

The Concept of Romanticism: Friedrich von Schlegel, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, and Heinrich Heine

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Abstract

This paper attempts to study how Heinrich Heine redefined romanticism in his seminal treatise “The Romantic School” and aims at bringing into argument how Friedrich von Schlegel and August Wilhelm von Schlegel have exemplified the ideology of Romanticism. These German thinkers responded to Indian thought, religious practices and also delved into deep analyses of Catholicism and the way Christianity influenced European or German thinking. Heine argues that Romanticism is a social response to Christianity’s rigid disciplines of asceticism. Scholars opine that the Schelling brothers also have contributed to the definition of Romanticism and these views are also valid.

Keywords: Romanticism, Heinrich Heine, Friedrich von Schlegel and August Wilhelm von Schlegel

All the writers of the nineteenth century have been highly influenced by romanticism. Writers of realism had to grapple with this challenge of poetic writing styles as “a realist artist cannot be satisfied with a direct denial of modern prosaic reality but must find in it itself elements of human initiative worthy of artistic depiction.” Vishnevsky remarks that “delimitation and polemics with romanticism” can be noticed in “Goethe, Schiller, Pushkin” and remarks that there are conflicts between realism and romanticism in the works of “Lermontov, Heine, Balzac, Stendhal and Merimee.” Scholars opine that the nineteenth century realism is seen to be “debunking” the “romantic element inherent” in its writings. “The greatest German revolutionary poet of the 19th century, Heinrich Heine, is also a Romantic in terms of the starting point of his poetic creativity, but his significance goes far beyond Romanticism” as Heine “mercilessly ridicules any Romantic naive, sentimental philistine utopia.” (Vishnevsky)

Christian Johann Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) was a German poet whose international literary reputation and influence were established by the *Buch der Lieder* (The Book of Songs 1827), frequently set to music. His two studies of German culture, *Die Romantische Schule*

(“The Romantic School” 1833–35) and *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* (“On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany” 1834–35) have influenced Europe in a phenomenal manner. He represents the post-Romantic crisis in Germany, dominated by the achievements of Goethe and Schiller. (Jeffrey L. Sammons)

Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) was a German literary critic whose works have come to be reassessed in the last several years because of the philosophical importance of early German Romanticism which was a counter-movement to German Idealism and as a contributing factor within idealism’s development. (Speight)

August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845) was a German essayist, translator and poet. He is considered to be one of the founders of the German Romantic Movement. Schlegel had in-depth knowledge of art, history, literature, architecture, anthropology and foreign languages, making him an expert in comparative literature and linguistics. He created the journal *Indische Bibliothek* and inaugurated the domain of Sanskrit studies in Germany. He is known for his translations of William Shakespeare into German. (Hay)

This paper attempts to study the literary and critical thoughts of these three German writers and thinkers who contributed to nineteenth century critical and creative energies in Germany, France and thus Europe in general. They have something in common that they all thought a lot about the new writing styles that arose in Europe as a result of colonialism, wars and other geopolitical issues. Each had their opinions regarding Romanticism, a leading literary and philosophical movement of their age.

Friedrich von Schlegel is supposed to have recommended romantic writing to classical writing. Speight says that this preference might have occurred “perhaps under the influence of Herder” as pointed out by Eichner earlier in 1956. Friedrich Schlegel understood the concept of the romantic as “the wide mixture of forms and genres that characterised mediaeval literature” and perceived “even Shakespeare’s plays or Dante’s *Commedia* to be classified as *Romane*.” If we attempt to see “from this historical perspective, the Roman becomes the central dividing line between ancient literature and the literature of the current age.”

Friedrich von Schlegel claimed that Greek poetry converged in epic and German poetry would converge in Roman and argued that Romantic poetry is a “progressive”, “universal poetry.” To him the job of writing has to “fuse poetry and prose” seasoned with “inspiration and criticism.” According to him poetry has to be “lively and sociable” and he perceives “life and society” to be “poetical.” He collides poetry and prose and states that a “genuine theory of poetry would be a theory of the novel.” Speight remarks that to Friedrich von Schlegel “the fragment is among the most characteristic figures of the Romantic movement.” Friedrich von Schlegel considers “a fragment as a particular” that has a “certain unity.” Hence it emerges “like a small work of art” and has to be “complete in itself like a hedgehog.” (Speight)

August Wilhelm von Schlegel played a major role in defining the concept of Romanticism in Germany, and Heinrich Heine rose against these interpretations of Schlegel. “The Romantic School” battered the reputation of August Wilhelm von Schlegel in Germany, say scholars. “Schlegel’s reputation” did not recover from the sharp critique of Heine’s analysis in “*Die Romantische Schule*.” Heine criticised August Wilhelm von Schlegel’s translations of Shakespeare for “polishing his words ever so sweetly and fastidiously” and scholars argue that Heinrich Heine viewed Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel as “critics and interpreters rather than poets.” It is opined that “the rediscovery of Shakespeare’s greatness in the 19th century was due, not only to Schlegel’s translations, but most importantly to his special approach to Shakespearean theatre” as he felt it “should be analysed on the grounds of” creating a “historical difference.”

It is this identification of the “difference between the ancients and the modern” that “set the basis for his theoretical use of the concept Romantic” and this interpretation “became the key-concept in his comprehension and reevaluation of modernity.” It is said that August Wilhelm von Schlegel gave “the word *romantic* a systematic significance and affirmative tone from the very beginning.” Johann Heinrich Voss who translated Homer’s *Odyssey* in 1781 and *Iliad* in 1793 into German argued that August Wilhelm von Schlegel’s Shakespeare “was not Shakespeare but Schlegel.” Hay discusses these using ideas from Kenneth E. Larson, who had published a research paper on Heinrich Voss in 1989. Though such negative criticisms are around regarding these translations of Schlegel, still “his translations into German of the works of Shakespeare are still and by far the best.” Katia D. Hay claims that Schlegel’s “Romantic ideals are in fact embedded in an enlightenment project.” In the 1809 preface to his “Lectures on Dramatic Art,” August Wilhelm von Schlegel wrote that his purpose was to “to liberate his listeners and readers from what he calls a “despotism in taste.” Hay notes that he wanted “to prepare the German public for a German Romantic theatre.” (Hay)

August Wilhelm von Schlegel prepared his country to try bringing out plays in the style of Shakespeare, with a high sense of nationalism, Hay contends. In fact, Schlegel’s Shakespeare translations themselves are German in tone, as suggested by Voss, we are reminded by Hay. Europe gradually slipped out of Aristotelian traditions of writing, and writers began to be more responsive to their contemporary social and cultural needs. Thinkers, perhaps, began to address this shift as Romanticism, suggests Hay. Schlegel “introduced in all of his lectures historical, social, and cultural observations.” He “did not believe he actually had a big influence on the German public,” and by 1828 he remarked that a “shift of taste had taken place in Europe, a shift that showed how the Romantic ideals had in fact widely pervaded European audiences” (Hay).

Katia D. Hay holds that Schlegel’s “cosmopolitanism” was mixed up with a strange form of blind, romantic nationalism” and says further that from a historical perspective August Wilhelm von Schlegel could be seen as a great predecessor to later philosophic thought:

In this specific sense, August Wilhelm von Schlegel could be understood as a thinker of difference in a much more radical way than other philosophers of his time. Although Schlegel's writings have not been considered as philosophical as those of other 19th century German philosophers, his approach to art and its history, and his reflections on language and cultural differences are much closer to what is sometimes called a postmodern comprehension of aesthetics than that of his contemporaries. Indeed, in his characteristically unpretentious style, August Wilhelm von Schlegel anticipates philosophers such as Nietzsche, Blumenberg, or Deleuze. (Hay)

Schlegel's cosmopolitanism shows signs of Europe breaking out of its rigid cultural frames and loosening itself to understand and accept other cultures and civilizations. Mobilisation of people across continents in a social structure dominated by the printing press and transfer of knowledge of other languages and literatures resulted in an enlargement of vision and gradually society produced thinkers like Nietzsche.

Heinrich Heine reinterprets this established notion of *romantic* as explained by the cosmopolitan Schlegel from a different, Christian perspective. Heine illuminates the Romantic School in Germany as the reawakening of poetry amidst people, inspired by Christianity:

It was nothing else than the reawakening of the poetry of the Middle Ages as it manifested itself in the poems, paintings, and sculptures, in the art and life of those times. This poetry, however, had been developed out of Christianity; it was a passion-flower which had blossomed from the blood of Christ. I know not if the melancholy flower which in Germany we call the passion-flower is known by the same name in France, and if the popular tradition has ascribed to it the same mystical origin. It is that motley-hued, melancholic flower in whose calyx one may behold a counterfeit presentment of the tools used at the crucifixion of Christ—namely, hammer, pincers, and nails. This flower is by no means unsightly, but only spectral: its aspect fills our souls with a dread pleasure, like those convulsive, sweet emotions that arise from grief. In this respect the passion-flower would be the fittest symbol of Christianity itself, whose most awe-inspiring charm consists in the voluptuousness of pain. (Heine)

Heine argues that in "France, Christianity and Roman Catholicism are synonymous terms." He becomes poetical and rhetorical and expounds the principles of original Christianity that emphasised on human restraint and moral discipline, arguing for the high quality of thinking prescribed by the religious fervour and how it came to be misinterpreted gradually showing an ambivalent attitude that he is referring to

that religion whose earliest dogmas contained a condemnation of all flesh, and not only admitted the supremacy of the spirit over the flesh but sought to mortify the latter in order thereby to glorify the former. I refer to that religion through whose unnatural mission, vice and hypocrisy came into the world, for through the odium which it cast on the flesh the most innocent gratification of the senses was accounted sins; and, as it was impossible to be entirely

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Dr. S. Sridevi

The Concept of Romanticism: Friedrich von Schlegel, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, and Heinrich Heine

spiritual, the growth of hypocrisy was inevitable. I refer to that religion which, by teaching the renunciation of all earthly pleasures, and by inculcating abject humility and angelic patience, became the most efficacious support of despotism. Men now recognise the nature of that religion and will no longer be put off with promises of a Heaven hereafter; they know that the material world has also its good, and is not wholly given over to Satan, and now they vindicate the pleasures of the world, this beautiful garden of the gods, our inalienable heritage. Just because we now comprehend so fully all the consequences of that absolute spirituality, we are warranted in believing that the Christian-Catholic theories of the universe are at an end; for every epoch is a sphinx which plunges into the abyss as soon as its problem is solved. (Heine)

One can't help thinking that this ambivalent attitude towards Roman Catholicism might have influenced his thought pattern regarding the poetic theories proposed by Friedrich von Schlegel as he converted to Catholicism after he came under the impact of Indian thought.

In his essay "Philosophy of Life," Friedrich von Schlegel writes in a very different note that recognises other cultures and rites, rising above the practice of viewing the 'other' as inferior:

We have here taken the olden heathenism in a very simple light, and quite generally as a materialism assuming a poetic form and expression, but one, at the same time, in which, as soon as we pierce through its poetical investiture, we discern many points of contact with Pantheism. When, however, pursuing a searching historical inquiry into the heathen modes of conception, we enter thoroughly and deeply into its details, we meet therein with so many magical rites and usages, that, in spite of any previous inclination to the contrary, we feel indisposed to deny the possibility of a demoniacally-affected imagination having, in some degree, influenced the character of heathenism. And, indeed, even in a philosophical point of view, there does not exist any sufficient reason for such a denial. This, however, as we formerly said, is a matter which needs not to be taken into consideration at present. (Schlegel in "Philosophy of Life")

The worldview of this European scholar that "heathen modes of conception" has magical rites that are governed by laws of "poetical investiture," much different from the institutionalised monotheism, also finds in Pantheism a larger scope for the power of imagination to play in its approach. The western perception of considering nature-based Gods as pantheism could be the strategic point in which the Indian religious system differs from it, as it has been woven closer to the ecological system of the universe, and it is this that would have affected the young Schlegel that we note in his writings on Indian systems. To the western mind pantheism became a doctrine that identifies God with the universe or the worship or tolerance of many gods. The Indian mind does not view so, instead it has created icons of nature as Gods, and celebrates the worship of multiple Gods and it has not institutionalised in a single structure its patterns of worship. An individual is given the freedom to worship, and the

commonalities are few amidst various sections of people. Caste is rigid and worship pattern is fluid in India. Schlegel writes further on India, its riches, caste system and civilization:

For three if not four thousand years India has preserved unchanged its institution of castes, and all its essential customs and laws. The very fact that this ancient empire, so extensive, so abundant in riches, and so singular in its nature, and with a civilised population equal to that of the whole of Europe put together, should be now conquered and held in subjection by the sea-ruling isles of Britain, which the ancients named the Cassiterides, or Tin Islands, and described as the ultimate limits of the habitable world, is one of the most remarkable signs of our days. That in such great historical events, and such singular juxtapositions, there rules some grand and mysterious design of the Mind which regulates the course of human affairs, we cannot but feel... Already has this remarkable approximation of the extreme East and West led to important consequences. The enlargement of our historical information, by the sources discovered in the East, has alone been so considerable as to give greater coherence and consistency to our knowledge of the earlier, and, indeed, of the very earliest times, and of the origin of mankind, and to have afforded a growing testimony and a strong confirmation of the truth of the sacred narrative. (Schlegel in “Philosophy of Life”)

The enlargement of historical information which was given to the westerners due to colonialism created a strong impact on their thinking. The expansion of the human mind and its scope for understanding the universe became a possibility after the 16th century with global political, economic, and social transactions. The mystery of human existence and its viable cultural and spiritual expressions is a topic to be discussed carefully, Schlegel feels. The German thinkers had begun to question the differences in other religions and social systems after the migration or colonisation of European countries to other continents. We notice that either they reassess themselves, or they venerate their thought practices.

On the contrary, Heine chooses to interpret the power of his land’s cultural and spiritual practices, the need of the hour then, as perceived by society, and agrees to “the benefits which the Christian-Catholic theories effected in Europe.” He claims that “they were needed as a wholesome reaction against the terrible colossal materialism, which was developed in the Roman Empire, and threatened the annihilation of all the intellectual grandeur of mankind.” The practice of “ascetic spirituality becomes manifest” while one reads “Petronius or Apuleius, books which may be considered as *pièces justificatives* of Christianity,” he points out. “The flesh had become so insolent” in the Roman empire “that Christian discipline was needed to chasten it,” Heine feels. (Heine)

E. J. Kenney in his introduction to *Golden Ass* by Apuleius says that “between the sixth and the thirteenth centuries” the book was “largely lost to view, and it was as a magician that its author was celebrated.” In *City of God* Augustine discusses the “place of demons in the scheme of things,” and he “repeatedly cites Apuleius as the prime witness of the Platonic position,” and Augustine is uncertain as to if Apuleius had “actually undergone

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Dr. S. Sridevi

The Concept of Romanticism: Friedrich von Schlegel, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, and Heinrich Heine

metamorphosis” and this, Kenney remarks “evidently betokens acceptance of the fact that such things were possible.” Kenney further insists that the “picture that emerges from the *Apology*” (A Discourse on Magic in which Apuleius defends himself) tells us of a “society where religion and magic perforce co-existed.” Apuleius, during the second century AD was prosecuted for performing magic and “the elaborate character of Apuleius’ defence shows that these matters were taken seriously,” notes Kenney. The Renaissance reinvented Apuleius “as a storyteller, when he was rediscovered by Boccaccio.” Various authors took ideas from this tale: “Boccaccio in the *Decameron*, Cervantes in *Don Quixote*, and Le Sage in *Gil Bias*.” The story of the ass began to be used in allegories and satires. Through “the tale of Cupid and Psyche that Apuleius’ book has exerted its greatest influence.” and: the story has been a perennial source of inspiration to poets, dramatists, composers for opera and ballet, and artists.” Shakespeare would have read it in “Adlington’s translation” and “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Othello*” the influence of Apuleius. (Kenney)

Kenney’s interpretation of Apuleius gives us another perspective in understanding the interpretations of European culture by Heine. We realise that Heine views the birth of Romanticism as a social response to “Judaic spiritualism.” He argues that “the ruddy barbarians became spiritualised through Christianity” and thus “European civilisation began.” One is reminded of the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843) who wrote about “the ordered oaks” in his famous poem “Ages of Life” (Holderlin). The past is viewed by Holderlin in a flash, and we notice how has begun to view other cultures and their Gods:

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. (Holderlin)

The Hypostyle Hall in the Karnak temple in Luxor, Egypt covers an area of more than 55,000 square feet. It is filled with 134 gigantic sandstone columns arranged in 16 rows, with an average diameter of nearly 10 feet. 12 columns are in the central aisle with open papyrus capitals. They supported an 82 feet ceiling. They are now around 70 feet high. The rest of the

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 23:4 April 2023

Dr. S. Sridevi

The Concept of Romanticism: Friedrich von Schlegel, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, and Heinrich Heine

columns have closed papyrus bud capitals. They supported two sloping 50 feet high roofs. Now they are 34 feet in height. These columns were built by Seti I and his son Ramesses II between 1294 – 1213 BCE. (The Urge to Wander).

Like the columns of forest in Egypt, Germany also has symmetrically ordered and planned oaks in its thick forest - a sign of discipline and order. Civilizations are created and are destroyed in the great movement of time, Holderlin points out in a philosophical tone. The argument is that Europeans began to break away from a rigid monotheistic environment into viewing a broader world and understanding other civilizations. German Romanticism and philosophy slowly developed into a cosmopolitan phenomenon, due to this emergence of social thinking.

It can be argued that Heine thinks along these lines and views his society going through a paradigm shift created by the Church and its rigid interpretation of Judaic Christianity. Hence “the Catholic Church earned in this regard the highest title to our respect and admiration,” states Heine, and “through grand, genial institutions it controlled the bestiality of the barbarian hordes of the North and tamed their brutal materialism.” The mediaeval art gives “evidence of this mastery of matter by the spirit” and “epic poems of that time may be easily classified according to the degree in which they show that mastery,” Heine points out further. The epics of the period were “purely Christian in their nature.” The spirit of Christianity reflected strongly in “German sacred poetry” and “*Barlaam and Josaphat*,” a very famous German poem that talks about “self-denial, continence, renunciation” and scorns “all worldly pleasures” (Heine). History tells us that these mediaeval poems were global in spirit and themes born out of spiritual experiences from Asia and merged with Christian spirituality. *Barlaam and Josaphat* is associated with Buddhism and studies tell us how stories travelled across to different lands:

Images of Buddha with the Greek lettering *BOAAO* (*‘Boddo’* for Buddha) were found on gold coins from the Kushan empire dating back to the second century CE. Buddha was mentioned in a Greek source, *‘Stromateis,’* by Clement of Alexandria as early as around 200 CE, and another reference to Buddha is found in St Jerome’s *‘Adversus Jovinianum’* written in 393 CE. A religious legend inspired by the narrative of the ‘Life of Buddha’ was well known in the Judaeo-Persian tradition and early versions in Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, Armenian and Georgian have been discovered. The story became commonly known as ‘Barlaam and Josaphat’ in mediaeval Europe. The name Josaphat, in Persian and Arabic spelled variously *Budasf, Budasaf, Yudasaf* or *Iosaph*, is a corruption of the title *Bodhisattva* which stands for ‘Buddha-to-be,’ referring to Prince Siddhartha who became Gotama Buddha with his enlightenment. (Igunma)

Heine interprets his society from a particular stand like his contemporaries and remarks that “dawn is gradually breaking over the old German forests, the ancient Druid oaks are being felled, and in the open arena Christianity and Paganism are battling” as Christianity is breaking

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Dr. S. Sridevi

The Concept of Romanticism: Friedrich von Schlegel, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, and Heinrich Heine

through the primitive forces of Europe. (Heine). If we were to use the phrase of Holderlin, the oak forests are now “ordered” in a prim and proper manner. We have to understand how institutionalised religions operated in a pluralistic society and negotiated with the already existing rituals and practices, co-existing with equal rights. Heine and Holderlin view Christianity as a disciplining force on Europe.

In reality, old religions lived with ease with new religions and in this respect Gassman writes how old religions coexisted with new religions and that during this period Christians “shared rituals and beliefs with non-Christians” resulting in “a new way of thinking about the human race and its religious differences” that “came to pervade both Roman law and late antique culture.” He observes further:

What kind of religious practices would a ‘gentile’ convert to Christianity have known, prior to the progressive banning and displacement of traditional religion across the fourth through sixth centuries? ... The gods of the Mediterranean world were the objects of a vast complex of local and transregional cults, philosophical ideas, and literary, artistic, and architectural traditions. In literature and learned discourse, the Roman pantheon was equated with the Greek. The same was done with the gods of other nations, by a procedure often called the *interpretatio Romana* or *interpretatio Graeca*. Thus, antiquarian writers and philosophers identified YHWH with various gods, including Dionysus, Osiris, and Saturn, or with a god not known to them. The historian Tacitus claimed that the Germanic peoples worshipped Mercury, Hercules, and Mars... the deities known in Old Norse as Odin, Thor and Týr; and that, among those peoples, some of the Suebi worshipped Isis... (Gassman).

Heine refers to this period of religious negotiations and intersected cultures and contextualises further that spiritual energies have culminated in bringing in a gentler social order of chivalry that led to Romantic School. These processes merge slowly and Heine notices the power of Christian virtue of self-sacrifice shaping human thought and art:

But now from this Christianised, spiritualised brute force is developed the peculiar feature of the Middle Ages, chivalry, which finally become exalted into a religious knighthood. The earlier knighthood is most felicitously portrayed in the legends of King Arthur, which are full of the most charming gallantry, the most finished courtesy, and the most daring bravery ... By the side of this cycle of legends we find the kindred and connected legends of the Holy Grail, in which the religious knighthood is glorified, and in which are to be found the three grandest poems of the Middle Ages, *Titarel*, *Parcival*, and *Lohengrin*. In these poems we stand face to face, as it were, with the muse of romantic poetry; we look deep into her large, sad eyes, and ere we are aware she has ensnared us in her network of scholasticism and drawn us down into the weird depths of medieval mysticism. (Heine)

Heine expostulates that German Romantic poetry is born right from the meeting point of Christianity, scholastic in nature, with the mediaeval legendary social structures via

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Dr. S. Sridevi

The Concept of Romanticism: Friedrich von Schlegel, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, and Heinrich Heine

mediaeval German Arthurian romances with chivalrous knights, with mediaeval mysticism. This period shows a blend of earlier European religions, legends and Christian spirituality. The mythical gallant King Arthur emerged as a symbol of Christian grace, courtesy, and gentle bravery. Heine expounds this emergence of the new Christian symbol of order, discipline, selflessness, empathy, and grace as the rise of Romantic thought against the traditionally established tough image of the warrior of Greek times. This Christian mysticism had “sad eyes” that reflected the guilt of mankind for its violent nature that inflicted pain on innocent people as taught by Christian doctrines of self-sacrifice. These narratives went on expanding into many and these chivalrous romances had Christian themes, later popularised by operas, and Heine writes that scholasticism was in the hearts of these poems that metaphorized on Christian themes of the denial of the self:

... we find poems which do not unconditionally bow down to Christian spirituality; poems in which it is even attacked, and in which the poet, breaking loose from the fetters of an abstract Christian morality, complacently plunges into the delightful realm of glorious sensuousness. Nor is it an inferior poet who has left us *Tristan and Isolde*, the masterpiece of this class. Verily, I must confess that Gottfried von Strasburg, the author of this, the most exquisite poem of the Middle Ages, is perhaps also the loftiest poet of that period. He surpasses even the grandeur of Wolfram von Eschilbach, whose *Parcival*, and fragments of *Titurel*, are so much admired. At present, it is perhaps permissible to praise Meister Gottfried without stint, but in his own time his book and similar poems, to which even *Lancelot* belonged, were considered Godless and dangerous. Francesca da Polenta and her handsome friend paid dearly for reading together such a book;—the greater danger, it is true, lay in the fact that they suddenly stopped reading.

Gottfried von Strassburg is considered to be one of the greatest mediaeval German poets, as discussed by Heine. His “Tristan und Isolde” shows “learning” that had been given to him “by the cathedral and monastery schools of the Middle Ages.” The poem is based on a “Celtic legend of Tristan and Iseult” which “reached Germany through French sources.” Gottfried’s “purpose” was “to present to courtiers an ideal of love” derived from the “romantic cult of woman in mediaeval courtly society” a kind of love that “ennobles through the suffering with which it is inseparably linked.” Gottfried is supposed to have written “the finest of the mediaeval versions of the Tristan legend” that exemplified “the mediaeval courtly spirit” with an “elevated tone of its content” and exquisite “skill of its poetic technique.” It is claimed to be “the inspiration for Richard Wagner’s opera “Tristan und Isolde” (1859)” (Britannica).

Wagner captured most of the mediaeval romances in his opera and his music took these narratives to the populace. We remember Nietzsche’s friendship with Wagner which, perhaps, created a kind of German nationalism that celebrated local German legends. Heine captures the essence of Romanticism and notices it in the fine sentiments of Christian love and mediaeval chivalry.

Heil, a contemporary historian, says that the followers of Romanticism “transformed the like “center of Francesca from a sinner languishing in hell” as portrayed by Dante in his *Divine Comedy* “into an exemplar of female agency and a cultural icon” and “composers” like “Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and Sergei Rachmaninoff,” artists like “Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Auguste Rodin” and writers like “Leigh Hunt and Lord Byron” recreated Francesca emphasising “the tragic elements of the tale” (Heil). Composers took the narratives of love and tragedy, and the popular imagination welcomed these musical love stories:

Classic art had to portray only the finite, and its forms could be identical with the artist's idea. Romantic art had to represent, or rather to typify, the infinite and the spiritual, and therefore was compelled to have recourse to a system of traditional, or rather parabolic, symbols, just as Christ himself had endeavoured to explain and make clear his spiritual meaning through beautiful parables. Hence the mystic, enigmatical, miraculous, and transcendental character of the art-productions of the Middle Ages. Fancy strives frantically to portray through concrete images that which is purely spiritual, and in vain endeavour invents the most colossal absurdities; it piles Ossa on Pelion, Parcival on Titirel, to reach heaven. (Heine)

Christ's symbolism and stories contain values and spiritual meanings and have miraculous and transcendental qualities. Imagination portrays meanings through concrete images. Religion creates stories like the story of the Aloadae who were two giants who attempted to storm the home of the gods by piling three mountains--Olympos, Ossa and Pelion--one on top of the other. Heine chooses to call it a colossal absurd thing. In the same vein he dismisses mediaeval stories like Parcival. Written in the first decade of the thirteenth century, Parzival is the greatest of the mediaeval Grail romances. It tells of Parzival's growth from youthful folly to knighthood at the court of King Arthur, and of his quest for the Holy Grail.

Heine compares his land with other lands and observes that “similar monstrous abortions of imagination have been produced by the Scandinavians, the Hindoos, and the other races” and thus “strive through poetry to represent the infinite; among them also do we find poems which may be regarded as romantic.” (Heine) So, in short, Indian poetry is indeed romantic in nature, he does agree. But these foreign poems have not affected German or French poetry, he insists strongly. “Christ himself had endeavoured to explain and make clear his spiritual meaning through beautiful parables,” Heine contends by insisting that beauty as a quality is found in the parables of Christ that also insisted on rigid morality (Heine). It is a fine blending of morality and aesthetics, he suggests, quite aggressively.

August Wilhelm von Schlegel looks at the situation from a different perspective. He remarks that “diverging” in “opposite directions” is human nature. “Harmony and contrast” are the basic elements of nature. Hence, he points out that we have classical and romantic poetry - two opposite elements. He hypothesises further:

The term is certainly not inappropriate; the word is derived from *romance*—the name originally given to the languages which were formed from the mixture of the Latin and the old Teutonic dialects, in the same manner as modern civilisation is the fruit of the heterogeneous union of the peculiarities of the northern nations and the fragments of antiquity; whereas the civilisation of the ancients was much more of a piece...the romantic drama, which, strictly speaking, can neither be called tragedy nor comedy in the sense of the ancients, is indigenous only to England and Spain. In both it began to flourish at the same time, somewhat more than two hundred years ago, being brought to perfection by Shakspeare in the former country, and in the latter by Lope de Vega. (August Wilhelm von Schlegel)

He appreciates Indian drama too and accepts that Indians

possess a rich dramatic literature, which goes backward through nearly two thousand years. The only specimen of their plays (*nataks*) hitherto known to us in the delightful *Sakontala*, which, notwithstanding the foreign colouring of its native climate, bears in its general structure such a striking resemblance to our own romantic drama, that we might be inclined to suspect we owe this resemblance to the predilection for Shakspeare entertained by the English translator (Sir William Jones), if his fidelity were not attested by other learned orientalisists. (August Wilhelm von Schlegel)

August Wilhelm von Schlegel finds similarities between the Indian play *Sakuntala* by Kalidas and the plays by Shakespeare. He remarks romantic drama began in “allegorical and religious pieces called Moralities and Mysteries” (August Wilhelm von Schlegel). Shakespeare took the liberty to break the classical structures of classical drama, and Schlegel calls this phenomenon as Romanticism: “The romantic poets take the liberty even of changing the scene during the course of an act.” they violate “the Unity of Time by the violation of the Unity of Place.” Most of the English and Spanish plays can be classified as romantic dramas as they break all classical rules, he notes, as the “romantic delights in indissoluble mixtures.” These plays have “all contrarities: nature and art, poetry and prose, seriousness and mirth, recollection and anticipation, spirituality and sensuality, terrestrial and celestial, life and death, are by it blended together in the most intimate combination.” Romantic poetry “is the expression of the secret attraction to a chaos which lies concealed in the very bosom of the ordered universe, and is perpetually striving after new and marvellous births,” he declares. Romantic poetry is not always linear-structures and does have a “fragmentary appearance” but it “approaches more to the secret of the universe.” (August Wilhelm von Schlegel in “Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature”)

Heine does not accept this school of thought and designates it as “Romantic School.” He observes that “at the head of this school stand the brothers August William and Frederic Schlegel.” Heine attacks them as he feels that “this school began with a criticism of the art productions of the past, and with recipes for the artworks of the future.” He proposes that “the Schlegels were entirely imitators of Lessing” (Heine). He states further saying that the

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 23:4 April 2023

Dr. S. Sridevi

The Concept of Romanticism: Friedrich von Schlegel, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, and Heinrich Heine

Schlegels could not provide reliable theories of Romanticism and re-emphasises that the mediaeval romantic poems were Christian poems:

These were chiefly the Christian-Catholic productions of the middle ages. The translation of Shakespeare...with Protestant ...smiles ...was solely intended for polemical purposes... Calderon was translated and ranked far above Shakespeare...Our poetry, said the Schlegels, is superannuated; our muse is an old and wrinkled hag; our Cupid is no fair youth, but a shrunken, grey-haired dwarf. Our emotions are withered; our imagination is dried up: we must re-invigorate ourselves. We must seek again the choked-up springs of the naïve, simple poetry of the middle ages, where bubbles the elixir of youth. (Heine)

Heine's comments on the Teutonic race become significant in a modern sense after we have witnessed the semitic hatred and the voice of Heine is prophetic. Heine's argument is that "the political condition of Germany was particularly favourable to those Christian old German tendencies ...No people are more loyally attached to its rulers than are the Germans." Heine notes that Germany's princes

sought to awaken in the German people a sense of homogeneity, and even the most exalted personages now spoke of a German nationality, of a common German fatherland, of a union of the Christian-Germanic races, of the unity of Germany. We were commanded to be patriotic, and straightway we became patriots,—for we always obey when our princes command...The patriotism of the Germans... consists in narrowing and contracting the heart, just as leather contracts in the cold; in hating foreigners; in ceasing to be European and cosmopolitan, and in adopting a narrow-minded and exclusive Germanism. (Heine)

The politics and nationalism of the period influenced the celebration of the Teutonic model of writing as "German patriotism and nationality were victorious," Heine remarks. Therefore "the popular Teutonic-Christian-romantic school" and "the new-German-religious-patriotic art-school triumphed" and "Napoleon, the great classic, who was as classic as Alexander or Cæsar, was overthrown, and August William and Frederic Schlegel, the petty romanticists, who were as romantic as struted about as victors," says Heine in a bitter attack (Heine). This aggressive attack on the Schlegel brought down their reputation as literary critics.

Heine interprets social modes as reacting to rigid Christianity again and again. He feels the "spiritualism of Christianity was a reaction against the brutal rule of imperial Roman materialism" and opines that "the revival of the love for Grecian art and science was a reaction against the extravagances of Christian spiritualism" and hence he suggests that it is possible to perceive that "the romanticism of the middle ages may also be considered as a reaction against the vapid apings of antique classic art." (Heine)

Katia D. Hay contends that “A.W. Schlegel was a remarkably talented translator” and “he translated over 16 Shakespearean plays, five plays by Calderón de la Barca, and selected pieces by Dante, Petrarch, Giovanni Boccaccio, Miguel de Cervantes, Torquato Tasso, and Luís de Camões.” They were “published in 1804 as *Blumensträuſſe italiänischer, spanischer, und portugiesischer Poesie, (Bouquets of Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese Poetry).*” His theory of Romanticism is different from Heine’s as had wider exposure to Oriental languages and literature and philosophy. He “made the first complete translation of the *Bhagavadgītā* from Sanskrit into Latin” and he could “rightly be regarded as one of the first and most significant founders of Indology in Western Europe” as he also published the “scholarly journal *Indische Bibliothek* (1820–1830)” and “set up a Sanskrit printing press with which he provided the first printed editions of the *Bhagavadgītā* (1823) and *Rāmāyana* (1829) in continental Europe.” His perception of romantic art came to be influenced by oriental writing as well as reading the plays of Shakespeare. Hay states further:

The idea of longing or *Sehnsucht* is indeed essential in Schlegel’s account of Romanticism and must be understood in relation to the difference between ancient and modern art ... constituted the real object of Schlegel’s analysis in his *Lectures on Dramatic Art*. This opposition may be summarised as follows: whereas ancient poetry is plastic, sensual, harmonious, and, overall, a poetry of enjoyment of the present; modern poetry is a poetry of desire and longing (*Sehnsucht*), hovering between the idealizations of a remote past and an unknown future ... ‘Romantic spirit’ is also found in the works of Shakespeare, and ... in the spirit of romance cultures and languages, which, for Schlegel, are the result of a fusion between Latin and Teutonic languages... (Hay)

August Wilhelm von Schlegel views Romanticism as a cosmopolitan art imbibing features from many types of art from various systems and structures. Friedrich von Schlegel views it as a continuity of Greek, mediaeval and other local elements of European culture; Heinrich Heine prefers to interpret it as a child of Judaic-Christian ideology. In a contemporary mode of thinking, living in a globalised society, it might be argued that August Wilhelm von Schlegel’s views of cosmopolitan - colonialism impacted - Romanticism might answer all the questions we have regarding the shift in poetic taste during nineteenth century Europe.

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Dr. S. Sridevi

The Concept of Romanticism: Friedrich von Schlegel, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, and Heinrich Heine

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