Enlightenment and Early Romantic literature; although Heine was to be sent to the classic universities. He studied briefly at Jena, and later at Goettingen, for Law, in 1821. But his sensitivities were always more attuned to current cultural/political events than to scholarship. (Writing of course concerned him from early on, and as a young man he had had a turn (not very successful) at theater.)

**Heine's concern with politics.** Heine was from early in life consumed by the political life of his time, as were most of his creative contemporaries. The Napoleonic Revolution, and how it would play out in Germany, was on everyone's mind. This was noticeably so in Duesseldorf, which lay close to the border of Napoleonic France, and which, at Napoleon's defeat in 1815, was returned to Germany. (Heine had an intense attachment to French culture, with which he had been familiar from childhood; and was to pass the last twenty five years of his life in Paris, where he was better known, and more popular than in Germany.) He was ardently attracted to some aspects of the Napoleonic invasion—the introduction of the Code Napoleon as the new law code, and the institution of trial by jury—and was to remain, throughout his life, a friend to the anti-monarchist forces in Germany, who were fighting the persistence there of the culture of small and highly conservative monarchies. To be a participant in Junges Deutschland, the New Germany movement which swept up Heine and many of his contemporaries impatient with fossilized political forms, meant to follow events in France, where the Revolution of 1848 seemed a culmination of dissatisfaction with the Ancien Regime, which Napoleon had ultimately restored in a new form. In France, where Heine spent his last twenty five years, he was widely admired, had influential friends—like Gerard de Nerval and Hector Berlioz—and wrote criticism and poetry voluminously.

**Heine's work.** Heine was a brilliant satirist and a lyric poet with a wide range of skills. From 1820 he was a publishing fury, creative with lyrics of such diversity that one can only illustrate his genius by a single sample. 'Die schlesischen Weber' 'The Silesian Weavers,' is of typical power and subtlety. The voices speaking in this poem are almost entirely the common voice of the weavers themselves. It comes out that the cloth the weavers are weaving is the shroud of the German nation: into that shroud they are weaving a threefold curse, a curse on the god who has betrayed them, a curse on the king who has let them starve and be shot, a curse on their fake and corrupt fatherland. The brilliance of Heine's poetry is in the slow revelation by the weavers of the details of what they are weaving, a revelation which proceeds at exactly the speed of the prosody. Nietzsche said that only he and Heine knew how to write German. He was right.

## Reading

### *Primary source reading*

Heine: *Selected verse: Dual Language Edition*, trans. Peter Branscombe, 1987.

### *Secondary source reading*

Sammons, Jeffrey, *Heinrich Heine: A Modern Biography*, 1979. (The classic study in English.)

### *Further reading*

Youens, Susan, *Heinrich Heine and the Lied*, 2011.

### *Original language reading*

Hinck, Walter, *Von Heine zu Brecht: Lyrik im Geschichtsprozess*, 1978.

### Suggested paper topics

To what especially do you attribute Heine's inclination to and gift for irony? Does it derive from his outsider status? From his dual French-German cultural background? From his lifelong oppositional stance in politics?

How does Heine deal with being Jewish? Does it bring a flavor of its own to his lyrics? Does he suffer racial inequities? Examine the question of Anti-Semitism in German literature. Has it deep historical roots there, or is German Anti-Semitism a by product of recent events in Germany?

*Excerpt* [www.poemhunter.com/heinrich-heine/](http://www.poemhunter.com/heinrich-heine/)

E'en As A lovely Flower  
E'en as a lovely flower,  
So fair, so pure thou art;  
I gaze on thee, and sadness  
Comes stealing o'er my heart.

My hands I fain had folded  
Upon thy soft brown hair,  
Praying that God may keep thee  
So lovely, pure and

A Palm-tree  
A single fir-tree, lonely,  
on a northern mountain height,  
sleeps in a white blanket,  
draped in snow and ice.

His dreams are of a palm-tree,  
who, far in eastern lands,  
weeps, all alone and silent,  
among the burning sands.

## Johann Gottlieb Fichte

**The Life of Johann Gottlieb Fichte.** Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1772-1829) was born in upper Lusatia as the son of a ribbon weaver. He was from a peasant family long settled in the district, and for the first years of his life he was educated by his father. However the young man showed exceptional tenacity, and was noticed: a baron, from the neighborhood, was struck by the youngster's extraordinary preaching ability, and offered to pay for his school tuition. The young man was put under the charge of one Pastor Knebel in Meissen, who saw to it that Johann was sent to the local gymnasium and given the most thorough possible classical education.

**Fichte's education.** In 1774 Johann matriculated at the distinguished Schulpforta school—at which both of the Schlegel brothers and Nietzsche would be students. In 1780 he enrolled as a Theology student at the University of Jena, which was by this time the central educational nucleus of Germany, if not Europe. All did not go smoothly, however, as Fichte had serious problems with tuition, and had to drop his University studies in order to serve as a tutor. An intense but unhappy love affair only made matters more difficult. As with so many of the brilliant and highly educated German thinkers of this time, Fichte's best hope for satisfying employment was on the university level. In December of 1793 he was made Professor of Philosophy at Jena, from which position, unfortunately, he was to be dismissed on a charge of atheism. (We might today deeply question that decision, as what in fact Fichte believed, and pronounced, was that God can be known through the will and goodness, not through a personal love—which set him at serious odds with the many Pietist forces that were dominant in the administration of the University.) In 1808 Fichte found himself distressed and discouraged by the devastation wrought by Napoleon's armies in Prussia, and delivered was to become his most widely attended to work, his *Reden an der deutschen Nation, Speeches to the German Nation*, on the urgent need for Germans to come together as a national whole, and—rather as Herder had sought—to discover their rich and nourishing cultural past with its unity in a single great language.

**Fichte's work.** Fichte was particularly known for his speeches to the German nation, but it was less well understood from where he was coming, in his national summons expressed in those *Reden*. The determining challenge to Fichte, in the development of his own thought, was the growing development of his thought-master and teacher, Immanuel Kant—whose *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) established a critical benchmark for the speculative thought of his own time, turn of century Germany, and for world thought on the philosophical level. In interacting with Kant's idealism—in prioritizing the dynamic of the ego, as the creator of a self-sufficient world; in arguing that consciousness is not grounded in anything; that there is no noumenal realm over against the phenomenal; in exploring domains of self awareness and self consciousness; in developing rich concepts of intersubjectivity—Fichte devoted some of his own philosophical attention to the question of the conditions and limits of thought. (It is increasingly apparent that Fichte, in his immanentist idealism, helped bridged the transition to Hegel's idealistic system of the absolute unfolding of Geist.) It is noteworthy that in Fichte's case, as in those of other German philosophers and religious thinkers, the presence of literature and philosophy within one another is inextricably close.

### Reading

#### *Primary source reading*

Beck, Gunnar, *Fichte and Kant on Freedom, Rights, and Law*, 2008.

#### *Secondary source reading*

Martin, Wayne, *Idealism and Objectivity: Understanding Fichte's Jena Project*, 1997.

#### *Further reading*

Zoller, Gunther, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy: the Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will*, 1998.

#### *Original language reading*

Rohs, Peter, *Johann Gottlieb Fichte*, 1991.

### Suggested paper topics

In his *Speeches to the German Nation* Fichte issued an impassioned plea for national self-consciousness and unity. Read those speeches, noting what sentiments they target in Fichte's fellow Germans. Assess the effect of those speeches, and when, if ever, the issue of German nationality found a solution.

In his philosophy Fichte—following the inspiration and challenge of Kant—is centrally concerned with the nature of the self and the other it relates to. This is a central problem for philosophy, and assumes special importance for the Romantics, because they are intent on the rich self affirmations of the self-liberating individual. Can you construe this self-other issue as a central concern for the understanding of literature? Does this issue bring out a point where the concerns of literature and philosophy are identical?

**Excerpt:** [http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Johann\\_Gottlieb\\_Fichte](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Johann_Gottlieb_Fichte)

- The correct relationship between the higher and lower classes, the appropriate mutual interaction between the two is, as such, the true underlying support on which the improvement of the human species rests. The higher classes constitute the mind of the single large whole of humanity; the lower classes constitute its limbs; the former are the thinking and designing [Entwerfende] part, the latter the executive part.
- The new education must consist essentially in this, that it completely destroys freedom of will in the soil which it undertakes to cultivate, and produces on the contrary strict necessity in the decisions of the will, the opposite being impossible. Such a will can henceforth be relied on with confidence and certainty.
- o
- If you want to influence him at all, you must do more than merely talk to him ; you must fashion him, and fashion him in such a way that he simply cannot will otherwise than you wish him to will.
- o
- Upon the progress of knowledge the whole progress of the human race is immediately dependent: he who retards that, hinders this also. And he who hinders this, —what character does he assume towards his age and posterity? Louder than with a thousand voices, by his actions he proclaims into the deafened ear of the world present and to come —"As long as I live at least, the men around me shall not become wiser or better; — for in their progress I too, notwithstanding all my efforts to the contrary, should be dragged forward in some direction; and this I detest I will not become more enlightened, — I will not become nobler. Darkness and perversion are my elements, and I will summon all my powers together that I may not be dislodged from them."

## Schleiermacher

**The development of Schleiermacher.** Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) was a German philosopher, theologian, Biblical scholar, and perhaps above all textual hermeneute, who was also a major player among German literary philosophical luminaries, like the Schlegels and Novalis, who gathered around the University of Jena at the turn of the century, and who did so with a particular focus on the journal *Athenaeum* (1798-1800), which was its movement's beacon publication. That is, Schleiermacher was deeply involved with this group of literary and artistic people who were trying to track a new path for German thought on the far side of Weimar classicism—the rich inheritance of Goethe and Schiller, who were living near Jena, in Weimar. Schleiermacher, in other words, not only wrote on culture and philosophy for *Athenaeum*, but belonged deeply to the movement of change and reconstruction that was taking over German culture as it entered its 'Romantic' phase. Who was this complex theologian and cultural critic with such a binding to the art world, and with a destiny to build toward a new religious sensibility to meet the demands of a Protestant culture still debating the issues that concerned Luther.

**Life of Friedrich Schleiermacher.** Friedrich Schleiermacher was born in Breslau, in Southern Silesia. He was the son of a chaplain in the Prussian Army. He was initially sent to a religious strict Moravian school, but he soon realized that his belief in Christianity was not of that sort, was under question. (Letters to his father, from these years, show the son tiptoeing around the belief issue, which was most important to his father, then blurting out in a letter that he no longer believed in the Trinity.) After this flap was resolved, it was agreed that Schleiermacher should go to the University of Halle, which was 'rationalist' and on the whole congenial to Schleiermacher, who profited from this time to study Greek and fall in love with Plato and Aristotle.

**Schleiermacher's Writing.** After University, Schleiermacher, who was actively writing all this time, took the usual posts as a tutor, and involved himself in what was to be a seven year relationship with the wife of a Berlin clergyman. He also deepened his relationship with Friedrich Schlegel, and brought to fruition the two works that represented the thinking of his first thirty years: his *Reden ueber die Religion (Speeches on Religion)* and his *Monologen (Monologues)*. To these works he added, in 1803, his *Outlines of a History of Morality*, all of which led to his being offered a Chair of Theology at Berlin in 1810.

**Schleiermacher's thought.** Like that of Fichte, another bigger than life figure in the transition of Germany from Enlightenment and classicism, into the complex early 19th century cultural mode we call Romanticism, Schleiermacher's thought was that of a significant and complex philosopher, as well as a Theologian concerned with bringing harmony between traditional Christianity—his reference point was Lutheranism and Pietism—and the various new naturalisms of the 19th century; not to mention the dramatic developments in textual criticism, hermeneutics, which Schleiermacher was considerably responsible for promoting. In those realms he evoked wide attention for the care with which he read Biblical texts in terms of a well planned method for scrutinizing the intentions of the writer. Schleiermacher's skeptical credence became an important ingredient of the Higher Criticism of the Bible, which was to prove one of the epoch making trends of the 19th century.

**Theology.** Like Fichte, Schleiermacher wished to base his modernist theology, with its room for evergrowing perspectives, on a compelling account of the human psyche. He elaborated a detailed psychology of self and other, in which God was introduced as the factor of supreme otherness; an otherness which nonetheless we can access in the depths of our self-awareness, where we live as the knowledge of our dependence.

### Reading

#### *Primary source reading*

Lamm, Julia, *The Living God. Schleiermacher's theological Appropriation of Spinoza*, 1996.

#### *Secondary source reading*

Gerrish, Brian, *Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology*, 1984.

#### *Further Reading*

Barth, Karl, *The Theology of Schleiermacher*, 1982.

#### *Original language reading*

Nowak, Kurt, *Schleiermacher: Leben, Werk, und Wirkung*, 2001.

### **Suggested paper topics**

Schleiermacher was a renowned Biblical scholar and text critic, who evolved many techniques for the analysis of Biblical texts. In one sense he was a major thrust of the so called higher criticism of the Bible, which led to fresh and unsuperstitious readings of scripture; while in another sense he reawoke interest in the Bible as sacred literature.

Examine some of the detailed features of Schleiermacher's method of Biblical criticism.

Examine Schleiermacher's contributions to the *Athenaeum* journal. How did Schleiermacher address the intellectual problems of the day, that *Sattelzeit* (saddle-time) between the end of Weimar classicism and the full blown unfolding of the Romantic movement?

*Excerpt* <http://www.egs.edu/library/friedrich-schleiermacher/quotes/>

To be a religious man and to pray are really one and the same thing. To join in the thought of God with every thought of any importance that occurs to us ; in all our admiration of external nature, to regard it as the work of His wisdom ; to take counsel with God about all our plans, that we may be able to carry them out in His name ; and even in our most mirthful hours to remember His all-seeing eye ; this is the prayer without ceasing to which we are called, and which is really the essence of true religion.

Therefore let us learn to die in seeing Christ die ! It is no small thing that I expect from you in calling on you to do this ; for it is with the death of the Saviour as it was with His life ; let him who seeks only happiness and joy shun likeness to Him ; let him alone seek it who covets what is great and perfect at any price.

If, then, His Spirit is actually among us, if Christ becomes increasingly glorious to us through our study of His words, our inward parts more and more enlightened by the eternal, divine light, which He brought from heaven, our hearts more and more purified ; we shall then, when the next time of commemorating our Lord comes round, return with new joy and gratitude to the beautiful circle of our Christian festivals, and anew, with yet purer spirit and in a way more worthy of Him, participate in adoring remembrance of His birth, His sufferings and His glorification.

However much admiration and honour was given to our Saviour by many of His contemporaries during His life on earth ; however powerfully a yet greater number were struck, at least for the moment, by His exalted character ; still just His greatest words and His noblest deeds often remained dark even to the noblest and best around Him, and seemed to the rest a piece of insolent pretension.

We will begin this series of meditations with the relationship which is the foundation of all others, namely, the holy bond of marriage, which we must regard as the first appointment of God after His almighty Word had called man into existence. Out of this sacred union are developed all other human relations ; on it rests the Christian family, and of such Christian families Christian communities consist. Moreover, on this union depends the propagation of the human race, and the transmitting of the power of the divine Word from one generation to another. Therefore let us today consider this foundation of the whole Christian Church in the light of God's Word.

But our grateful joy before God must also be free from slothfulness. It seems really superfluous to say this ; for slothfulness and joy can never harmonize. Joy arouses the spirit, so that it is nothing but strength and life and activity ; and this is pre-eminently true of joy before God, for it is ever exciting, ever bringing into action whatever may be specially in our hearts at the same time.

## Hegel

**Hegel's Life.** Georg Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was born in Stuttgart, in the kingdom of Wuerttemberg, where his father was secretary to the local revenue office. At three he attended the local public school, and proved astonishingly precocious. Two years later when he entered the local Latin School he already knew the first declension, with some help from his mother. By the time he had enrolled in the Stuttgart Gymnasium Illustre he was a voracious reader—not only of Classics but of German authors like Klopstock and Lessing. At the age of eighteen he entered the renowned Tuebinger Stift, the theological faculty at Tuebingen University, where he was lucky to form friendships with fellow students like the poet Friedrich Hoelderlin, and the critic and philosopher Friedrich Schelling, both of whom had significant influence on the development of Hegel. (One of the closest bonds among the three was their shared enthusiasm for the French Revolution, which was in full swing, and which was stirring the spirit of freedom in Germany; and which would in the proximate future foreordain the issue of freedom to central position in the thought of the three friends.) After graduation—he was writing drafts of philosophical essays all the time—Hegel spent several years as a private tutor. In 1801 he went to Jena, where he collaborated with Schelling, while by 1806 we see him completing one of his great books, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Die Phaenomenologie des Geistes*), in which he unfolds the best known principles of the philosophy we now, thanks to him, call absolute idealism. (While completing this work he had occasion to see Napoleon, on horseback, entering Prussia victoriously, and had to admire this victorious figure of history, who would seem to embody key elements of Hegel's historical belief that what happens is right.) In 1818 Hegel was appointed to a Professorship of Philosophy in Berlin, and saw his intellectual reputation spread throughout Europe.

**Hegel's and German thought.** Theologians and philosophers—from Eckhart to Boehme, Fichte to Schopenhauer—have played fruitful roles in shaping the creative imaginations of German literature. (In fact no other literature than German so turns around the unity of the philosophical with the imaginative.) Throughout his work, in logic, aesthetics, and especially in metaphysics Hegel unfolds a thought scheme in which the Absolute Spirit, Geist, realizes itself, in revolutionary development, into the many stages first of cosmic unfolding then of historical unfolding, from the earliest human presences known to our planet to Hegel's own present, in which he saw—remember his response to the French Revolution—the furthest yet development of the will of what is.

**Hegel: Aesthetics and Logic.** As the Absolute Spirit reveals itself it inevitably assumes an evolving sequence of phenomenal expressions. (While pure spirit, that is, it can only realize itself by taking on concrete forms.) Pure thought (philosophy), forms of society or government, conceptions that become the laws, norms of behavior (moral values): all these realms of expression enable us to know Geist in its unfolding. Quite as meaningful to us, in our effort to see the advance of Spirit behind us, is the unfolding of Idea as sensuous form, that is as art. We are to assume, if we follow Hegel's argument of the 'advance of spirit,' that its expression in concrete form, in the arts, will show itself to be unceasingly 'purer,' and 'more Geist like.' It is a matter of fine distinction, to consider Hegel's efforts to establish this point, and a pleasure to the aesthetic in all of us, to see to what extraordinary insights Hegel takes us, as he conducts us into the development of literature, the plastic arts, and architecture up to his own time. It is only for the sake of minimal completeness, that we must add, that Hegel's dialectical system of logic, by which he characterizes the self-generation of Spirit, is an indispensable correlate of the evolutionary process he tracks in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

### Reading

#### *Primary source reading*

A *Hegel Reader*, ed. Houlgate, 1998.

#### *Secondary source reading*

Houlgate, Stephen, *An Introduction to Hegel. Freedom, Truth, and History*, 2005.

#### *Further reading*

Solomon, Robert, *In the Spirit of Hegel*, 1983.

#### *Original language reading*

Schaefer, Reiner, *Die dialektik und ihre besonderen Formen in Hegel's Logik*, 2001.



### Suggested paper topics

Hegel believes that the arts are expressions of Geist, spirit; incarnations. (This is a one sentence survey of a lifetime of positioning the argument.) Does this general kind of approach, to what the arts and especially literature, are, seem promising to you? Is it an approach which leads to fresh insights into texts of literature?

When Hegel saw the victorious Napoleon riding through Prussia, he was amazed, and despite his feelings about the matter he admired the conqueror. What was it he admired? Was it the spirit of history incarnate, as we are told? If so, what does that incarnation of spirit in history mean to Hegel, and why is it so powerful? Have you had that feeling, in watching an international figure who seems to be riding the wave of history?

*Excerpt* [https://www.goodreads.com/.../quotes/6188.Georg\\_Wilhelm\\_Friedrich](https://www.goodreads.com/.../quotes/6188.Georg_Wilhelm_Friedrich)

Governments have never learned anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it When liberty is mentioned, we must always be careful to observe whether it is not really the assertion of private interests which is thereby designated.

Mark this well, you proud men of action! you are, after all, nothing but unconscious instruments of the men of thought.

Education is the art of making man ethical.

We do not need to be shoemakers to know if our shoes fit, and just as little have we any need to be professionals to acquire knowledge of matters of universal interest.

An idea is always a generalization, and generalization is a property of thinking. To generalize means to think

Truth in philosophy means that concept and external reality correspond.

The history of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom.

## Friedrich Schlegel

**Profile of Friedrich Schlegel.** Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) was a German poet, literary critic, and philosopher who was one of the principal creators of the concept of the Romantic, and inspirational in developing the new aesthetics of the Romantic Movement, especially as it was being formulated in the cultural seedbed of Jena. (Among the writers most directly influenced by him were Coleridge and Adam Mickiewicz.) He made his debut as a critic and essayist, but devoted the most concentrated part of his work life to his specialty, Indo European linguistics and comparative literature. He should be distinguished from his equally distinguished brother, August Wilhelm Schlegel, with whom Friedrich collaborated on the Athenaeum journal in Jena, and who also contributed to the initial impulses of Romanticism.

**The Life of Friedrich Schlegel.** Friedrich Schlegel was born in Hanover, son of the Lutheran pastor of the Hanover Marktkirche. Still a young man he went for the study of law at the universities of both Goettingen and Leipzig, but soon tired of that study, and turned toward an exclusive concern with literary matters, especially in the context of the Athenaeum journal, on which he worked at the turn of the century with Tieck, Fichte, and Novalis. In his work for that journal, especially in the *Athenaeumsfragmente* and in his novel *Lucinde*, he worked through the basic principle of the idea of Romanticism, in forms which—say in his definition of the Romantic, or of the fragment or the ironic—would be major legacies for early 19th century thinkers, across Europe, as they attempted to characterize the new cultural/literary world they found themselves in. The years subsequent to The Athenaeum work, the last twenty years of his life, were devoted to a vast array of literary studies, the most fruitful of which were in Indo European culture and linguistics.

**The works.** As a youth Schlegel was thought a wild card revolutionary and atheist, but in 1818, when he converted to Roman Catholicism, he moved into a late phase, as a representative of the arch conservative Metternich, in which his political and social views were unrecognizably different from those of his youth, and in which, for example, he found no more disgusting example of political structure than Anglo-American parliamentarianism, with its openness to the voice of the people. What transpired between these two intellectual postures of Friedrich Schlegel? Perhaps the key lies in the notion of the Romantic, which as Schlegel first forged it served as a conceptual bridge toward fresh new perceptions of what a literary text (especially Poetry) is, while later in his thinking life Schlegel found that this Romantic notion, which for him fundamentally connoted moods and tones of the Middle Ages (the Romantic embedded in the roots of the inheritance from Rome), became the enveloping mantle for an archaizing thinker whose fascinations were all in the past.

**Schlegel as Scholar.** With Friedrich Schlegel we truly find the blend of serious and seminal scholar with lyric poet with literary critical intelligence capable of intuiting the richest formulations of the entire birthing Romantic movement. The masterpiece of his rich scholarly poetic achievement is *On the Language and Wisdom of India* (1818). In that work he draws on his own intensive study of Indo European linguistics, which began in 1803, and his acceptance of the position, then coming into first prominence, that there were remarkable similarities among Sanskrit, Latin, Greek and Persian. From this observation, which was claiming scholarly attention, Schlegel developed his own version of an Aryanist theory, that the 'noble people,' the Aryans, made their ways west from India, where they deposited their distinctive and exceptionally valuable culture.

### Reading

#### *Primary source reading*

Forster, M.N., *German Philosophy of Language from Schlegel to Hegel and Beyond*, 2011.

#### *Secondary source reading*

Beiser, F., *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism 1781-1801*, 2002.

#### *Further reading*

Chaouli, M. *The Laboratory of Poetry; Chemistry and Poetics in the work of Friedrich Schlegel*, 2002.

#### *Original language reading*

Zovko, Jure, *Verstehen und Nichtverstehen bei Friedrich Schlegel. Zur Entstehung und Bedeutung seiner hermeneutischen Kritik*, 1990.

***Suggested paper topics***

What is the relation of Friedrich Schlegel the scholar to Schlegel the ideologist of the Romantic poetic? Does the Schlegel for whom Aryan poetics are defining for western culture, support his notions of irony, the fragmentary, and visionary on his discoveries as a scholar?

What are the principal ways that Friedrich Schlegel begins to distance himself—say in the Athenauumsfragmente—from the thinking of the Weimar classicists like Goethe and Scniller? What role does the notion of the fragment play in that distancing? How about the notion of irony? Why are these such influential wedge concepts into the new Romantic world?

***Excerpt*** [http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Karl\\_Wilhelm\\_Friedrich\\_Schlegel](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Karl_Wilhelm_Friedrich_Schlegel)

The romantic poetry is a progressive universal poetry.

Irony is a form of paradox. Paradox is what is good and great at the same time.

Wit is the appearance, the external flash of imagination. Thus its divinity, and the witty character of mysticism.

Honour is the mysticism of legality.

It is equally fatal for the spirit to have a system and to have none. One must thus decide to join the two.  
It is equally fatal for the spirit to have a system and to have none. It will simply have to decide to combine the two.

## Nietzsche

**Significance of the life of Friedrich Nietzsche.** Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was a German philosopher, classical philologist, poet, and social critic who exercised great influence on such philosophical movements as Existentialism and Postmodernism, and more widely on educated readers worldwide who have attempted to make sense of such developments as the God is Dead movement or the paths to self-orientation in a world of radical individualism. As with many of the greatest German writers—Eckhart, Boehme, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Fichte—in Nietzsche too the borderline between rigorous philosophy and imaginative, even mythical thinking is porous, and constantly transgressed.

**The Life of Friedrich Nietzsche.** Friedrich Nietzsche was born in Ruecken-bei-Letzen in Prussia. His father was a Lutheran pastor, and the young Nietzsche was at first sent to the local boys' school. Then from 1858-64 he matriculated at the renowned Schulpforta gymnasium, where he got a conventional thorough grounding in chiefly classical languages—doing poorly only in Hebrew, and creating a minor scandal from time to time with his comrades and the bottle. At Schulpforta Nietzsche wrote poems, composed some interesting music, and discovered a favorite poet, Hoelderlin; in addition, and of eminent importance, he wrote one of his first serious essays, on his loss of Christian faith. (In a sharp letter to his sister, his other self in thinking through value issues, Nietzsche wrote that one can either have faith and be happy, or inquiry, suffer, and be honest.) From Schulpforta Nietzsche went to the University of Bonn, in 1864, to major in Classical Philology. During these years he slipped into the first stages of serious health issues, severe dysentery, migraines, what were to become debilitating mental issues, probably including schizophrenia; as well as into a serious accident on horseback, in which the muscles of his chest were badly ripped. He was however able to accept, in 1848, the unprecedented offer of a Chair in Classical Philology at the University of Basel—he was only 24—and was to remain a resident of Switzerland for the rest of his life—although his periods of travel for recuperation were unremitting. After a few years Nietzsche had to retire from this taxing teaching post, and devoted himself increasingly to his writings, and to his own recuperation. The period of intense creativity was about to commence; it would see *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), *Human, All Too Human* (1878), *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1882) and a spate of other passionate, driven, contentious texts written before madness took the requisite reason from his poetry.

**The Thought of Friedrich Nietzsche.** Scattered through the writings of Nietzsche are many themes that can be considered key works of the intellectual climate of the twentieth century and beyond. The outburst of feeling and vision that accompanied Romanticism had borne fruit in a 19th century for which a return to conservative values was widespread—in monarchies, in repressive or obscurantist policies such as those of Metternich and (in part) Bismarck), The implications of scientific investigation were making themselves unavoidable, and the challenges to orthodox religious were compelling believers to reformulate their positions. Into this turbulent mix Nietzsche arrived with a collection of perspectives which, expressed with poetic ardor and uncompromising rudeness, drove wedges into what positions still remained. Notions like the polarity of the Apollonian and Dionysias in drama—the basis of *The Birth of Tragedy*; like *The Will to Power*, a key exhortation to enslaved modern man—largely a victim of Christianity's servile propaganda—to affirm the life he finds himself in; The Death of God, the shibboleth with which Nietzsche compresses his sense that the world has outgrown its dependence on false father figures; and the notion, pervasive throughout Nietzsche's work, that the truth is undiscoverable, that all cognition is perspectival and dependent: such notions, developed with great power in Nietzsche's brief and often aphoristic works, inevitably exercised the strongest effect both on artists and intellectuals.

### Reading

#### *Primary source reading*

*Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. Hollingdale, 1986.

#### *Secondary source reading*

Gemes, Ken; May, Simon, *Nietzsche on Freedom and Authority*, 2009.

#### *Further reading*

*Nietzsche: Philosophy and the Arts*, ed. Kemal, Salim; Gaskell, Ivan; Conway, Daniel, 1998.

***Original language reading***

Breitschmid, Markus, *Nietzsche's Denkraum*, 2006.

**Suggested paper topics**

How does Nietzsche deal with the origins and development of ancient Greek tragedy—which he claimed to understand better after his first meetings with Richard Wagner? How is Nietzsche's perspective onto classical culture different from that of the Weimar classicists like Goethe and Schiller? What would Nietzsche say of Winkelmann's idea, that Greek art reaches to a noble simplicity and dignified gravity?

Once again with Nietzsche we come to the boundaries between literature and philosophy. Do Nietzsche's texts, like *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, seem to lie on the side of imaginative literature? Or are they philosophical texts, with a discursive argument, but powered by imagination?

***Excerpt en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Friedrich\_Nietzsche***

“Without music, life would be a mistake.”

“It is not a lack of love, but a lack of friendship that makes unhappy marriages.”

“That which does not kill us makes us stronger.”

“I'm not upset that you lied to me, I'm upset that from now on I can't believe you.”

“It is hard enough to remember my opinions, without also remembering my reasons for them!”

“And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music.”

“There is always some madness in love. But there is also always some reason in madness.”

## Richard Wagner

**The achievement of Richard Wagner.** Richard Wagner (1813-1883) was a great composer, poet (of the librettos of his own operas), scenographer and dramaturge, publicist, political voice, and autobiographer. It is no wonder that his creative brilliance made of opera (the Gesamtkunstwerk, the Total Art Work) the consummate statement of 19th century Romanticism, with its overtones (in Germany) of apocalypse and violence. German literature is multiply intertwined with the work of Wagner: the themes of his greatest work, like *Parzifal* and the *Ring of the Niebelungen*, are drawn from the earliest classics of German literature; Wagner himself proved to be the consummate wordsmith, in creating the librettos for his operas; and the literary climate of early 20th century German literature is unthinkable without Wagner's looming shadow over it.

**The Life of Richard Wagner.** Richard Wagner was born in Leipzig. His father was a police department clerk, while his mother was the daughter of a baker. His father died shortly after Richard's birth, and his mother, remarrying one of the Father's friends, moved the family to Dresden, near to which the young Wagner went to a pastor's school at Possendorf. At the age of nine, while still in elementary school, Wagner registered his extreme delight at hearing Karl Maria von Weber's *Die Freischuetz*; at the same stage he wrote his first play. (Wagner was quick to pick up on driving new forces in the German art world: in 1825 he heard Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, and was taken with a fit of demonic excitement.) In 1831 Wagner entered the University of Leipzig, and at the age of 20 he composed his first opera, *The Fairies*. In 1836 Wagner fell in love—for the first of many recorded times—and married. (The next year the lady left him for another man, only to reappear, reconciled then fighting, many times in Wagner's later life, all the while he was accumulating new romantic encumbrances. Romantic confusion and constant debt were the two constants of Wagner's personal life.) The following years, as Wagner composed unremittingly, were to find him making his way by luck and prayer through the labyrinth of higher culture elements on whom he was dependent for his livelihood, and, even in his later years, when he had settled in Bayreuth, and established a performance for his operatic achievement, for the funding of an appropriate Grand Hall for the staging of his works.

**The Work of Richard Wagner.** You will be able to trace, in any of Wagner's major operas, the combination of skills which marks his originality: his bringing together of all the elements of the opera—from costume and gesture to the highest singing roles—to a firm unity; tonal experimentation and chromaticism that bespeaks the advent of the 'modern music' lying not far ahead into the next century. Wagner recapitulates (in his invariably fresh and socially alert manner) many of the greatest early Germanic narrative themes: *Lohengrin* and *Parzifal* (Wolfram's *Parzifal*); *Tannhauser* (the *Meistersingers*); *The Ring of the Niebelungen*; *Tristan und Isolde* (Gottfried von Strassburg, 12th century). Wagner's perspective, throughout his reworking of this narrative material, is romantic-tragic in mode; in world view he is both celebratory of the origins of German literature, and scornful of the fallen state of commercial middle class Germany, at its worst exemplified by the Jews, whom Wagner regularly excoriates. Wagner's powerful written lyrics, and sublime (at best) music, which he was to help enshrine in a national festival at Bayreuth (1872), mark one of the high points of German cultural self-awareness. It must be mentioned that Adolf Hitler promoted his own cult of Wagnerian music, which he considered the highest testimony to German national supremacy. But it has been frequently observed, that Wagner was, instead of a nationalist, a creator employing the treasures of German culture to focus an unrelenting critique of German society.

### Reading

#### *Primary source reading*

Wagner, Richard, *My Life*, trans. Gray, 1992.

#### *Secondary source reading*

*Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, ed. Spencer and Millington, 1987.

#### *Further reading*

Spett, Frederic, *Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival*, 1994.

#### *Original language reading*

Callico, J, 'Fuer eine neue deutsche Nationaloper,' in Applegate, *Music and German National Identity*, 2002.

### Suggested paper topics

What connection do you see between Wagner's conception of the Gesamtkunstwerk and the work of creative imagination in literature? While it is true that Wagner composed the lyrics for his own operas, and that he was a genius at creating lyrics for the operatic production, does this kind of work constitute literary creation?

What kinds of transformation of early German literature do you see in Wagner's operas? How has Wagner's *The Ring of the Niebelungen* modified the *Niebelungenlied*? How has Wagner's *Parzifal* refashioned the epic of Wolfram von Eschenbach? Answer with the view to the kinds of radical transformation the Gesamtkunstwerk makes when it assembles literary material into a new whole.

*Excerpt en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Talk:Richard\_Wagner*

- I believe in God, Mozart, and Beethoven.
- The error in the art-genre of Opera consists herein: a Means of expression (Music) has been made the end, while the End of expression (the Drama) has been made a means.
- The oldest, truest, most beautiful organ of music, the origin to which alone our music owes its being, is the human voice.
- A political man is disgusting, but a political wife, horrible.
- From its first faint glimmerings, History shews Man's constant progress as a beast of prey. As such he conquers every land, subdues the fruit-fed races, founds mighty realms by subjugating other subjugators, forms states and sets up civilisations, to enjoy his prey at rest.
- Attack and defence, want and war, victory and defeat, lordship and thralldom, all sealed with the seal of blood: this from henceforth is the History of Man.

## **20th Century German Literature**

The political and military history of Germany during the first half of the 20th century, is so well known that only the briefest outline should suffice. Under Kaiser Wilhelm II Germany began WW I in 1914. Decisively defeated by the Allies in 1918, she lost all her colonies, Alsace-Lorraine, and some frontier territory. The Republic of Germany (Weimar Republic) was proclaimed in 1919. For fourteen years the nation remained in a deplorable condition: her economy was severely damaged; the government was highly unstable and the people were under a cloud of war guilt. Already as early as 1923 Adolf Hitler made a bid for power in the Beer Hall Putsch in Munich; although this attempt proved abortive, Hitler continued to gain power, and by 1933 he was able to seize complete control of the country. He abolished the Weimar Republic, set up the so called Third Reich, with himself as dictator, repudiated the Versailles Treaty which had ended WW I, carried out a campaign of racial purification, annexed Austria (1937), and part of Czechoslovakia (1938), and began WWII by attacking Poland in 1939. Germany was defeated again in 1945. The division of Germany into East and West, during the Cold War between the United States and Russia, consumed much of the German spirit for the remainder of the 20th century.



## George

**Life and work of Stefan George.** Stefan George (1868-1933) was a German poet, translator, and editor, who was born in Bingen, in Prussia. Already as a teenager he was actively creating poetry, some of it in a private language he invented; thus representative, already, of George's drive toward the pure and hermetic in language. In the late 1880's he found himself for a while in Paris, where he met the eminent poet Paul Verlaine, and became a member of Stéphane Mallarmé's famed Tuesday soirees, at which many leading French poets appeared. Upon returning to Germany he founded a literary review—*Blaetter fuer die Kunst; Art Journal*—which was to become a style setter for the new and arcane wave of German post Romantic lyric. (It might more precisely be said that the aesthetic forged in the Art Journal was one in which the Symbolist movement—which George was introduced to in Paris—was grafted onto the most recent versions of Romantic poetry. A cult of poetry was under construction here, in which George came increasingly to think of himself as high priest.)

**The aesthetic of George and his Circle.** Around him George promoted the creation of a Kreis, a Circle, of devotees of him and his work; devotees who were expected to call George Meister, and among whom were a few of the best of German poetry. George boldly formulated the qualifications for entry into the poetic priesthood of pure language: 'in poetry... anyone still desirous to 'say' or 'bring about' anything is not worthy even to enter the forecourt of art.' (The reigning mode of this circle was homosexuality, which was George's life-slant, and the purity of poetry seems here to do with the non-parturitive; virginity on all sides, enforced, furthermore, by George's strong recommendation that all the homosexuals in his *Kreis* should remain chaste, like him.) The exclusivity of this *Kreis* was not, however, a sign of indifference to the world situation evolving around every member. George, the aesthete, was also a prophet, by self-proclamation, and in the years during which he saw his country wiped out in WWI, swept into a dull and weak Weimar Democracy, between the two wars, and finally drawn toward an alarming take over of civic life by a prophesied violent solution, was deeply sensitive both to his country's need for a 'way out' of civil chaos and economic, and to the horror of the impending solution—he died in 1933.

**The work of George.** Consider two poem cycles, *Algabal (Helagabalus)* (1892), and *Das Neue Reich (The New Empire)* (1928), which enter George's reflection on the condition of life itself and of his own world. The first sequence concerns the effete and self-indulgent Roman Emperor, Helagabalus, The work shows a fascination with the ultimate in narcissism—a king who can only relate to a marble statue, being incapable of human relations. And ultimately isolated. The later poem sequence, The New Empire, anatomizes the new Germany of the late twenties, which has suffered nothing but defeats, and which is boiling to promote some overwhelming and catastrophic revenge triumph. 'The poet in times of tumult,' written in 1921, anticipates the coming of a powerful leader surrounded by committed followers. Many such prophetic poems crowd the pages of The New Empire, some predicting precise events, like the substitution of the swastika for the cross. All these later poems appear to speak for a nation humiliated, hopeless, potentially violent, and closing in on itself

## Reading

### *Primary source reading*

*The Works of Stefan George*, trans. Marx and Morwitz, 1974.

### *Secondary source reading*

Norton, Robert, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and his Circle*, 2002.

### *Further reading*

Rieckmann, Jens, *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George*, 2007.

### *Original language reading*

Karlauf, Thomas, *Die Entdeckung des Charisma*, 2007.

### Suggested paper topics

Stefan George and his aristocratic artistic Kreis embraced certain plotters—von Stauffenberg at their head—who attempted to assassinate Hitler. At the same time George has been accused of Nazi sympathies. Where do you think the truth lies, concerning George's attitudes toward the Nazis?

As a teen ager, George invented a private language of his own, using words and phrases of his own making. What traces of that youthful impulse do you see in George's mature work as a poet?

*Excerpt poemsintranslation.blogspot.com/.../stefan-george-you-like-flames*

Thanks

The summer field is parched with evil fire,  
 And from a shoreland trail of trodden clover  
 I saw my head in waters thick with mire  
 That wrath of far-off thunder dimmed with red.  
 The mornings after frantic nights are dread:  
 The cherished gardens turned to stifling stall,  
 Untimely snow of bane the trees filmed over,  
 And upward rose the lark with hopeless call.

Then through the land on weightless soles you stray,  
 And bright it grows with colors you have laid,  
 You bid us pluck the fruits from joyous spray,  
 And rout the shadows lurking in the night...  
 Did I not weave-you and your tranquil light-  
 This crown in thanks, who ever could have known  
 That more than sun, long days for me you rayed,  
 And evenings more than any starry zone.

## Rilke

**The Life of Rainer Maria Rilke.** Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) was a Bohemian-Austrian poet, novelist, and voluminous correspondent, who left a deep mark on the introspective (and borderline mystic) lyric of our own century. Rilke was born in Prague. His father, a not very successful military man, and his mother, who came from a well to do Prague family, divorced in 1884, when Rilke was nine. Partly due to this shake up in the family, Rilke found himself consigned to a military academy from 1886-1891. Rilke was not at home in this environment, and could not wait to get out—which he did in 1895-96, when he studied at the Universities of Prague and Munich. It can be said that with the departure from those institutions of higher learning, Rilke set out on a course of lifelong devotion to poetry, as well as love. In 1897 he met and fell in love with Lou Andreas Salomé, the gutsy, attractive, and very talented intimate of Freud and Nietzsche, as well as of Rilke. Rilke remained close to Lou for the next three years, and though they then split up she remained an invaluable guide and adviser to him throughout his life. (Close to Freud, and in her own right a serious student of psychoanalysis, she aided the often self-absorbed Rilke to think more critically about himself.) It was she, after all, who had forced him to change his name from René to Rainer, which seemed ‘more masculine.’ A meeting with Tolstoy, in 1898, greatly expanded Rilke’s sense of the power of art in the world.

**The Prose Work of Rainer Maria Rilke.** Rilke brought many of his lifetime themes into his only work of fiction. *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910). This work presents the jottings, notations and observations of a young painter living in Paris, in pretty complete human isolation. For some time Malte is struck by the ugliness of Paris, as a vast urban sprawl, but gradually he learns how to look at his surrounding world ‘aesthetically.’ The model for this change in sensibility—which is the turning point into a whole new world view—can be seen in the Baudelaire poem, ‘Une Charogne,’ ‘The Corpse.’ That poem is cited admiringly in the novel and suggests the transformation by which one can come to find the sight of a rotting corpse aesthetically satisfying. Malte’s self-discoveries also include, not surprisingly, a fascination with his own death, which becomes profound and interior to him, and opens him up, strangely, to a power of transcendent love.

**Rilke’s poetry.** In his *Stunden-buch, Book of Hours*, 1905, Rilke deepens the haunting bond between his prosodic flexibility and the mystical dignity of his thought. In this work he laments the loss of a past—especially the 18th century aristocratic past—which enshrined human values and a sense of beauty, and which set standards of behavior and thought, unlike the crass society of Rilke’s time, with its brainless commercialism, and indifference to valid traditions. Among the bleak casualties of this commercial culture must rank the almost universal forgetting of the interior meaning, and enrichment, of death. *The Duino Elegies* (1923) and *The Sonnets to Orpheus* (1923) show us Rilke at his most mature and powerful, making new myths for our time—myths of the Angelic, myths of the Orphic—deepening his account of the leading place art plays in the making of society, and widening his sense (which is always latent in his work) of the importance of the underclasses in his society, and of their candidacy for artistic greatness. Rilke carries his work far beyond the barren isolation of Malte, into a participatory transcendent world, which all can assay.

## Reading

### Primary source reading

*Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, trans. Robert Bly, 1981.

### Secondary source reading

Freedman, Ralph, *Life of a Poet: Rainer Maria Rilke*, 1998.

### Further reading

Tavis, Anna, *Rilke’s Russia: A Cultural Encounter*, 1997.

### Original language reading

Engel, Manfred, *Rilkes ‘Duineser Elegien’ und die moderne deutsche Lyrik*, 1986.

### Suggested paper topics

Why was death so personally meaningful to Rilke? Was this intimacy to death a creative factor in Rilke's poems? Is the death he lives with a depressing death or an inspiring death?

What does Malte Laurids Brigge discover about the ugly aspects of death, as encountered in Paris? Does he find a way to see a rotting human corpse as beautiful?

Excerpt <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/archaic-torso-of-apollo/>

Archaic Torso of Apollo

We cannot know his legendary head  
with eyes like ripening fruit. And yet his torso  
is still suffused with brilliance from inside,  
like a lamp, in which his gaze, now turned to low,  
gleams in all its power. Otherwise  
the curved breast could not dazzle you so, nor could  
a smile run through the placid hips and thighs  
to that dark center where procreation flared.

Otherwise this stone would seem defaced  
beneath the translucent cascade of the shoulders  
and would not glisten like a wild beast's fur:

would not, from all the borders of itself,  
burst like a star: for here there is no place  
that does not see you. You must change your life.

## Hugo von Hofmansthal

**The Life of Hugo von Hofmanstahl.** Hugo Von Hofmanstahl (1874-1929) was an Austrian novelist, librettist, poet, and dramatist, who came to believe strongly in the writer's need to be significantly absorbed in his society, and who accordingly was widely known in his home world of Vienna. His father was an Austrian-Italian banker, and his mother came from an old and distinguished Viennese family. His great grandfather was a Jewish merchant, prominent in Vienna, who was ennobled by the Austrian Emperor.

**Student and early creative life in Vienna.** At an early age Hofmansthal was active writing poems, and at 17 he made the acquaintance of Stefan George, and published poems in George's *Blaetter fuer die Kunst, Art Journal*. (Characteristically enough he refused George's invitation to membership in George's Kreis, anxious not to adopt a servant/master relationship to the great man.) Hofmansthal studied Law and Philosophy at the University of Vienna, but on graduation, in 1901, he chose to take the direction of poetry—which his financial situation permitted. He settled into Viennese avant garde creative circles, joining the Young Vienna group, in which he enjoyed the partnership of the Viennese dramatist, Arthur Schnitzler.

**Hugo von Hofmanstahl, a literary life.** Hugo von Hofmanstahl met the composer Richard Strauss for the first time in 1901, and formed a working relationship with him, as the Romantic fabulist E.T.A. Hoffman had formed such a relationship with the great composers of his day. (Libretti for a number of superb opera dramas were generated by Hofmanstahl and Strauss: we note *Elektra*, perhaps the best and best known, *Der Rosenkavalier*, and *Ariadne on Naxos*. In 1912 Hofmanstahl adapted into German the 15th century English mystery play, *Everyman*—which is still performed annually at the Salzburg Festival. We can easily imagine that, during the years following WW I, Hofmanstahl was writing continuously, in several genres: but he was also taking his part in society, in the way, he thought, the poet should. During the War he supported a pro-Government position, and grew increasingly conservative and supportive of the Austro Hungarian Empire. His disappointment, at the outcome of the war, was predictably great, and the Weimar Republic little solace. Nonetheless, von Hofmanstahl continued with an intense regime of writing and directing. In 1920, with the director Max Reinhardt, von Hofmanstahl founded the Salzburg Festival of the arts, which flourishes to our day.

**Hugo von Hofmanstahl in later life.** Hugo von Hofmanstahl married in 1901, his Jewish wife having converted to Christianity, and von Hofmanstahl having grown deeper in his appreciation of Roman Catholicism as he advanced in his own imaginative work. Three children were born to the marriage; von Hofmanstahl's son Franz, committed suicide, and two days later von Hofmanstahl himself died of a stroke. He was buried in the habit of a Franciscan tertiary.

**The character of the work.** A couple of examples will suffice. In 1902 von Hofmanstahl published his fictive letter, 'Ein Brief,' 'A Letter,' purportedly written by the English nobleman Lord Chandos to Francis Bacon, in the 16th century. This fascinating letter allows von Hofmanstahl to elaborate his own ideas about the crisis of language, as a means to encountering the world, and the inherent loneliness of the person who tries to reach the world through language. The Bildungsroman *Andreas or the United* (1912) consists of two parts: the first, set on an Alpine farm, features Andreas mystically identifying with the extremes of good and evil; the second part, set in Venice, displays Andreas in love with a split personality woman whom he tries, it seems in vain, to reunite into one person through love. Von Hofmanstahl probes deeply into imagination and its psychological depths.

### Reading

#### Primary source reading

McClatchy, J.P., ed. *The Whole Difference: Selected Writings of Hugo von Hofmanstahl*, 2008.

#### Secondary source reading

Broch, Hermann; trans. Michael Pitnam, *Hugo von Hofmanstahl and his Time: The European Imagination, 1860-1920*, 1984.

#### Further reading

Schorske, Carol, *Fin-de-siecle Vienna. Politics and Culture*, 1980.

**Original language reading**

Mayer, Mathias, *Hugo von Hofmannstahl*, 1993.

**Suggested paper topics**

Look into the Chandos letter of Hofmannstahl. Why is this discussion set centuries in the past, in England? What point is Hofmannstahl making here? Is the issue primarily the nature of human beings lost in the loneliness of their own private language?

Read *Andreas* or *The United*, and discuss Hofmannstahl's perceptions into serious mental illness. Does he show a technical understanding of the psychoanalysis which was a major trend in the Vienna of Hofmannstahl's time?

**Excerpt** [www.poemhunter.com/hugo-von-hofmannstahl/](http://www.poemhunter.com/hugo-von-hofmannstahl/)

The valley of dusk was filled  
 With a silver-grey fragrance, like the moon  
 Seeping through clouds. But it wasn't night.  
 The silver-grey fragrance of the dark valley  
 Caused my sleepy thoughts to blur,  
 And silently I sank into the weaving,

Transparent sea and left my life.  
 What wonderful flowers there were,  
 With dark chalices glowing! A maze of plants  
 Through which a yellow-red light,  
 as if from topazes, glowed in warm streams. All  
 Was filled with a deep swelling  
 Of melancholy music. And this I knew,

Even though I could not fathom it, but I knew:  
 This was death. Death turned music,  
 With an immense longing, sweet and glowing darkly,  
 Brother to deepest melancholy.  
 And yet:  
 A nameless homesickness for life kept crying  
 Mutely in my soul, crying as someone

On board a big ocean vessel would cry, a ship, driven  
 By gigantic yellow sails, passing by the city,  
 His city, at night in dark-blue water. There he sees  
 The lanes, hears the rushing of the fountains, smells  
 The scent of the lilac bushes, sees himself,  
 A child, standing on the shore, with a child's eyes,  
 Fearful, with tears welling up, sees

Through the open window the light in his room  
 But the big ship carries him along,  
 Gliding away on dark-blue water soundlessly,  
 Driven by gigantic yellow sails of strange shape

## Kafka

**The Achievement of Franz Kafka.** Franz Kafka (1883-1924) was a writer in German—of short stories, novels, and aphorisms; a body of largely incomplete work which has nonetheless made Kafka one of the determinant literary forces of the twentieth century.

**The Life of Franz Kafka: Jewishness and Education.** Franz Kafka was born into a middle class German speaking Ashkenazi Jewish family living near the Town Square in Prague, in the later years of the Austro Hungarian Empire. Prague was a city in which both Czech and German were spoken, and which, during the course of Kafka's lifetime, was to see a rivalry verging on hostility develop between the two racial groups. (Kafka was later to dismiss the claim that his work was marked by its Jewish tone, and yet the lifetime evidence is that the sensitive Kafka strongly felt the Jewish predicament he found himself in.) Kafka's father was a ritual slaughterer, who later became a fancy goods retailer and traveling salesman rep. His mother was better educated than his Father, and easier for Kafka to understand and love than his Father, with whom Franz had a lifetime struggle toward an understanding which never materialized. (In his later Letters to His Father he described this parental disharmony as a major life-blockage.) Kafka himself was sent to the local boys' elementary school (1889-1893), then, for the usual eight years, to the State Gymnasium in Prague, a home to strict Latin and Greek educational practices. Kafka entered Charles University in 1901, majoring in Chemistry, but soon changing to Law, with which he was to complete his degree. While at Charles University, Kafka met Max Brod, with whom he formed a firm and creative relationship which was to be seminal for both men. (Brod would later be the biographer of Kafka, and the editor of his literary estate.) Together they read Plato (in Greek) and Flaubert together, and shared ideas, on aesthetics, which would buoy up their fellow Prague aesthetes in the years following graduation (1906). The life and work of Franz Kafka after graduation become increasingly bifurcated: fairly successful employee of two different insurance companies, at one point President of a new asphalt company, Kafka frets and will continue to fret at the only limited time he has for his work.

**The work of Franz Kafka.** The hypersensitive Kafka lived to see a brutal war (World War I) and its aftermath, the increasing bourgeoisification of European society, and formative stages of a uniquely barbaric political movement, National Socialism in Germany. (And fortunately not the Third Reich, in which three of his sisters were gassed.) Like many in his time, Kafka grew increasingly aware of the inhumanity of the 'new society' forming around him; a wasteland of bureaucracy, of faceless decisions, of abject middle-class values, and, of course, of undercurrents of menacing revenge for the wartime humiliation of his homeland. Better than any critic, however, Kafka knew how to describe the crisis of his time, in novels or short stories catching the human in the midst of bureaucratic labyrinths, and meaningless adventures.

**Kafka's Work.** *The Trial* (1925) and *The Castle* (1926), two of these novels, skewer the individual against the mysterious and threatening power of society. It is easy to see the spiritual kinship among George, Rilke, and Kafka, as they confront a world which to them seemed dangerously confused, but which to us is beginning to seem unremarkably familiar. But the turn Kafka gives, to these shadowy tales of individuals lost in the non meaning of contemporary life—that is of life one hundred years less far, than we are today, into the ravages of alienation, family disintegration, impersonality, and occasional, mysterious transformation—is more directly spooky than the lamentational or aristocratic twists given by Rilke or George, as they call out against the monstrously new. Kafka places shadowy figurae in a shadowy world, and becomes their lostness with them.

## Reading

### *Primary source reading*

Kafka, Franz, *The Trial*, 2009.

### *Secondary source reading*

Murray, Nicholas, *Kafka*, 2004.

Corngold, Stanley; Wagner, Benno, *Franz Kafka; The Ghosts in the Machine*, 2011.

### *Original language reading*

Alt, Peter-Andre, *Franz Kafka: der ewige Sohn. Eine biographie*. 2011.

*Excerpt en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Franz\_Kafka*

“Many a book is like a key to unknown chambers within the castle of one’s own self.”

“Don't bend; don't water it down; don't try to make it logical; don't edit your own soul according to the fashion. Rather, follow your most intense obsessions mercilessly.”

“A First Sign of the Beginning of Understanding is the Wish to Die.”

“I think we ought to read only the kind of books that wound or stab us. If the book we're reading doesn't wake us up with a blow to the head, what are we reading for? So that it will make us happy, as you write? Good Lord, we would be happy precisely if we had no books, and the kind of books that make us happy are the kind we could write ourselves if we had to. But we need books that affect us like a disaster, that grieve us deeply, like the death of someone we loved more than ourselves, like being banished into forests far from everyone, like a suicide. A book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us. That is my belief.”

“All language is but a poor translation.”

“The meaning of life is that it stops.”



## Hesse

**Herman Hesse's Life.** Herman Hesse (1877-1962) was a German novelist, poet, and short story writer, who won the Nobel Prize in 1942, for the novel *The Glass Bead Game*. Hesse was born in Calw, in the Black Forest in the State of Wuerttemberg, of parents who were missionaries of the Basel Mission, at one time in India. Hesse's mother was born on mission. Her husband, a doctor, hailed from Estonia, but the parents settled in Calw, when the father, who was severe and religiously powerful, settled the family into a new job. (Hesse himself was never comfortable with the small town culture he then found himself raised on, and from the start, with the help of a highly cultivated polylingual grandfather, considered himself a citizen of the world.) As Dad took on a job with a theological publishing company the Pietist atmosphere in young Hesse's family grew even more marked. Accordingly young Hesse grew up yielding to his powerful stubbornness—his Mother wondered what force could subdue him—and at times seriously depressed. By the age of twelve, Hesse had firmly decided to be a writer.

**Hesse's Education.** Hesse's formal education began at the Latin School of Goeppingen, in Switzerland, was then continued to the gymnasium level at the Theological Seminary of Maulbronn Abbey. Not a model student, Hesse took to drinking and smoking with older boys, not to mention a serious episode—a suicide attempt—to prove how deeply disorganized he was in that educational environment. After matriculation he took on a number of bookstore jobs, finally discovering a position in Tuebingen at which, after a twelve hour day as salesman, he was left free to read at his leisure—and did so, voraciously, in the German classics and Nietzsche, whose notions of good and evil, and transcendence of them, were compelling to Hesse.

**Hesse's Work.** Hesse had decided, from age 12, to devote himself to writing, and of course did fill his teen age years with essays and stories. But his first major public success came with *Peter Camenzind* (1904), a book Freud considered one of his favorite texts. In 1911 Hesse traveled to Sri Lanka and Indonesia, a trip on which he would build impressions and insights later to gel into the novel *Siddartha* (1922), a tribute to aesthetic withdrawal, and transcendence, which many found facile and unrealistically 'poetic,' at the time. (Interestingly enough, the American sixties, with their hippie stress on Peace and Love, brought back Hesse's novel as a cult commodity.) Like most sensitive Germans, Hesse was appalled at the sufferings and cruelties of WW I, but unlike most he tried to remain 'European,' rather than nationalist, throughout the conflict; though later he confessed that he had failed in his effort to use love against war. After the war, with return to civilian life, and to a second shattered marriage, Hesse readdressed himself to the realities of his world, and created his most powerful novel, *Steppenwolf* (1927). *The Wolf from the Steppe* is in fact a study of the profound split in the mind of Harry Haller, a disoriented post WW I middle class German, who both adores German comfort, classical values, the world of finance, and, on the other hand, reveals himself as exposed—a steppe wolf—to the vicious and uncivilized in mankind, and to the New Americanized World of jazz, danger, wild dreams and self-discoveries, and, foreseen but foresworn by the protagonist, the onset of a world catastrophic clash of forces. *The Glass Bead Game* (1944) projects into an ideally pure elite company of aesthetes, who have found a (temporary) solution to chaos, in the perfection of a game which is pure pattern.

## Reading

### *Primary source reading*

Hesse, Herman, *Siddartha*, 1981. (There are many updates of this translation; take your pick.)

### *Secondary source reading*

Freedman, Ralph, *Herman Hesse: Pilgrim of Crisis. A Biography*, 1978. (The classic study of Hesse.)

### *Further reading*

Mileck, Joseph, *Herman Hesse: Biography and Bibliography*, 1977.

### *Original language reading*

Zeller, Bernhard, *Herman Hesse*, 2005.

### Suggested paper topics

From *Siddhartha*, with its sympathy for peace and withdrawal to the darker jungles of urban imagination, in *Steppenwolf*, is a long journey. Was the Hesse of *Steppenwolf* still the same peace seeking sensibility we saw in *Siddhartha*?

What was Hesse's experience of trying to bring love to the understanding and resolution of the conflict in WW1? Was Hesse discouraged by this experience? Did the experience change the direction of his thinking?

**Excerpt** [https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/1113469.Hermann\\_Hesse](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/1113469.Hermann_Hesse)

“For me, trees have always been the most penetrating preachers. I revere them when they live in tribes and families, in forests and groves. And even more I revere them when they stand alone. They are like lonely persons. Not like hermits who have stolen away out of some weakness, but like great, solitary men, like Beethoven and Nietzsche. In their highest boughs the world rustles, their roots rest in infinity; but they do not lose themselves there, they struggle with all the force of their lives for one thing only: to fulfil themselves according to their own laws, to build up their own form, to represent themselves. Nothing is holier, nothing is more exemplary than a beautiful, strong tree. When a tree is cut down and reveals its naked death-wound to the sun, one can read its whole history in the luminous, inscribed disk of its trunk: in the rings of its years, its scars, all the struggle, all the suffering, all the sickness, all the happiness and prosperity stand truly written, the narrow years and the luxurious years, the attacks withstood, the storms endured. And every young farmboy knows that the hardest and noblest wood has the narrowest rings, that high on the mountains and in continuing danger the most indestructible, the strongest, the ideal trees grow.

Trees are sanctuaries. Whoever knows how to speak to them, whoever knows how to listen to them, can learn the truth. They do not preach learning and precepts, they preach, undeterred by particulars, the ancient law of life.

A tree says: A kernel is hidden in me, a spark, a thought, I am life from eternal life. The attempt and the risk that the eternal mother took with me is unique, unique the form and veins of my skin, unique the smallest play of leaves in my branches and the smallest scar on my bark. I was made to form and reveal the eternal in my smallest special detail.

## Mann

**The Importance of Thomas Mann.** Thomas Mann (1875-1955) was a German novelist, critic, short story writer, philanthropist, and towering figure of mature perspective during the catastrophic and chaotic years of the Third Reich. Mann won the Nobel Prize in 1929, for his novel *Buddenbrooks*, which was published in 1901. His elder brother, Heinrich, was also a prominent and influential fiction writer.

**Life of Thomas Mann.** Mann was born in Luebeck, Germany, into an old Hanseatic business family. He was the second son of Thomas Mann, a senator and prosperous grain merchant, and of a Brazilian-German mother, who had been brought to Germany as a child. The young Thomas Mann was baptized as a Lutheran, and moved to Munich, where his first education was in the science departments of the Munich gymnasium. After matriculation he enrolled at the University of Munich, and then at the Technical University of Munich, where it was his intention to study Journalism. During these years, as we know from Mann's Diaries, which were opened after his death, he became aware of his homosexuality—which was to play a keen role in some of his short fiction—and fought hard to come to terms with his bisexual nature. None the less he fell in love with the woman of his life, with whom he was to have six children, three of them consequential writers. He grew in his writing—perhaps his most ambitious novel, *Buddenbrooks*, was published in 1901—and in his public presence, early on as a friend to the German nation, and to the Weimar Republic, then in the increasingly explosive twenties as an ardent foe of the National Socialist Movement, and finally, in 1933, as an exile to Switzerland. (Mann's children had warned him, just in time, that it was too dangerous to return to Germany after a European trip. In 1939, as the European landscape grew desperate, and many German intellectuals were going into exile, Thomas Mann and his family left Europe for the United States. He spent the war years in California, then returned to Switzerland in 1962.

**The Work of Thomas Mann.** Mann's work spans a vast period of tumultuous personal and political turmoil, and generates themes of widely varying character. One thinks first of *Buddenbrooks* (1901), then of the short story 'Death in Venice' (1912), *The Magic Mountain* (1924), *Joseph and his Brothers* (1933J-43), and *Dr. Faustus* (1947). In the aggregate these works constitute the most mature analysis available to us, of the double nature of German society, at best brilliant and creative, at worst demonic, hate filled, and disastrous. *Dr. Faustus* puts this complex package in a powerful way, through the character of one Adrian Leverkuehn, a composer. Typically German, as Mann puts it, Leverkuen is given to exhilarating and frightening regions of experience, like Nietzsche, and accordingly makes a pact with the Devil, promising not to love anyone in return for the understanding of how to use the absolutely pure and anti humanist twelve tone scale. Leverkuehn's biography is recounted by his friend, a decent man and schoolmaster, who is a realist, around whom—his narration starts in 1943—the world is starting to fall apart, German cities bombed out of existence. Mann's overall comment on the powers and perils of the German personality are intense and vivid.

**Mann's grand reach.** Mann, writing at the height of his powers from exile, struggles to defend the German enterprise, hearkening back to the Humanist tradition in his nation, a tradition which political madness and virulent hatred had rendered nearly a dead letter.

## Reading

### *Primary source reading*

Mann, Thomas, *The Magic Mountain*, trans. Woods, 1996.

### *Secondary source reading*

Kurzke, Hermann, *Thomas Mann: Life as a Work of Art: A Biography*, trans. Leslie Wilson, 2007.

### *Further reading*

Reed, T.J., *Thomas Mann: the uses of tradition*, 1974.

### *Original language reading*

Boehm, Karl Werner, *Zwischen Selbstzucht und Verlangen: Thomas Mann und das Stigma Homosexualitet*, 1991.

### Suggested paper topics

Thomas Mann was tortured, it seems by his homosexuality. (He was in fact a married father of six.) How does he handle this personal tension in his writing? Is his tension the source of 'good writing'?

What layers of German historical experience are embedded in Mann's *Doktor Faustus*? Why is so much emphasis placed on 12 tone music? Are you convinced by the artistic technique of combining story narration with panning shots of the actual destruction of German cities by bombing?

*Excerpt* [http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Mann](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Thomas_Mann)

- I think of my suffering, of the problem of my suffering. What am I suffering from? From knowledge — is it going to destroy me? What am I suffering from? From sexuality — is it going to destroy me? How I hate it, this knowledge which forces even art to join it! How I hate it, this sensuality, which claims everything fine and good is its consequence and effect. Alas, it is the poison that lurks in everything fine and good! — How am I to free myself of knowledge? By religion? How am I to free myself of sexuality? By eating rice?
- Here and there, among a thousand other peddlers, are slyly hissing dealers who urge you to come along with them to allegedly "very beautiful" girls, and not only to girls. They keep at it, walk alongside, praising their wares until you answer roughly. They don't know that you have resolved to eat nothing but rice just to escape from sexuality!
- We are most likely to get angry and excited in our opposition to some idea when we ourselves are not quite certain of our own position, and are inwardly tempted to take the other side.
- It is as though something had begun to slip — as though I haven't the firm grip I had on events. — What is success? It is an inner, an indescribable force, resourcefulness, power of vision; a consciousness that I am, by my mere existence, exerting pressure on the movement of life about me. It is my belief in the adaptability of life to my own ends. Fortune and success lie within ourselves. We must hold them firmly — deep within us. For as soon as something begins to slip, to relax, to get tired, within us, then everything without us will rebel and struggle to withdraw from our influence. One thing follows another, blow after blow — and the man is finished.

## Brecht

**The Achievement of Berthold Brecht.** Berthold Brecht (1898-1956) was a German poet, dramatist, theater producer, and adherent of Marxism, who put his political insights to work in new visions of the nature of theater, and of its relation to the audience.

**The Life of Berthold Brecht.** Berthold Brecht was born in Augsburg, Bavaria. At the time of Brecht's birth, his father worked for a paper mill, of which he was to become managing director in 1914. (Thus despite Brecht's later claims to have been brought up in Marxist appropriate working class conditions, Brecht was a child of the middle class.) Brecht's mother was pious and supportive, and importantly responsible for Berthold's intimate knowledge of the Bible, which supported him in many ways throughout his life. While other great German writers of the modern period typically carved out their thought paths in the course of advanced University study, Brecht found events projecting him into the world, where he was to discover life, and the social setting for his literary work. Brecht's first sense of WWI was the desire to participate with his fellow countrymen, but he changed his mind as he saw the ravages of the war, and on the advice of his father, who urged him to enroll in a medical course which would qualify him for exempt status. At the same time, while the War raged, Brecht was finding his social theatrical milieu, starting with his lifetime friendship with Caspar Neher, who was to be the set-design collaborator for many of Brecht's finest stage works. Not only was Brecht positioning himself, in Berlin theater life, as a designer, producer and adapter—in addition to much collaborative work he was into the creation of such 'epic theater' as *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Mother Courage and her Children*, *The Good Woman of Szechuan*—but he was creating startlingly original socially observant poems, as in the volume *Domestic Breviary* (1927). He was an avid consumer of popular Berlin theater, vaudeville, slapstick—a great admirer of Chaplin, and of the music hall creations of Franz Wedekind—and from life on the Berlin streets he was forging both a dramatic genius and a sense for the drama of the times. As so many of his most gifted German colleagues, the twenties were a period during which great creativity and great anxiety were blended. That crisis on the horizon, which George had anticipated, was the daily bread of Brecht, whose own Marxism—he had been educating himself in Marx and Lenin--was fed by the mounting struggle against Nazism.

**Exile and after.** In 1935, knowing he was tightly pursued by the Nazis, Brecht moved to Denmark, then, in 1939, went to Sweden, preparatory to following one branch of the exile tribe to America. In America, like many self-exiled Germans, Brecht came under suspicion for Communist sympathies, and was called before the House Un American Affairs Committee, by which he was set free of all charges. In 1947 he returned to East Germany, where he was to receive the Stalin Peace Prize in 1954, and to spend the remainder of his life.

**Brecht's Work.** As a lyric poet, but especially as a dramatist, Brecht was from start to finish socially involved. His work as a dramatist was also work as a member of society, setting up actions within the citizenry; thus Brecht regularly incorporates, in his plays, a *Verfremdungseffekt*, Alienation Effect, designed to make the drama itself seem like a social action, and not a piece of literature. The societal impulse, at work here, took large scale form in Brecht's commitment to Communism. This playwright long allied himself to the East German and East European political perspective instituted during the Cold War. The finest of his plays, like *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* or *The Good Woman of Sechuan* throw light on social organizations still unrealized, but part (possibly) of social shapes that will extend out beyond the social period we inhabit in this Encyclopedia.

## Reading

### *Primary source reading*

Brecht, Berthold, Letters, 1913-1956, trans. John Willett.

### *Secondary source reading*

Benjamin, Walter, *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Bostock, 1983.

### *Further reading*

Fuegi, John, *Brecht and Company: Sex, Politics, and the Making of the Modern Drama*, 2002.

*Original language reading*

Mittenzwei, Werner, *Das Leben des Berthold Brecht*, 2 vol., 1986.

**Suggested paper topics**

Review some Brecht plays—The Caucasian Chalk Circle, The Good Woman of Szechuan—to see what in effect he means by a theater of alienation, in which the audience is to be forbidden the Aristotelian pleasure of catharsis. Can you see a good case for this innovative view of theater?

Brecht emerges as a collaborative playwright, performing many roles himself, and working with many fellow producers. Was the same kind of collaborative production at play in the dramatic work of Goethe and Schiller? Lessing?

*Excerpt* [http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Bertolt\\_Brecht](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Bertolt_Brecht)

- People remain what they are even if their faces fall apart.
- But something's missing (Aber etwas fehlt).
- A man who strains himself on the stage is bound, if he is any good, to strain all the people sitting in the stalls.
- The theater-goer in conventional dramatic theater says: Yes, I've felt that way, too. That's the way I am. That's life. That's the way it will always be. The suffering of this or that person grips me because there is no escape for him. That's great art — Everything is self-evident. I am made to cry with those who cry, and laugh with those who laugh. But the theater-goer in the epic theater says: I would never have thought that. You can't do that. That's very strange, practically unbelievable. That has to stop. The suffering of this or that person grips me because there is an escape for him. That's great art — nothing is self-evident. I am made to laugh about those who cry, and cry about those who laugh.
- Let nothing be called natural  
In an age of bloody confusion,  
Ordered disorder, planned caprice,  
And dehumanized humanity, lest all things  
Be held unalterable!
- Literary works cannot be taken over like factories, or literary forms of expression like industrial methods. Realist writing, of which history offers many widely varying examples, is likewise conditioned by the question of how, when and for what class it is made use of.
- Do not rejoice in his defeat, you men. For though the world has stood up and stopped the bastard, the bitch that bore him is in heat again.