THE ROMANTIC ERA
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1. General Studies

The debate about the modernity and influence of German Romanticism continues, but it has now entered more decisively into the English-speaking world, and specifically the realm of British scholarship, than has hitherto been the case, aiming at a non-Germanist as well as a Germanist readership. For instance, most of the contributors to Cunningham, Romanticism, are historians of science rather than of literature, but their grasp of the literary, philosophical, cultural, and political context of the period is impressive. Although reference is made to France, Britain, and America, the volume is heavily weighted towards Germany as the origin of most of the seminal ideas of the period. Germanists may baulk at the inclusion of Goethe and Schiller under the rubric of Romanticism — although in a European context this is at least understandable — but the book, the first in English on the topic since 1941, does demonstrate the proximity of Goethe’s ideas, in particular, to those of the Romantics. The aim is to give a systematic coverage of a field which, dismissed until quite recently, has over the past 15 years seen a revival of scholarly interest and a series of reassessments (see YWMLS, 47:738; 50:819–20). There is now a widespread recognition of the importance of particular Romantic contributions to the natural sciences and of the major role that Romantic approaches to the study of nature played in the so-called ‘Second Scientific Revolution’. The introduction, ‘The age of reflexion’ (pp. 1–9), notes the centrality of self-understanding to the major critical movements of the period, and discusses at some length Novalis’s Die Lehrlinge zu Sais. Further relevant contributions are: D. Knight, ‘Romanticism and the sciences’ (13–24); D. von Engelhardt, ‘Historical consciousness in the German Romantic “Naturforschung”’ (55–68), which stresses that the interrelationship of natural, scientific, and cultural development in the period has something to teach us today; F. Gregory, ‘Theology and the sciences in the German Romantic period’ (69–81), on Schleiermacher and Schelling; S. Schaffer, ‘Genius in Romantic natural philosophy’ (82–98), a wide-ranging essay including discussion of Schelling, Novalis, J. W. Ritter, and others; N. Tsouyopoulos, ‘Doctors contra clysters and feudalism: the consequences of a Romantic revolution’ (101–18); E. Richards, ‘Metaphorical mystifications: the Romantic gestation of nature in British biology’ (130–43), which discusses the
influence of German Romantic 'Naturphilosophie', particularly Lorenz Oken, on pre-Darwinian British biology and palaeontology; P. F. Rehbock, 'Transcendental anatomy' (146–60), which traces the German beginnings of this idea, and again particularly the role of Oken; L. S. Jacyna, 'Romantic thought and the origins of cell theory' (161–68); H. A. M. Snelders, 'Oersted's discovery of electromagnetism' (228–40), documenting the influence of Ritter, Fichte, the Schlegel brothers, and Franz von Baader on the Danish physicist and chemist; and N. A. Rupke, 'Caves, fossils and the history of the earth' (241–59), an illuminating piece which places Novalis's literary work, the paintings of C. D. Friedrich, and the writings of Oken and G. H. von Schubert in the context of contemporary interest in geology and palaeontology.

The Origins of Modern Critical Thought. German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism from Lessing to Hegel, ed. David Simpson, CUP, 1989, 458 pp., reprints selections from the three-volume set of German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism published by CUP in 1984 and 1985 (see WWMLS, 46:762), with a new introduction by S. The change to the original title reflects the stress on the importance of the texts included here for an understanding not only of the Romantic period itself, but also of the foundational concepts and arguments of modern literary theory. Selections from A. W. and F. Schlegel, Fichte, Novalis, Jean Paul, Schelling, and Solger are given in English translation. Andrew Bowie, Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche, MUP, 284 pp., likewise seeks to interpret the writings of German thinkers of the period in order to assess their relevance to 20th-c. theory. There are chapters on German Idealism and early German Romanticism, including 'new mythology'; on Fichte, Hölderlin, and Novalis; and separate chapters on Schelling and Schleiermacher. Particular attention is devoted to music; the views of E. T. A. Hoffmann are discussed in this context. A major influence on B.'s thinking has been Manfred Frank, whose doctoral thesis, Das Problem 'Zeit' in der deutschen Romantik. Zeitbewußtsein und Bewußtsein von Zeitlichkeit in der Frühromantischen Philosophie und in Tiecks Dichtung, 2nd rev. edn, Paderborn, Schöningh, 506 pp., which first appeared in 1972, has been reissued with a 'Nachwort' by F. outlining his reasons for republishing it and the ways in which his thinking on the matters examined in it has developed since. In particular, he discusses the reception of Tieck at much greater length than in the original thesis, praising him as an innovator, a seminal figure, who put into practice what his more speculatively inclined friends — F. Schlegel, Solger, Novalis — merely talked about. The modernity of Romanticism, F. notes, a radical idea in 1972, is now gradually being accepted.