SCHUMANN'S *DICHTERLIEBE* AND EARLY ROMANTIC POETICS

FRAGMENTATION OF DESIRE

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INTRODUCTION

So, what is *Poetology*, as the aesthetic and literary theory of early German Romanticism was originally called? Developed in a decidedly analytical, if speculative, mode of thinking, this theory introduced new definitions of literary genres and advanced new forms of expression in a radical move away from the older model of representation and mimesis towards that of creation and imagination. *Poetology* also involves a powerful advocacy of the inseparability of art and life, morality and religion, and as such lies at the heart of the overarching Romantic conception of *Symphilosophy*.[1] Here, all aspects of life, in particular its contradictions, are raised on to a higher aesthetic plane. This process crystallizes in the *Poetic*. The qualifier 'poetic' thus takes on a newer and wider meaning than usually assumed when considered the property of a specific literary genre. The return to its original meaning, to *poiesis* as in 'making' and 'creating', is of paramount importance within the Romantics' new philosophy of life – the *progressive universal poetry* – and receives here its social momentum:

> It tries to and should mix and fuse poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism, the poetry of art and the poetry of nature; and make poetry lively and sociable, life and society poetical; poeticize wit and fill and saturate the forms of art with every kind of good, solid matter for instruction, and animate them with the pulsation of humour. It embraces everything that is purely poetic, from the greatest systems of art, containing within themselves still further systems, to the sigh, the kiss that the child who composes breathes forth in artless song.[2]

In this introduction to some central topoi of Early Romantic thought, to the formative concepts of a highly refined kind of Idealism, I shall introduce and define the terms in which the subsequent discussion of Heinrich Heine and Robert Schumann will take place. Although different in their responses, both artists remained faithful

[1] Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1987).

[2] Friedrich Schlegel's definition of Romantic poetry in the famous fragment no. 116 of the *Athenaeum* [Sie will und soll auch Poesie und Prosa, Genialität und Kritik, Kunstpoesie und Naturpoesie bald mischen, bald verschmelzen, die Poesie lebendig und gesellig und das Leben und die Gesellschaft poetisch machen, den Witz poetisieren und die Formen der Kunst mit gediegenem Bildungsstoff jeder Art anfüllen und sättigen und durch die Schwingungen des Humors beseelen. Sie umfaßt alles, was nur poetisch ist, vom größten wieder mehre Systeme in sich enthaltende Systeme der Kunst bis zum Seufzer, dem Kuß, den das dichtende Kind aushaucht in kunstlosem Gesang]. *Athenaeum*, p. 119. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. The original spelling of these texts from nineteenth-century German sources has been left unchanged.

to the ideas and poetic practices the Early Romantics developed – an interesting aspect, for Heine and Schumann are latecomers in a movement that made its meteoric rise at the end of the eighteenth century, years before either of them had begun an artistic career.

With the city of Jena as the centre of their congenial intellectual exchange, the Early Romantics developed their theory in a short period of time, effectively between 1798 and 1801, the period in which the journal *Das Athenaeum* appeared. Founded by the brothers Friedrich and August Wilhelm von Schlegel as the organ for their literary-critical and aesthetic re-evaluation, it contains the essence of Early Romantic theoretical thought. Associated with the Jena group are the philosophers Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Schelling, the Protestant theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, and the poets Ludwig Tieck and Wilhelm Wackenroder. The figure of Novalis epitomizes the Early Romantics' aspirations. As the inventor of the Romantic symbol of the Blue Flower,[3] he promoted the Romantic Ideal to its fullest extent. His collection of 114 philosophical-psychological fragments called *Blütenstaub* (Pollen) of 1798, and the late *Hymnen an die Nacht* (Hymns to the Night) of 1799, both published in the *Athenaeum*, show him as advancing his vision intellectually and transcending it poetically on the side of religion, art and life. In the *Hymnen* in particular, the wholeness of mind and body, achieved in the need for an unshakeable God, was first announced and formally suggested through poetry's inherently ascendant powers. Novalis could then meet the afterglow shadowing his art of darkness, for following the beloved, the Mother, the Spirit, meant bringing to life what the power of imagination had already prescribed. Befriending death for real after foretelling it in poetico-theoretical terms adds a further level of complexity to Novalis' work and renders his poetry as one of the most difficult the Romantic spirit engendered.

Just as the sheer intensity of the Early Romantic Idea was force enough to leave behind the 'Age of Reason', the atmospheric orbit of such an idealistic orientation was to hold its sway over future generations long after it was first articulated. Its high intellectual and spiritual values reach into the present, although unrecognized or unacknowledged at times, as they inform the best, or are merely perpetuated in the worst, forms of contemporary critical and philosophical pursuit.[4]

As this enquiry is concerned with the intellectual and aesthetic issues of Early Romanticism, its innovative concepts of artistic structure and representation, the distinction from later forms of Romanticism must be emphasized. If, as is stereotypically suggested, the ideological content of Romanticism rested on a formidable

[3] See Novalis' novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* of 1802. See Part II for my discussion about Heine's critical preoccupation with the Blue Flower, and my discussion about the Early Romantic concept of the 'language of flowers' as adopted by Schumann in Part III, pp. 87–90.

[4] In philosophy, this has been demonstrated most consistently in the extensive work of Manfred Frank. See also Behler and Hörisch (1987), as well as Bowie (1990). Jerome McGann (1985, p. 12) uncovers and refutes as reactionary the uncritical adoption of Romantic ideology often present in scholarly work dealing with the period – the 'absorption in Romanticism's own self-representation'.

transference in which the Romantics' intense adversity towards their socio-political setting finds itself relocated in poeticized and idealized ways of retreat, then two things need to be borne in mind: first, the term 'Romantic' is, of course, known to be problematic, especially if applied without specific references regarding time, place and person. Quite understandably, then, little consensus exists in the critical literature, for 'Romanticism' cannot be seen as a unified phenomenon, whether historically, culturally or ideologically. The differences to be observed between early and later German Romantic thought are indeed as great as, say, between English and French Romantic poetry, and one must therefore doubt the possibility of some universal 'Romantic ideology' and sentiment. Only with the second generation of the Romantics are nationalism and Catholicism, to mention just two aspects, to be found dispersed among Romantic texts and popular opinion. Since this study focuses on the first generation, the whole notion of 'retreat', for example, turns out to be premature; it simply did not surface until some time later and has no place in either the theory or the mentality of the Early Romantics. Further, in view of the tenaciously repeated assessment that the German Romantic movement in general – of which the Early Romantics laid the foundation – amounted to a proto-Fascist, reactionary force leading directly or indirectly to private and public catastrophe, it is essential to remember that the notion of *Volk*, cultivated in the interests of political restoration or religious orthodoxy, is a distinction with which only later Romanticism was to be burdened. Reactionary conservatism may be seen as a trend emerging after the French Revolution and, in particular, after the abortive 1848 uprising. This is a cultural-political issue that studies of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries do, indeed, have to engage with in greater depth. Though no particular effort is made in the present study to discuss the ideological side of Early Romanticism,[5] it may nonetheless be worth mentioning somewhat categorically that its leading figures were decidedly cosmopolitan, progressive and 'modern' in attitude. They were supporters of the French Revolution. Directly opposed to an institutionalized belief in the Saviour or even in the Resurrection, the Early Romantics' promotion of Pantheism grew out of convictions more humanitarian than later generations were able to accommodate.

CRITIQUE AND META-CRITIQUE

Second, in as much as any evaluation of works of the past in general and Romanticism in particular needs to articulate what the relevance of its subject matter can possibly be for the actual present from which we critics operate, one soon discovers that the import of Early Romantic theory and art is topical rather than historical. The major questions with which Postmodernism has concerned itself – the critique of work, author and communication – had been asked and indeed answered in the Early Romantic discourse. Since then, neither its questions nor its answers have lost

[5] Frank (1997b).

their impact. Consciously reflecting upon their own position towards modernity and its very condition, the Early Romantics developed a conception of the work of art which carries the ethical question within itself by seizing it as an aesthetic one. The work created is so conditioned, structurally, that from its form arises its message; a message, however, that is never fully stated. It is withheld in order to emphasize the notion of possibility rather than the notion of completion: 'Romantic poetry is still in a state of becoming', Friedrich Schlegel says. 'Indeed, the real essence [of poetry] is that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected.'[6] Contrary to later Romantic poetry which sustains the sense of illusion throughout, Early Romantic poetry thematizes and reflects critically upon the illusions it creates. In the light of the generalizing assumption that Romantic art as a whole aimed at the illusionary, the first point to be made is that the Early Romantics were consciously aware of the unattainability of the Absolute. The Early Romantic notions of imperfectibility, estrangement, loss of communication and consensus are thus aspects that contemporary continental criticism (Gadamer, Adorno and Habermas, as well as Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy) has recognized as the beginning and basis of the aesthetic and philosophical discourse on modernity.[7] The modern air that surrounds and breathes through the works of the Early Romantics is precisely then the notion of *critique*. Hence, the Early Romantics did not opt out of their environment; rather, Romantic theory and poetry announces in the most uncompromising terms its critical position towards its own *Poetology*, for the theory itself is defined by what can be called an ever-present paradox. Such self-conscious meta-critique can be observed in the theoretical conceptions that this first Part seeks to introduce.

[6] *Athenaeum*, p. 19 [Die romantische Dichtart ist noch im Werden; ja das ist ihr eigentliches Wesen, daß sie ewig nur werden, nie vollendet sein kann].

[7] Derrida (1967 and 1972), Foucault (1970), Lyotard (1984), Gadamer (1990), Adorno (1993), Habermas (1987). See the collected essays in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1987) as well as Behler and Hörisch (1987). Whilst one observes in French circles the attempt and ability to fuse philosophical and literary discourse (first developed by Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel – 'Wem gefiele nicht eine Philosophie, deren Keim ein erster Kuß ist?' [Who wouldn't like a philosophy whose kernel was a first kiss?] – [NO II, p. 541, no. 74]), Habermas insists on the traditional demarcation as he reproaches Derrida for the '*aesthetisizing of language, which is purchased with the two-fold denial of the proper senses of normal and poetic discourse*' by asserting that 'art and literature on the one side, and science, morality, and law on the other, are specialized for experiences and modes of knowledge that can be shaped and worked out within the compass of *one* linguistic function and *one* dimension of validity at a time. Derrida holistically levels these complicated relationships in order to equate philosophy with literature and criticism.' See 'Excursus on Levelling the Genre Distinction between Philosophy and Literature' in Habermas (1987), pp. 185–210 (here pp. 205 and 207; emphasis original). Cf. Frank (1989), p. 221: 'Only the early-Romantic authors of the Jena circle inserted aesthetic meaning [ästhetischer Sinn] *into* philosophical production itself' (emphasis original). The reason why works pertaining to the Early Romantic concept of a *Symphilosophy* and *Universal Poetry* – characterized chiefly by the preferred use of the fragment as an expository form (in our case Schumann's *Dichterliebe*) – must be discussed in the light of its philosophical implications lies in the very fact that both the genesis and the meaning of the aesthetic concept of the fragment are inseparable from the philosophical vision it seeks to convey. Hence the Early Romantics' self-designation 'poet-philosophers' whose aim is to merge poetry and philosophy, philosophy and life, morality and religion, and so forth. The generic term for this all-encompassing enterprise is 'Poetry', and the person performing it is a 'poet' – the name Schumann assigned to himself in the spirit of Early Romanticism.

HEINE'S EXPERIENCE OF ROMANTICISM

Heine's critique of Romanticism in his influential book *The Romantic School* (1833) was perhaps the first to address the issue of Romanticism and its ideology constructively by way of providing it with what some have described as 'living quarters in a non-Romantic age and consciousness',[8] that is, by admitting his sympathy without losing his integrity. Yet, allowing for a less triumphal trait in Heine's response to his predecessors, his poetry also manifests the anguish of losing the Romantic ideal in Heine's attempt to assert a self, certainly if that self can be located in what Adorno famously called 'the wound'.[9] The estrangement experienced by Heine invaded his poetic language, where an obsession with breaking the tone (*Stimmungsbruch*) means breaking with the universal, clearly Romantic model of poetic expressivity. Heine's tone, artfully unnatural and never melodious, does not derive from a voice in tune with the words it speaks. Speechless in the face of his inner alienation from Romantic Germany, Heine moves like a stranger within his mother tongue, for his uncanny linguistic ability is that of a well-adapted foreigner. Grating irony creeps into his lines like an indefinable accent or the habitual grammatical mistake. It is irritating first of all, and fascinating only insofar as the typical onlooker takes reassuring delight in a fortunate unfamiliarity with the utter negativity Heine's irony affords.

Here, Heine's strikingly limited vocabulary in his early poetry, the constant reappearance of certain words and images, merits scrutiny. Although this may well be characteristic of a language not actually lived, but learned by a 'person who uses language like a book that is out of print',[10] the desire invested here is nevertheless very real. For such insistence on a few motifs turns poetry into monotonous speech, as if trying, in an incessant stream of unsuccessful attempts, to bring home to the native speaker what cannot be accomplished – immediacy and real communication through idiomatic speech. This is the sense of 'variations on the same little theme',[11] as Heine himself described the *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, because any one poem is as approximate a formulation as any other. In this sense, Heine's poetry is not expressive; rather, it is ostentatiously impressive. Bedazzled by his perfection of form (folk-song), arrangement and chiselled poetic rhetoric, amused by witty turns of phrase or

[8] McGann (1985), p. 11. McGann explores and eventually adopts Heine's critical procedures with great skill in his attempt to 'arrest that process of reification' of the Romantic ideology permeating much of the critical literature.

[9] Adorno's brilliant talk on 'Heine the Wound' (1968/91a) given on the centenary of Heine's death in 1956 contains central insights into Heine's disposition towards nineteenth-century Germany. Emphasizing the political relevance of the case of Heine, Adorno speaks of a 'wound' and 'injury' inflicted upon Heine with indirect reference to the Holocaust: Heine's 'homelessness' as a Jew in an anti-Semitic climate is related to the poet's conciliatory gesture of using 'assimilatory language' as a sign of his desperate yet 'unsuccessful identification'. Marxist in orientation, Adorno asserts that Heine 'took a poetic technique of reproduction . . . that corresponds to the industrial age'. This, however, is debatable in its relative reductionism, for the stylistic complexity of Heine's poetic language rests on a great number of factors whose various effects can only with difficulty be whittled down to be seen as relevant only on a socio-economic level. Nonetheless, Adorno's centenary talk on Heine remains one of the most important statements made about the poet.

[10] Adorno (1968), p. 150. Trans. (1991a), p. 83.

[11] Heine's own description of the poetic cycle. See *HSA* XX, p. 250.

strategically well-placed words out of phase, Heine's reader enjoys the sparkle, but keeps and is always kept well outside. Heine thus belies the Early Romantic thesis of 'reading as becoming the poet of the poem' and instead passes on his linguistic ordeal: 'Blaring trumpets cutting through' this poetry of 'angels sobbing and groaning'[12] make a readerly 'drowning' rather impossible. In Heine, the heightened Romantic sentimentality first invoked functions in inverse proportion to the fall the reader experiences at the moment of Heine's cuts. Yet these same cuts possess an exceptional effectiveness by pointing the way back to the sentimentality originally evoked and remembered as having touched such heights in the first place. Either way, then, the Heinean cut ensures a zero degree of illusion. As images of abysmal maliciousness or intense kitsch come crashing down on us, Heine shows reality naked – the opposite of the Romantics' 'Kingdom Come'. Eventually one realizes that Heine was not blessed with the kind of faith we witness in the Romantics' pursuit of Elysium – indeed there was no other faith that could have filled the void in Heine's fractionally hearted, dissociated self. 'Where no Gods reign, there ghosts reign' (*Wo keine Götter walten, da walten Gespenster*), Novalis knew, and Heine's *imago* of a woman wandering through his poems may be seen as such a ghost, an outgrowth of Heine's deep-seated suspicion and rejection of the Early Romantic spirit.[13]

The abrasiveness of Heine's tone, together with his disturbing passion to leave no aspect of an inherited Romantic imagery innocent, is however a sign of defence. It reveals his ostracism, and makes one pause to reconsider the possible extent of Heine's tolerance towards the Romantic cause that even in his prose would be difficult to recover. Heine's poetry bespeaks a reaction to the Romantic movement that may indeed disturb the modern ideal of conciliation, for this language is as irreconciliatory as language can be. It also, however, bespeaks a kind of preoccupation with that movement's values that derives its tension from welding together two extremes: the horror of an inescapable dependency on, and the solace sought but not to be found in, these very values. Thus, indebtedness is a burden and insecurity is laid bare.

Wunderglaube! Blaue Blume,	Belief in miracles! Blue Flower,
Die verschollen jetzt, wie prachtvoll	Which is now missing, how magnificently
Blühte sie im Menschenherzen	It blossomed in man's heart
Zu der Zeit, von der wir singen!	In those times of which we are singing!
... und die verstorbnen	... and the deceased
Jugendträume, sie erwachen.	Dreams of one's youth awake.
Auf den Häuptern welke Kränze,	On the heads withered wreaths,
Schauen sie mich an wehmütiglich;	Look at me nostalgically;
Tote Nachtigallen flöten,	Dead nightingales are singing,
Schluchzen zärtlich, wie verblutend.[14]	Are sobbing gently, as if bleeding to death.

[12] *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, XX [... Trompeten schmettern drein; ... / ... Dazwischen schluchzen und stöhnen / Die guten Engelein].

[13] See Part II, pp. 91–103.

[14] From the Prologue of Heine's late poem *Bimini*, first published posthumously in 1869. B VI/1, pp. 243–249.

SCHUMANN'S EXPERIENCE OF ROMANTICISM

Schumann had a greater feeling of belonging to the Romantic tradition. Ironically, at the same time as Heine's critical *Romantic School* had appeared, Schumann took the momentous step of advocating publicly the beginning of a 'new poetic time' in founding the music-critical journal *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. Highly influenced by Romantic poetry and literature, in particular by the fantastical writings of Jean Paul, who told his stories 'through ten thousand reflections and conceits',[15] Schumann's music was the joint work of those characters that had invaded his wandering mind. Calling himself the 'musical fantast'[16] of the secret community of the *Davidsbündler*, Schumann's compositions until 1840 form a complex dialectic of invention, idealization, transformation and denial of self and other personae. His compositional celebration of 'rare' and 'secret states of the soul'[17] means, on perhaps a more abstract level, a similar procedure of casting into sound his mobile, self-reflective imagination. Schumann's constant attention to those moments and events in life which forced him to react and act out musically with the hyper-sensitivity of the affected shows again the same dynamics – the Romantic artist's journey of searching both self and soul to find an authentic space within. Indeed, if Schumann was one of the least cosmopolitan of Romantic composers, it was because he was arrested within his own, Romantic cosmos, and only there did he see 'constellations of a subterranean firmament'.[18] In exploring the unintelligible, he thus left the tranquillity of Reason for the sake of more rarefied atmospheres, capturing forces instead of matter, himself instead of the outside. In this, he cuts the sorry, yet sympathetic figure, not of the one who was deserted, but of the Romantic Solitary, the 'One-Alone' and 'One-All'[19] of German Romanticism: a Romantic hero after all, then, who could render audible the waves of voices which swept across his mind, who could perceive and sublimate the haunting images of an inner truth. Thus in discourse with none but himself, Schumann the composer is self-indulgent and self-absorbed. In this, Schumann took the risk of entering a nocturnal space by giving himself over to the power of his desire. This is also why, in fact, one cannot speak of 'style' in Schumann's music as one can in the case of Heine's words. Whilst the stylist's motivation is to write poems as good as the poetic models he seeks to out-match, and with a judging audience in the forefront of his mind, Schumann's aim was centred within and directed towards himself as he explored his multiple Romantic characters by giving them a voice. Thus, his music is concerned with nothing other than itself, keeps turning back on itself, reflects and contradicts itself in the manner of what one calls *pure poetry* in Early Romanticism. Such intuitive creative processes leave little room for the kind of overtly conscious stylistic finesse we find in Heine, but all the more for direct, unprotected speech. In this sense, Schumann's music is indeed, as Roland Barthes

[15] Jean Paul's own description as quoted in Casey (1992), p. 43.
[16] Schumann about himself in *GS* I, p. 54 [musikalischer Phantast].
[17] Kreisig *GS* I, p. 343 [seltene . . . geheime Seelenzustände].
[18] JP IX, p. 58 [Sternbilder eines unterirdischen Himmels].
[19] Deleuze (1988), p. 340.

suggests, of a kind that keeps saying nothing other than '*c'est moi*', and which makes it thus 'an egoistic music'.[20] But Schumann's songs are even more self-involved than this. The space is opened up for yet another voice which makes the Romantic invocation of the Other complete and structurally real. *Dichterliebe* exemplifies this Romantic drama, in which the voice is personified desire, and to which the piano yields and which it opposes. While the dialogical nature of the short piano pieces is still at work, it is the human voice that brings into Schumann's monologue the fictitious solace of the Other. At the core of these songs there is always the 'split Self' of Schumann's Romantic subjectivity,[21] who vacillates between giving in to the voices of desire and making distancing moves so as to preserve his sense of the solitary Romantic artist. For the piano in Schumann's songs, certainly, does not continuously act as supporting accompaniment; rather it keeps disrupting the voice and contradicting it, keeps silent or speaks to itself once the singing voice has ceased. Interestingly, it is also in view of the greater structural scale of *Dichterliebe* that Schumann remains within the desiring mode of a wandering Romantic visionary:

> The thread of thought moves imperceptibly forward in constant interconnection until the surprised spectator, after the thread abruptly breaks off or dissolves in itself, suddenly finds himself confronted with a goal he had not at all expected: before him an unlimited, wide view, but upon looking back at the path he has traversed and the spiral of conversation distinctly before him, he realizes that this was only a fragment of an infinite cycle.[22]

SHARED NOTIONS OF CRITIQUE

My own point of view is consciously sited in the hermeneutic tradition as developed by Schleiermacher, whose proposed approach to works of art implies the recognition of an insurmountable distance between artist, work and critic. I do not, therefore, even so much as raise the question of artistic intentionality, not only because it may be a problematic issue but more crucially because it could be considered irrelevant; this stance originated in the Romantics' awareness that the critic is always situated somewhere other than the origin of the work. The Romantic thesis of *différence* is, however, based on more than the usual emphasis on historical and cultural determination. It is carried further in the Romantics' assertion that artistic language does not possess the 'objectivity of gold'[23] and that the work always 'knows more than it says, and intends more than it knows'.[24] The critic, therefore, will be able to bring out a higher level of signification by becoming the 'extended creator' of the work.[25] Thus, to speak with Walter Benjamin, for whose own critical stance the hermeneutic

[20] Barthes (1985c), p. 295.

[21] See the discussion on the Early Romantics' awareness of a fragmentary Self on pp. 5–8.

[22] One of Friedrich Schlegel's description of poetry. See *KFSA* III, p. 50. Trans. Behler (1993), p. 141.

[23] Friedrich Schlegel uses the metaphor ironically in his important essay 'On Incomprehensibility' in the last volume of the *Athenaeum*, *KFSA* II, p. 365. See further discussion in Part III, p. 133.

[24] *KFSA* XVIII, p. 318 [Das Werk das mehr weiß als es sagt, und mehr will als es weiß].

[25] Cf. Frank (1985), pp. 358–364 or Behler (1987), pp. 141–160 and (1992), pp. 271–277.

tradition of Early Romanticism turned out to be formative, 'the proper approach to [the object and its 'truth-content'] is not . . . one of intention and knowledge, but rather a total immersion and absorption in it'.[26]

At the heart of this hermeneutic procedure, 'the great Romantic shift' as Gadamer called it,[27] there always lies the autonomy of the art work itself. Although this is perceptible throughout *Truth and Method*, Gadamer acknowledges his affinity to Friedrich Schlegel's conception of the 'work' openly when speaking up for the hermeneutic meaning of the work-concept, which has more recently come under attack. In obvious opposition to the doubts expressed by Derrida, De Man and Levinas – the 'Zeitgeist' as Gadamer summarizes it – whose idea of *différence* includes questioning the very possibility of an 'understanding' that would not at the same time undermine the presence of the work's constant otherness, Gadamer raises our sensitivity to the word's root: ' "Work" means nothing else than "ergon" and is, exactly like the other "ergon", characterized by the fact that it is separated from producer and its production.' Form and the understanding thereof does not depend on who produced it, but on who uses it. The 'intentio auctoris' is therefore engrained in the work which purely biographical or genesis-orientated research might fail to discover. 'Works of art are detached from their genesis [*Entstehung*] and only for this reason begin to speak, perhaps even to the surprise of its creator.'[28] Gadamer elicits the concept of *différence* that distinguishes him from Derrida by way of etymologically elucidating the German word *Verstehen*:

> Its place within the German human sciences does not, of course, so easily find an equivalent in other languages. What does Verstehen actually mean? Verstehen is 'to stand in for somebody' [*'für jemanden stehen'*]. In its original sense, the word applies to someone who is an intercessor in court, an advocate. He is that person who understands his party, as we in today's usage say 'represents him' [*'vertreten'*]. He represents his client, he stands in for him, he certainly does not repeat what he has been told or what has been dictated to him, but he speaks for him. But that means that he speaks from his point of view, as somebody else, and he addresses others. *Différence* is obviously implied here. . . . That is not the art of hermeneutics, which is to nail somebody down on what he has said. It is the art of perceiving what he actually wanted to say.[29]

One of Gadamer's most compelling images is 'that in all acts of understanding the horizon of one person merges with the horizon of the other; this certainly does not mean a lasting and identifiable One, but takes place as a continuing conversation

[26] Benjamin (1977), p. 36. [27] See Gadamer (1990), pp. 188–201.

[28] Gadamer (1987), pp. 258–259.

[29] Gadamer (1987), p. 254 [Sein Ort in der deutschen Geistesgeschichte findet freilich in anderen Sprachen nicht so leicht eine Entsprechung. Was heißt eigentlich Verstehen? Verstehen ist 'für jemanden stehen'. Das Wort wird dem ursprünglichen Sinn nach von dem gesagt, der Fürsprecher vor Gericht ist, der Advokat. Er ist der, der seine Partei versteht, so wie wir im heutigen Sprachgebrauch dafür 'vertreten' sagen. Er vertritt seinen Klienten, er steht für ihn, er wiederholt nicht etwa, was er ihm vorgesagt oder diktiert hat, sondern er spricht für ihn. Das heißt aber, er redet von sich aus, als ein anderer, und wendet sich an andere. Différence ist hier selbstverständlich impliziert . . . Das ist nicht die Kunst der Hermeneutik, jemanden auf etwas festzunageln, was er gesagt hat. Sie ist die Kunst, das, was er hat eigentlich sagen wollen, aufzunehmen].

[*Gespräch*]'.[30] Here resonates Jaspers's idea of a 'Gespräch der Geister' (conversation of minds) into which one enters with an open mind.

The significance of Romanticism as a literary-philosophical phenomenon lies in its conviction that art, more than philosophy itself, is the ultimate source of human cognition. The Romantics arrived at this position after their revisionist engagement with Kantian subjectivity on the one hand, and their own development of a theory of language on the other. Their speculative exploration of the potential of language in general and the languages of art in particular arguably bears similarities to Foucault's proposition that 'language may sometimes arise for its own sake in an act of writing that designates nothing other than itself'.[31] Within this contemporaneously modernist definition of language, poetry became the paradigmatic art form of Early Romanticism. It stood at the centre of all poetological reflections. Although an Early Romantic theory of music has yet to be reconstructed, the references to music are frequent. In closest proximity to the Romantics' concept of poetry, music was seen to be able to transcend articulate speech so as to 'represent the Unrepresentable'.[32] Given the preference at the time for so-called 'absolute' music, the emergence of the Romantic art song at the beginning of the nineteenth century is a particularly intriguing phenomenon. For in song, two 'most expressive' art forms, poetry and music, were brought together as if to experiment with their differing expressive means. Indeed, the concept of poetry set to music, that is, the combination of the ineffable expressivity of music with the conceptual capacities of language, epitomizes the Early Romantics' theoretical speculations about the two 'speaking arts' (Hegel in the *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetic*). Schumann, the most poetically minded among the Romantic composers, proposed in his writings a concept of the Lied that departs from earlier models of Lied composition in its distinctly Idealist orientation. Rather than seeking to synchronize text and music with regard to either form or content, he conceived of the Lied as a separate independent art form, a 'higher sphere of art'.[33] After having realized the poetic ideal in short piano works, he regarded the Lied as *the* Romantic medium of poetic sublimation able to transcend both the musical and poetical to the highest level of expression. In the Romantic sense, however, Schumann's Lieder are not exclusively interpretative; rather, Schumann was preoccupied with what was elusively absent from the written word. Freeing himself from

[30] Gadamer (1987), p. 255 [in allem Verstehen verschmilzt sich der Horizont des einen mit dem Horizont des anderen . . . dies meint wahrlich kein bleibendes und identifizierbares Eines, sondern geschieht in dem weitergehenden Gespräch].

[31] Foucault (1970), p. 304. Beginning with the 'Romantic revolt against a discourse frozen in its own ritual pomp', Foucault speaks here of the new notion of 'literature' in which 'language . . . – in opposition to all other forms of discourse – . . . curve[s] back in a perpetual return upon itself, as if its discourse could have no other content than the expression of its own form.' The idea of language as introduced by the Romantics was the foundation of, so Foucault argues, its use by Mallarmé, for example, where the word 'has nothing to say but itself, nothing to do but shine in the brightness of its being'. See Foucault (1970), p. 300. In the light of this radically modern notion of language, the Romantics came to see musical notation in a similar way.

[32] Novalis' programmatic dictum epitomizing the Romantics' aims. See NO III, p. 685, no. 671 [Das Undarstellbare darstellen].

[33] *NZfM* 1 (1834), p. 193 [höhere Kunstsphäre].

complying with the text in the spirit of becoming the 'second author of the poem' and with the awareness of a 'better understanding', Schumann is firmly grounded within the hermeneutic tradition first proposed by Schleiermacher.[34] With this vision of a 'higher sphere of art', Schumann's Lieder thus epitomize the quintessential Romantic paradox: creation/critique. This brought into song composition a degree of unrestrained creativity which led to the kind of intensity that we instantly recognize to be at work in Schumann's songs. Thus, listening to Schumann's *Dichterliebe* means an involvement with the 'incandescent core of the romantic song',[35] and the hermeneutic approach that I have taken intends to account for the theoretical and intellectual context out of which it originally arose.

One aim of Part I, then, is to bring a measure of exposition to the theoretical ideas of these Early Romantic poet-philosophers, and to convey the historical and intellectual context in which Heine and Schumann must be seen. At the same time, one will also need to measure their different distances from that context, thereby realizing the extent to which Heine distanced himself from the Romantic ideal to which Schumann, in contrast, truly aspired. Here, by way of reference to the sources of this theory, the focus will be on the more hermetic members of the Romantic school, and on Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis in particular. Both realized more than any other exponents of the movement the sublimation of theory into art. And nowhere is the idea of the aesthetic more resonant than in the philosophy of the *Athenaeum*, with their major contributions.[36] In short texts and fragments the central Early Romantic thesis is expounded that the paradigmatic medium of reflection is art, and not, as Fichte had proposed earlier, the 'I'.

FORMS OF DESIRE

My discussion of the Early Romantics' very diverse body of thought is restricted to aspects of language and art, poetry and music, and, above all, their aesthetic of form and expression. Here, I shall focus on three forms: the Romantic fragment, Romantic irony and reflection.[37] Developed as a means to 'represent the Unrepresentable',[38] these concepts are devoted to the visionary *per se*: the Romantic *Sehnen* or 'longing' and the more modern *Verlangen*, 'desire'. Projective in nature compared with their

[34] Schleiermacher's famous dictum 'to understand speech [*Rede*] first just as well and then better than its author'. See *HK*, p. 87 [die Rede zuerst eben so gut und dann besser zu verstehen als ihr Author]. This idea was already suggested, of course, by Kant in the *KrV* B, p. 371.

[35] Barthes (1985b), p. 289.

[36] The important place the *Athenaeum* takes in the development of an Early Romantic aesthetic was first demonstrated by Benjamin (1973) in his masterly dissertation 'Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik' of 1919 to which, among others, Blanchot (1969) has added his own brilliant critiques.

[37] Whilst the two concepts of 'Romantic fragment' and 'irony' will be treated separately (pp. 26–39), a systematic description of the Early Romantics' idea of 'reflection' is provided in connection with the Romantic concept of language and music (pp. 40–46).

[38] NO III, p. 685, no. 671 [Das Undarstellbare darstellen]. Novalis' dictum and thesis of Early Romanticism about the incommensurability of poetic works which can no longer be conceptually grasped; instead the Sublime or Absolute may be divined or anticipated (*geahndet*).

earlier and darker precursor melancholy, or their later, more retrograde nostalgia, *Sehnen* or *Sehnsucht* was, despite its exhausting force, the *movens* which retained its grace under the pressure resulting from the unattainability of the Romantics' aspirations. Although *Sehnsucht* often degenerates into a vague commonplace in those studies of Romanticism where it is simply taken for granted, my attempt is to demonstrate its presence and continuing strength in structural terms. The Romantic fragment is one important means of doing so, for it bears the dynamics of *Sehnsucht* within itself and, together with the subtly disintegrating forces of Romantic irony, is the primary agency able to bring out the forward-thriving movement and projective energy contained within Romantic *Sehnsucht*. In its very inability to attain the desired, to come to fulfilment, the Romantic fragment invokes and evokes endlessly. Hence, in contrast to the concept of a 'work', the fragment contains no fixed or final statement; rather it alludes to and points towards the distant horizon of our desire, and is, no more and no less, an inscription of our 'Sehnsucht nach dem Unendlichen'.[39] But let us say that such inscription of *Sehnsucht* in Heine's and Schumann's work is mediated, for it involves the affective side of a creative process which channels rather than describes or elaborates upon its primary origin. It is esoteric: the stream of an inner truth floating beneath the surface of these poetic texts, as omnipresent as it is elusive.

Another aim of this introduction to Early Romantic poetics is to bring out the uses of fragmentation, which lies at the heart of the Early Romantics' idea of form. Within the mobile dialectical movement of a Romantic play of thoughts and associations, ideas always live in contradiction. What I earlier called the 'paradox' in the Romantic position is indeed the fundamental mechanism behind the concepts of reflection, fragment and irony. Here, the central paradox behind these concepts is that the totality that is posited is also precisely what causes the moment of disintegration. The Romantic fragment represents the middle term around which the other two, reflection and irony, continuously revolve; defined by Frank as an expression of the 'negative dialectic of Early Romanticism',[40] the Romantic fragment will here be discussed in relation to its detotalizing function. Devised to destroy the appearance of finitude and unity, it signifies *ex negativo* a new kind of synthesis: the absence of the Absolute. The contradiction inherent in the fragment's ultimate failure to represent the Absolute explains the presence of some other typically Romantic notions: evocation and ambiguity, instability, contradiction, and endlessness. If *Dichterliebe* has long been examined with the expectation of functions bearing the norms of an organic whole, burdened with rules typically applied to coherent systems, the resistance of a work like *Dichterliebe* to complying with such a system encourages us to explore the expressive possibilities of fragmentary forms. As heard in *Dichterliebe* itself, the atmosphere created by the Romantic fragment is that of anticipation, when

[39] *KFSA* XVIII, p. 418, no. 1168. The famous Romantic statement in Friedrich Schlegel's words.
[40] Frank (1989), pp. 300–301.

love remains in suspense, and when the poet will not submit to confessions: 'Is desire not that what remains always *unthought* at the heart of thought?'[41]

The material of Early Romantic aesthetics is both large and complex, not least because it is a part of *Symphilosophie* and progressive *Universalpoesie* – cosmic conceptual constructs. There is always then, as most scholars recognize, the inclination to try to disentangle the colourful web of ideas and eventually reduce them to doctrines and single threads of thought. This misses, however, the character of the body of thought in question. On the one hand, philosophy and poetry, art and life coalesce here on every level – it was the Romantics' achievement to overcome these traditional antitheses. On the other hand, the Romantics' preferred mode of thinking-as-double-reflection is pervasive in all these primary texts-as-fragments. With 'theory often being highly poetical and poetry sometimes deeply theoretical', these texts, as Behler admits, escape from fixed interpretation and draw the reader into their enigmatic logic, thus contributing to their decidedly modern character.[42] As Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy propose: 'Romanticism is neither mere "literature" (they invented the concept) nor simply a "theory of literature" (ancient and modern). Rather, it is theory itself as literature or, in other words, literature producing itself as it produces its own theory.'[43] Following Novalis, these texts are also only 'the beginning of interesting successions of thought – texts for thinking'.[44] The theory itself was envisioned as a process 'eternally evolving, never to be completed'.[45] In this sense, the following discussion of a number of texts by the Early Romantics is intended as the starting-point and theoretical basis to reflect upon Heine's post-Romantic poetic procedure characterizing the *Lyrisches Intermezzo* and its transformation into Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, a transposition into sound of theoretical speculations that found their highest expression with Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis.

[41] Foucault (1970), p. 375. Emphasis original.
[42] Behler (1992), pp. 28–29. Emphasis original.
[43] Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1987), p. 12.
[44] NO III, p. 276 [Anfänge interessanter Gedankenfolgen – Texte zum Denken].
[45] *KFSA* II, p. 183 [ewig nur werden, nie vollendet].