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978-0-521-28087-7 - German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: The Romantic Ironists and Goethe

Edited by Kathleen M. Wheeler

Excerpt

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Introduction

A good preface must be at once the square root and the square of its book.
(Friedrich Schlegel, *Critical Fragments*, 8)

1. Storm and Stress

In the period preceding the rise of romanticism was enacted the conflict between Neo-classicism and the Storm and Stress movement – the rejection of those ‘rigid rules of reason’ binding art and human experience generally. The Storm and Stress rejection of reason for the emotional, mystical side of human nature gained strength first from Neo-Platonic speculations mediated by Shaftesbury* in the early eighteenth century, from Leibniz’s philosophy, and from the pietistic strain in the German tradition. Johann Georg Hamann and Johann Gottfried Herder both drew upon these sources for their inspirational revival of German mysticism into a philosophy of feeling opposed to the tyranny of reason that was stifling, as they thought, the deepest creative and artistic impulses in man, impulses coming not from the faculty of reason but from the irrational and the unconscious. Like the Romanticism superseding it, Storm and Stress rejected rigid adherence to formal conventions derived from literal interpretations of Aristotle. It strove to replace objective representation of nature with subjective representation of feeling, and the simplicity of ancient art (with its emphasis on representation of the visual aspects of the natural world) with the complexity and turmoil of the inner world of feelings, intuitions, and the unconscious. But the emphasis on feeling and the rejection of reason for emotion was the great weakness of the Storm and Stress movement in its struggle against Neo-classicism and rationalism; Storm and Stress was superseded by Romanticism as the major spokesman against the advocates of dogmatic rationalism.

Romanticism attacked the leaders of Storm and Stress, such as Hamann, Herder, and the young Goethe, for rejecting reason. The romantics insisted that

* Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of (1671–1713), whose *Characteristics of Man, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711) had an incalculable influence upon the eighteenth century both in England and abroad. The dialogue form typical of the treatises in *Characteristics* was modelled after Plato’s method of leading the learner (and, analogously, the reader) from confused opinion to subject that received opinion to analysis and liberate the mind from pseudo-knowledge.

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their common goal, of a striving toward knowledge of the infinite, was a rational, not a merely irrational, striving. As Kant had taught the young romantics, it was a postulate of reason itself to seek for the eternal, the infinite, the final cause. Friedrich Schlegel, basing his philosophy of the synthesis of reason and emotions firmly upon Kant's faith in reason, sought to overthrow the extremism of Storm and Stress, and sought to prove to adherents of the philosophy of feeling, such as Herder and August Wilhelm Schlegel, that they too, unaware perhaps, were using their reason to formulate irrationalism and to set feeling up to dominate over reason. Friedrich Schlegel, along with Friedrich Schleiermacher and Friedrich Schelling, insisted upon the necessity to synthesize these two only apparently conflicting sides of man's nature, if knowledge of the sort they sought was to be gained. While Kant's earlier Humean scepticism may have been the grounds for Hamann and Herder's rejection of reason as incapable of handling the deeper and the most pressing of human questions, his own later development of a transcendental metaphysic provided the new basis needed for the early romantic challenge to extremist emotionalism, and also provided grounds for their insistence upon a philosophy of art, religion, and man that involved the synthesis of these several faculties into a single, powerful, and integrated tool for probing the essence of existence. The romantics learned from Kant that reason could be an ally of the sublime and inspirational in man's spirit. They learned from him that feelings could be articulated into conceptions and related to thought so as to become knowledge. But they went beyond Kant (at least beyond the literal position of his published writings) in asserting that man could achieve his highest spiritual knowledge and perfection not merely by means of the reason articulating emotions, feelings, and intuitions into conceptions and ideas. Reasoning alone, even about feeling, could never lead man to the knowledge of himself that he was really capable of unless, in addition to reasoning, he united his reason with the education of his aesthetic and moral spirit.

From this rejection of Kant's Stoic ethics (derived solely from reasoning and a sense of duty) arose once again the idea of the aesthetic education of man as central to his moral and intellectual development, an idea elaborated by Schiller, Schelling and later by Karl Solger, and inspired perhaps by Shaftesbury's much earlier speculations. Man's delight in beauty and the gradual refinement of his taste was seen not only as a worthy end in itself, but also as a means of inspiring him to knowledge of his transcendental self and thereby to knowledge of reality. Love of beauty led naturally to love of the good, so that the harsh demands of Kant's Stoic duty were replaced by an emotional yearning to live morally – an inner drive, rather than duty imposed from without and performed without the desire to do the good.

2. Ancient and modern literature

Romanticism sought, then, to integrate the two opposing forces in Neoclassicism and Storm and Stress. In reuniting reason and feeling in philosophy,

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the Romantic was still, however, confronted on the aesthetic side by the same basic conflict, the conflict between ancient and modern literature. All the writers represented here were deeply interested in trying to grasp and articulate the distinction between ancient and modern literature, as expressive of the principles of art and of a theory of literature that could account for the value and aesthetic validity of modern literature in spite of its glaring divergence from the classical aesthetic. The concept of romantic irony first arose from the efforts to define the essentially modern in literature, but later came to be recognized as a principle essential to all art. Ludwig Tieck explained that 'Romantisch' refers not to a particular type (*Gattung*) of poetry: rather, 'Classic and romantic are not opposites, because poetry is everywhere the same essentially, whether called romantic or classical. Indeed all poetry is in itself romantic; in this sense there is nothing but romantic poetry' (Köpke, *Nachgelassene Schriften*, II, 237). Nevertheless, the word 'romantic' retained the historical reference from which it originated even after its significance was broadened to include not just modern but all great art. This ambivalence reflects more the development and articulation of the concept than any contradiction in the theory itself.

The word 'Romantisch', used to signify the distinguishing characteristic of modern literature, originated from a family of terms, including 'Roman' (meaning only very roughly 'novel' and including romance and related prose narratives), the adjective 'Roman' (meaning Roman civilization), 'Romanze' (referring to medieval romances and ballads), and 'romantic' (suggesting love, the sentimental, the exotic, and the fantastic). All these elements contributed to the acceptance of 'Romantisch' as the adjective used to describe the essentially modern. To identify any single element as the predominant source would seem to be reductive (but see Lovejoy (1916 and 1917), and Eichner's response (1956), both efforts to identify such a predominant source). Friedrich Schlegel was the most forward of the young writers of the circle of Romantics in expounding a theory of 'Romantische Poesie', and was probably catalysed into articulating his position by Friedrich Schiller's article 'Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung' in *Die Horen* of December 1795. Schlegel's reading of J. G. Herder would already have prepared him to receive this decisive influence from Schiller. Herder, as Jean Paul Richter of all the Romantics was most vividly aware, had, some twenty years earlier, expressed many of the ideas which were to become the starting points for romantic theory, scattering them throughout his innovative and influential writings on Shakespeare (the dramatist who was to be seen as the 'centre of romantic poetry': see especially 'Shakespeare' in *Von Deutscher Art und Kunst*), his work on the origins of modern poetry in the Middle Ages, and his discussions on the relation of ancient and modern literature. Herder explicitly identified the characteristically modern or post-classical genre as originating in the 'Mischung' of the Middle Ages, and as being itself a mixed genre, or 'Mischgedicht', as Friedrich Schlegel was later to name it (see *Critical Fragments*, 4). Herder identified the essentially modern genre as the *Roman* (using the term very broadly) or the *Abenteuer*, and characterized it as having a marvellous, all-encompassing content (*Sämtliche*

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Werke, ed. B. Suphan, 33 vols. (Berlin, 1877–1913), xviii, 59f., 107–9). Herder also identified Shakespeare's plays as the central examples of *Romane* and as the link between medieval and modern literature. He further anticipated Friedrich Schlegel's account of the essentially modern literary form when he insisted that the *Roman* had become more and more philosophical, that it was poetry in prose, and contained all genres and types of poetry while including criticism, philosophy, theory of art, history, and science. Goethe shared some of these ideas of Herder's; in his 'Aphorisms on Art and Art History' he emphasized the need for artists and critics to unite artistic and philosophic realms: 'if you would write, and certainly if you would dispute, about art today, you should at least have some inkling of the continuing achievements of philosophy in our time'. In the same group of aphorisms, Goethe maintained the need for modern art forms to be many-sided and miscellaneous, including both the 'highest' and the 'lowest', the former for the sake of seriousness, the latter for fun (but see headnote to Goethe for an account of his early hostility to Romanticism). In this he continues Herder's *Mischung* concept, and also expresses the romantic concept of the necessity for seriousness and play, tragedy and comedy, positive and negative to be united in art.

Roman, then, did not have a genre meaning, as, for example, 'novel' does; rather, it indicated a *tendency* in modern literature away from classical styles and toward prose of an intensely poetic type, encompassing a wide range of content and styles as well as genre, a *Mischgedicht*. As a tendency, the word *Roman* included not only *Romane* and *Novellen*, but also the plays of Shakespeare, medieval romances, and the writings of Cervantes, Dante and others. As Friedrich Schlegel explained in the 'Letter on the Novel' (in this volume), 'Romantic is not so much a literary genre as an element of poetry which may be more or less dominant or recessive, but never entirely absent . . . I postulate that all poetry should be Romantic and . . . I detest the novel as far as it wants to be a separate genre' (*Dialogue on Poetry*, 101 and below, p. 78). However, Goethe, in his letters and conversations with Schiller, insisted that the novel was an inferior form (to the lyric, drama, and verse-epic). He and Schiller stoutly defended the traditional genres in the face of romantic syncretism. Schlegel saw the tendency of modern art to be toward firstly a fusion of genres into an all-embracing art form; secondly a fusion of poetry and prose into a 'poetic prose', that is, a prose highly concentrated and compressed, a prose that also included passages of poetry; and finally a fusion of the separate realms of philosophy, art, religion, and criticism that would reveal their intrinsic interdependence. Jean Paul shared this view, regarding all genre classification with scepticism and demanding from the highest poetry a fusion of all literary forms. Only through such a fusion would each part find its richest, most adequate expression. The preoccupation with the *Roman* did not indicate a preference for prose over poetry; rather it indicated that the tendency of modern literature was away from 'pure' classical norms and genres, towards *Mischung*. The *Roman* was the poetic form in which 'all the faculties are in bloom at once' and which most

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aply represented the nature of genius; it was the ‘poetic encyclopedia, a poetic licence to use every poetic licence’ (Jean Paul, *School for Aesthetics*, 35, 180 and below, p. 167).

In the context of Lessing (whom the Schlegels and Jean Paul praised for his ironic style in spite of his classicism), Herder, and finally Schiller’s and Goethe’s renewal and development of earlier Neo-classical theories of art and criticism, under the influence of Winckelmann’s classical researches, and in relation to the philosophical developments of Kant, Schelling, and Fichte, the romantics brought about a transition in criticism that forms the basis of modern critical thought today. While Schiller, along with Goethe, was the impetus for freeing the romantics from an aesthetic of objectivity and the superiority of classical over modern literature, Kant’s *practical* philosophy (that is, an action can be permissible for me only if it is permissible for anyone *in my situation* – the last three words constitute the sense of relativism as applied to Kant) on which the *Critique of Practical Reason* was grounded, along with Herder’s aesthetic of historical relativism (expressed, for example, in his essay ‘Shakespeare’, in *Von Deutscher Art und Kunst*), had pointed the way for a revolution in criticism. A respect for the relativism of beauty was the analogue to Kant’s moral relativism and made it possible for the young romantics to embrace both ancient and modern types of art as good art, since each was representative of the different culture from which it emerged, and since art, according to the new philosophy, need not be judged by pure or absolute laws but rather by relative ones representing evolving conceptions of beauty and worth. Dialectical oppositions between perfection or completion and a striving or progression toward unattainable perfection came to represent the distinction between classical and modern art. Nevertheless, while relativism pointed the way toward a liberation from Neo-classical criticism, the new criticism tended to establish romantic irony as a principle expressive of the essentially aesthetic in *all* great art, though irony certainly began as the concept characteristic of post-classical literature as distinct from ancient art. The Aristotelian Neo-classical canon, then, was for the romantics simply false as characterizing the essential in art, whether Greek or modern; it only described the accidents of ancient art. Like Kant, romantic theorists achieved a balancing act between relativism and absolutism that reflected the awareness of a need to recognize a family resemblance amongst aesthetic objects without, however, postulating a shared essence and without losing sight of the limitations of cultural and intellectual perspective.

While the term *Romantisch* is closely related to Schiller’s *sentimentalisch* in that both represent the tendency in much modern or post-classical art towards the progressive and infinite (as distinct from the alleged perfection of classical art through limitation and cyclic rather than progressive movement), the difference between the two terms becomes immediately apparent when Schiller judges Shakespeare to be *naiv*, not *sentimentalisch*, and categorizes him with Homer; by contrast, all the Romantics included in this volume saw Shakespeare as the romantic poet *par excellence* and saw Homer initially as charac-

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teristically classical. In this central case the Romantics followed Herder's lead, and then gradually moved in the direction of establishing principles essential to *all* good art, while Schiller on the other hand sought to distinguish two types of good art, and Herder had been content with a historical relativism consistent with either approach. Similarly, in relation to contemporary writers, Schiller's and Schlegel's categories of the sentimental and the romantic did not overlap. Goethe, particularly his *Wilhelm Meister* novel, represented for Schiller the *naiv* type of artist. Friedrich Schlegel, on the other hand, repeatedly (even if inconsistently: see Eichner (1956), 1019, and Lovejoy (1916) for discussion of Schlegel's ambivalent attitude toward Goethe) extolled Goethe's art and particularly *Wilhelm Meister* as preeminent examples of romantic art. Indeed, Schlegel's review of the novel, 'On Goethe's *Meister*', constitutes the major early manifesto of romantic irony (see below, pp. 59–73).

Some of the major distinctions between the predominant tendencies in ancient and modern art emphasized by Schiller and the Romantics can be summarized as, first, the preponderance of the objective in ancient art, second, the subjective in modern art, third the pervasive interest in unifying form in classical as opposed to the interest in multifarious content in modern art – the one displaying a unity, permanence, naturalness, and perfection of form through limitation, the other revealing a variousness and all-encompassing content through its striving for the unattainable infinite. Modern art was extolled for its emphasis upon expressiveness and concern for impressions and ideas, rather than upon nature, external objects, and objectivity of representation generally. The Romantics were obsessed with nature, while rejecting the rational, objective view of nature common to enlightenment thinkers. The goal of modern art was the *interessant* instead of the 'beautiful'; it was didactic and philosophical, and, characteristically, while ancient art was largely based upon mythology, modern art was 'based entirely on a historical' or often real, autobiographical foundation, however fantastic, marvellous, grotesque, or fanciful its elaboration of this real. Furthermore, modern writers were said to portray individual human nature in its peculiar characteristics, only indirectly revealing the universal, thereby giving free play to originality and individual, mannered style.

Friedrich Schlegel was clearly dissatisfied with his own early acceptance of and with Schiller's (and Herder's) apparent acquiescence in a dualistic theory of two types of great art, in Schiller's terms the objective or 'naiv' and the subjective or 'sentimental'. Schlegel set himself to study Shakespeare as the model of the modern tendency in literature in order to be able to articulate the nature of that tendency, and to decide whether or not it might still reveal shared, fundamental aesthetic principles with the ancient, classical mode in spite of extreme differences evident at the surface level. Schlegel found in his study of Shakespeare that he shared the view of his famous brother August Wilhelm, namely, that Shakespeare's judgment and artistry were equal to his instinct and genius. The plays of Shakespeare were not mere instinctual

outpourings of an unreflective spirit, as the Storm and Stress encouraged us to believe, but were artistic constructs of an intensely observant and penetrating mind. In this the Schlegel brothers seem to give a hint as to one genuine meaning of Schiller's categorizing of Shakespeare with the 'objective' poets, for Shakespeare showed objective artistic intelligence and not just subjective outpouring of emotion. Yet, confusingly, Schiller further described these poets as 'naiv', implying lack of conscious artistry. 'Objective' and 'naiv' seem to have opposite meanings, but this apparent discrepancy may be a clue to how Schiller meant the term 'naiv' to be understood. A spontaneous detachment from subjective, personal, sentimental involvement in their art is probably a better description of what is meant by naive poets than if we imagine 'naive' to mean the outpourings of the poet, or his naive and primitive descriptions of the natural world – a genius unguided by the rudder of judgment, conscious reflection, or conscious artistry (if such a genius is even possible). Schiller himself was also deeply impressed by Shakespeare's consummate artistry, by his ability to select and abstract from the mass of detail offered by reality the most apt and intense particulars that imbue his language with the compression essential to poetry and his characters with the passion essential to art. It was his consummate artistry and objective, detached passion or imaginative intensity in representing nature and human nature that made Shakespeare a Homeric poet in Schiller's eyes.

Friedrich Schlegel adopted Schiller's insight into Shakespeare's objectivity, universality and detachment from sentimental emotionalism, which the Storm and Stress movement had overlooked in favour of the notion of a 'raw, unfettered genius'. But Schlegel then overcame the dualism of Schiller's aesthetic theory by not only admitting this shared quality with Homer and perhaps with early Greek tragedy. Schlegel also claimed that Schiller's error lay in not recognizing the conclusion that must be drawn from Shakespeare's affinity to the Greeks – namely, that there are not two types of great art, but only one, and that not only Shakespeare and Goethe amongst the moderns were close to the Greeks when the deeper principles of their art were discovered. All truly great modern art is close to Greek literature in its essential aesthetic principles. 'Naiv und sentimental' was rejected as a misleading and inadequate dichotomy, however useful it had been initially in bridging the gap between the ancient and the modern. Schlegel announced Shakespeare's plays as the perfect artistic embodiment of both so-called 'objective' and 'subjective' art. Shakespeare's art was, as was Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, at once representative of the universal and of the particular, of objective and subjective, of unified form and multifarious content, of objective nature and subjective consciousness, of detachment and of passion. The difference between disparate literary forms, could not be one of fundamental aesthetic principle, as Schiller seemed at least to suggest by his dualism, but merely a matter of emphasis, or of degree rather than kind. Friedrich Schlegel then transformed the original meaning of his term 'romantic' to signify the characteristic synthesis of these pairs of opposites

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common to all great art, where before ‘romantic’ had been used merely as a historical term in relation to modern literature.

3. The challenge to unity, authority, and decorum

The effort to articulate the nature of the distinction between ancient and modern literature brought into question the notion of perfection, completeness, unity, and the work of art as a self-contained whole or discrete entity (a question discussed more fully below, where unity is related to the individual’s self-cultivation through art). But related assumptions about individual authorship and originality were also questioned, covertly by means of the fragment form, used by several of the Romantics for their first public statements about the new literature and criticism, and which by its nature challenged conventional, technical unity. Romantic collections of fragments of mixed and unidentified authorship also challenged the established notions of authorship, influence and originality as a matter of individuality alone. Fragments represented a self-conscious expression through choice of genre that all genuinely romantic literature must be fragmentary and incomplete, imperfect because it strives for an unattainable infinity. Jean Paul defended the fragment form for the additional reason that ‘all life is but a fragment anyway’ (*Sämtliche Werke*, 1:2:5). Fragments constituted not only a rejection of the apparent unity and perfection of the closed, consistent system or work of art in favour of a form which could include multiple authorship as a truer expression of the nature of authorship (because authorship involves not merely the individual but previous poets and the literary tradition, as well as contemporary poets as co-authors). Self-contradiction and paradox were also seen as necessary elements of art expressible through the fragment genre, for both were pervasive characteristics of human experience and psychology, and thus necessary to an adequate representation of it.

The fragment form as conceived by the Romantics also represented the nature of language and communication as indirect, imperfect, and dialectical, that is, emphasizing the process of response as an integral, completing part of a necessarily fragmentary formulation. Thus the problem of response and, derivatively, of incomprehensibility became a focus for several of these issues. Friedrich Schlegel, Jean Paul, and Novalis addressed themselves to these aspects of communication, openly rejecting easy, immediate comprehension as unproductive and even delusive. They embraced carefully designed models of incomprehension as a way of stimulating readers, by means of fragmentary and oracular utterances, to grapple with thinking itself and with language as a vehicle of thought. Such a style discouraged reading merely mechanically over linguistic formulations whose significance eludes actual reflection, due to a surface sense that is too readily accessible to provoke active thinking, while it appears to offer determined solutions. Jean Paul explained: ‘Ultimately it is

best to envelop everything great in dark words so that it cannot be parroted, but only guessed at by those who will not destroy but explore it further . . . Like children, those who are capable will learn through the incomprehensible how to understand' (E. Berend, *Jean Paul's Aesthetik* (Berlin, 1909), 86). Goethe, in a moment of perhaps only apparent agreement, similarly remarked, 'The obscurity of certain maxims is only relative. Not everything which is illuminating to the man who practises it can be made clear to the listener' ('Aphorisms', see below, p. 226). Closely related to this method of stimulating the reader to imaginative labours of thought was the concept of 'preparatives' and 'propadeutics'. In spite of the emphasis by Herder and the Romantics upon the *Roman* as the 'all-encompassing tendency' of modern art, and as the 'poetry in prose' of post-classical literature, the fragment form was important as the 'preparative style' for the development of the genuine *Roman* to come. Indeed, art itself was seen as the essential preparative to raising the mind from unimaginative to creative apprehension of life and reality. Preparatives were necessary to prepare the mind for imaginative response. Jean Paul especially emphasized the importance of 'preparatives', of prefaces and 'delaying techniques'. His *School for Aesthetics* he saw as a prefatory work, just as Novalis saw the fragment form as prefatory to the genuine novel. In his own fiction, as in the *School*, Jean Paul made extensive use of delays – of interruptions, prefaces to prefaces, and extra pages, in order to loosen narrative convention and raise the reader to a pitch of imaginative stimulation, where he could awaken to the realization that the preparative or the delay and the goal, if understood rightly, are identical. This identity of delay and goal and the concept of the preparative are also emphasized by Karl Solger (see below for discussion). The fragment by its very fragmentariness and simultaneous self-contained unity expressed the paradoxical identity of the preparative as also the goal, or the thinking itself as not only the means but the end of thought. A thought posing as a solution and authorized end to thinking about something was seen as a delusory expectation and a false goal. Situations of apparent (surface) incomprehension were designed to reveal the genuine goal to be reflection itself, arrived at through the very situations supposed to be preparatives only.

4. Allegory, symbol, and fragment

The distinction between allegory and symbol made clear by such theorists as Schelling and Karl Solger, and later by Friedrich Schlegel further elaborated the purpose of this calculated and deliberate 'incomprehension' typical of the fragment as a dense and compressed form. Other theorists of the period such as G. H. Schubert and Creuzer followed this work up and explored in detail the distinction and its relation to art and dream-work. The distinction was based largely on Schelling's insistence that the symbol is not merely a sign for something, as allegory is (see *Philosophie der Kunst*, part II, in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol.

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v (Stuttgart, 1859), 354f.). Rather, the symbol both signifies and also vitally participates in the idea which it represents. Goethe made a similar distinction between the allegory – which involves the *concept* fully captured and complete in the image that expresses it – and the symbol, which involves not a concept but an idea, which can never be fully captured or expressed completely in the image that seeks to represent it (see ‘Aphorisms’ below, p. 229, for a brief exposition). Schelling insisted moreover that the value of all mythology is that it is not allegorical, but symbolic (which accounts, for example, for the power of Greek mythology as it occurs in ancient art). The meaning of the symbol verges on the mystical because it cannot be expressed discursively or conclusively and because it eludes any definite linguistic formulation. Its content, incommensurate with its expression taken discursively, stimulates the hearer to active contemplation and energetic participation in the symbolic work. The value of the symbol over allegory then is in its evocative power; in its linguistic expression it is nevertheless a true part or a living fragment of the experience or idea it seeks to represent.

The romantics viewed their collections of fragments as examples of the symbolic mode, on account of the genre itself, but also in many particular cases through the actual content of the fragments, some being more successful examples than others. The fragments were designed not to determine solutions or to give final results, even indirectly, as the allegory does. Nor are they to be conceived as ‘signs’, which in themselves are not significant but arbitrary. Rather, by portraying the author’s mind in an active grappling which remains uncompleted and indecisive, they stir the reader to active thinking. As Jean Paul insisted, the process of the artist’s labour to decipher the symbolic language of nature must be repeated as the reader deciphers the ‘hieroglyphs’ of the aesthetic object. Goethe, in spite of his anti-romantic stance, made a similar point, in the ‘Aphorisms’, when he insisted that the spectator could derive aesthetic pleasure from even a moderate talent, precisely because the work of art reveals a mind at work in the presence of nature. To the Romantics, a work of art is necessarily incomplete just as nature is, for both communicate through a language of symbols. Novalis and Jean Paul emphasized that poetry was a fragmentary, symbolic, but imperfect representation of the secret, the hidden, and the mystical in human life. Goethe too, in a rare moment of apparent agreement, emphasized the unattainability of symbolic meaning and described beauty as inner necessity concealed from view but nevertheless discoverable in the work of art (‘Aphorisms’, p. 229). Hegel, that master of such dialectical writing, was impressed by Solger’s theoretical contribution to the distinction between allegory and symbol (included in this volume), a distinction that also fascinated Goethe, but other Romantics used the fragment form as a practical contribution to the distinction. Novalis well described this symbolic significance of the fragment form; each fragment, he said, was meant to be for the reader a ‘purposeful exercise of the power of thinking’, and Jean Paul insisted that the fragment was designed to leave room for the imagination