

Andreas Hjort Møller
(Aarhus University)

Bards, Ballads, and Barbarians in Jena. Germanic Medievalism in the Early Works of Friedrich Schlegel

Abstract

The early German romantics were highly interested in medieval literature, primarily poetry written in romance vernaculars such as Dante's *Inferno*. Only later did the German romantics turn to northern medieval literature for inspiration. In the case of German romantic Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), the usual opinion is that he would not have cared for northern (primarily Scandinavian) medieval literature and art before his late phase, beginning around 1802. In this phase, his literary criticism stood under the sway of his conservative politics. This article examines the reception of Germanic medieval literature in Schlegel's early essays, reviews and fragments, in order to discuss the role of Germanic medieval literature in his work and the extent to which it is connected with his poetics and politics.

Keywords

Friedrich Schlegel, Medievalism, romanticism, Germanic and romance medieval literature, Antiquarianism.

Traditional histories of literary criticism inform us that Friedrich Schlegel began his literary career as a classicist historian of Greek and Roman Literature (1794–1796), then went on to study romance literature (1797–1801) and only later, during his time in Paris around 1802, gained an interest in Germanic medieval literature that would persist for the remainder of his life.¹ Schlegel's interest in the medieval is commonly taken to have emerged from his so-called conservative or nationalist turn that culminated in Schlegel's conversion to Catholicism in the Cologne Cathedral in 1808 and his participation in the Congress of Vienna as a

1 For instance, Koziellek dates the beginning of the interest of the early German romantics to Ludwig Tieck and the year 1801, even though he notes that Tieck and Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder paid attention to Old German literature in the 1790s, *Gerard Koziellek: Mittelalterrezeption. Texte zur Aufnahme altdeutscher Literatur in der Romantik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1977), 13. This anthology of medievalist romantic critical texts spans the years 1803 to 1831. Not to be forgotten: The novel fragment *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, written by Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1772–1801) has a Germanic medieval setting.

Metternichian agent.² It is interesting to note, however, that the romantic poetics of Schlegel seems to recall that of the earlier generation of Sturm und Drang poets and critics Gottfried August Bürger (1747–1794), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), and Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), as well as the British mid-eighteenth-century antiquarians who inspired them. Some of the central ideas of the Jena romantics are very much like those of the earlier generations of critics, who were mainly interested in Germanic literature. Indeed among these earlier critics were several members of Schlegel's immediate family. In what way did Germanic medievalism, i. e. reinventions of a Germanic past and the development of medieval scholarship, contribute to the genesis of romantic literary criticism?

I will start answering these questions by 1) laying out the influence of literary historian and translator Herder and the writer of popular ballads Bürger, the two most important medievalist members of the Sturm und Drang movement. 2) I will move on to the members of the Copenhagen German Circle. 3) I will then examine the young Schlegel's occupation with early eighteenth-century English antiquarianism. This approach is in reverse chronological order, in that Herder constitutes the link between Jena and Copenhagen, and in that the chief inspirational source for the 'Nordic Renaissance' in Copenhagen 1750–1770 was British antiquarianism. 4) Based on these influences, I will argue for the fact that Schlegel's northern medievalism was to some extent present in his early work and that his interest in the Germanic past was not solely political. 5) I will give a conclusion.

1. Connections between Early Jena Romanticism and Sturm und Drang

In his position as a shaper of Jena romanticism, Herder was significantly influenced by the British antiquarians Richard Hurd (1720–1808), Bishop Thomas Percy (1729–1811) and Thomas Warton the younger (1728–1790) and the critical epistles of the German-born Danish citizen and critic Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg (1737–1823).³ Hans Eichner (1921–2009) revealed the profound-

2 Manuel Bauer discusses Schlegel's late Germanic-oriented criticism as a conversion to themes 'die nationalideologisch fruchtbar gemacht werden können' [that could be turned into a national ideology], Manuel Bauer, 'Konversionen in Friedrich Schlegels später Literaturkritik, Philologie und Hermeneutik', in *Figuren der Konversion. Friedrich Schlegels Übertritt zum Katholizismus im Kontext*, ed. Winfried Eckel and Nikolaus Wegmann, (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2014): 160–179, quotation on p. 167.

3 A. Gillies: 'Herder's Preparation of Romantic Theory', *The Modern Language Review* 39.3 (1944): 252–261, quotation on p. 252. doi: 10.2307/3717862.

ness of this influence in a reading of Schlegel's review of Herder's *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität* [Letters for the advancement of humanity] (1793).⁴ Schlegel published this review in the journal *Deutschland* in 1796, well before the famous fragments. There are striking similarities between Herder's poetics of the novel and Schlegel's theory of romantic poetry:

Die ... *Fragmente über den Geist und Wert der modernen Poesie* sind nicht etwa vollendete Bruchstücke eines unvollendeten Ganzen: sie sind auch im einzelnen *fragmentarisch*, wie die nachlässiger geschriebenen Briefe auch des geistvollsten Schriftstellers wohl sein können, und sein dürfen.

[The ... *Fragments on the Spirit and Worth of Modern Poetry* are not just complete shards of an uncompleted whole: They are also each one of them *fragmentary*, in the same way that the more carelessly written letters of a most brilliant writer can sometimes be and indeed may be].⁵

Schlegel's review consists of a series of such Herderian quotes followed by short questions or remarks. After this sentence, the young reviewer ponders the value of German medieval poetry as compared to that of the Greeks:

Alle deutsche Nationen, die das Römische Reich unter sich teilten, kamen mit Heldenliedern von Taten ihrer Vorfahren in die ihnen neue Welt....

[All German nations won over by the Roman Empire came into a world new to them with heroic songs about the deeds of their ancestors....]⁶

Schlegel then asks the question:

Hat aber die Abenteuerlichkeit des Mittelalters nicht einen ganz eignen, von der Lebensart und Denkart der Griechen im heroischen Zeitalter durchaus verschiedenen Charakter?

[Does the chivalry of the Middle Ages not possess its very own quality, completely different from the lifestyle and thought of the Greeks of the Heroic Age?]⁷

Schlegel does not go beyond reiterating the main points of Herder's book, focusing on his positive view on the Middle Ages. One example is his defence of the Middle Ages when compared to the Renaissance: '[i]n jenen Zeiten, welche wir *barbarische* nennen, vor der sogenannten Erweckung der Alten, gab es einen

4 Hans Eichner, 'Friedrich Schlegel's Theory of Romantic Poetry', *PMLA*, 71.5 (December 1956): 1018–1041, quotation on p. 1019. doi: 10.2307/460525.

5 I refer to the unfinished multivolume edition Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1958–), henceforth abbreviated as KFSA, followed by a volume number. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. For the quote, see KFSA 2, 47.

6 KFSA 2, 50.

7 Ibid.

Dante’, [in yonder times, which we call *barbaric*, before the so-called awakening of the Greeks and Romans, there was *Dante*].⁸

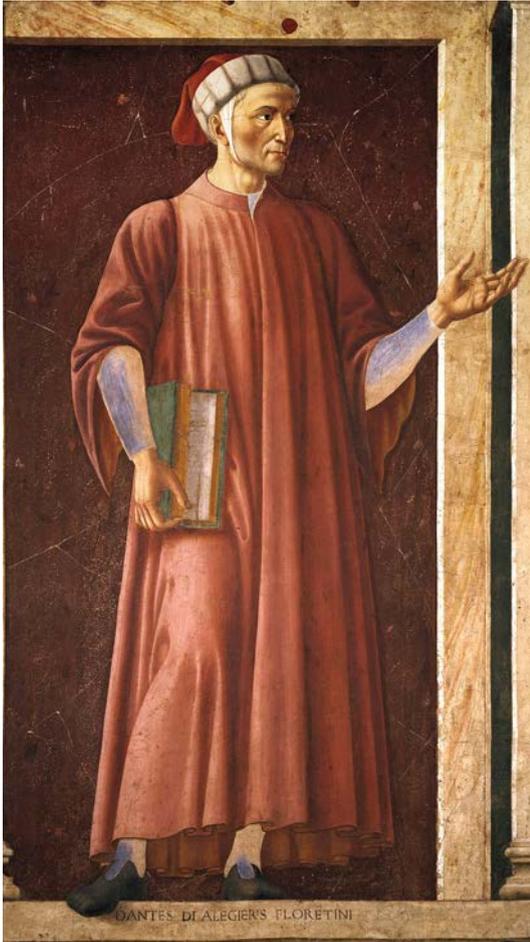


Fig. 1: Andrea del Castagno, Dante, c. 1450, Fresco, Uffizzi, Florence.

Herder remains an idol for Friedrich Schlegel, who also mentions him favourably in *Über das Studium der Griechischen Poesie* [On the study of Greek poetry] from 1797.⁹ In 1807, he had reviewed Johann Gustav Gottlieb Büsching and Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen’s newly published anthology, *Sammlung Deutscher Volkslieder mit einem Anhang Flamländischer u. Französischer, nebst Melodien* [Collection of German folk songs with an appendix in Flemish

⁸ Ibid., 52.

⁹ See KFSa 1, 364.

and French, along with melodies]. In this review, he paid homage to Herder's translation of European ballads, which he thought 'aus den mit Schmück und Zierat überladenen Kunstgärten der gelehrten oder vornehmen modischen Dichtkunst in das Freie zurückführte' [brought back the fashionable poetry of the learned or posh into freedom, out of the artificial gardens cluttered with dazzling ornament].¹⁰ The ballad was the core genre for Herder and Goethe's generation, and a particularly famous practitioner was Bürger. From early on, Schlegel took a critical stance towards Bürger's reinvention of the *Volkslied* [ballad]. He would never really deviate from this stance, even though he softened his view on the ballads so popular in his time. We find his first classicist attack on the ballad in his agreement with Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), who published an attack on Bürger, in four parts, in the January 1791 editions of the *Jena Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* [Jena general literary review]. Schiller condemned Bürger's remark about a poem's popularity being a sure sign of its perfection:

Dieser Satz ['Popularität eines poetischen Werkes ist das Siegel seiner Vollkommenheit', AHM] ist durchaus Eins mit diesem: Was den Vortrefflichen gefällt, ist gut; was allen ohne Unterschied gefällt, ist es noch mehr.

[This sentence ['The popularity of a poetic work is the seal of its perfection', AHM] is very much the same as this: What pleases the admirable, is good, what pleases everyone with no exception is even better.]¹¹

In a letter to his brother, dated 11 December 1793, Schlegel asserts that Bürger's style belongs to the simple middle, 'gemein' [crude], yet admits that 'B.[ürger] in einigen seiner Romanzen Originale-Höchstes erreicht habe, aber nicht daß ihm dieß auf den Namen eines großen Dichters gültigen Anspruch giebt' ['B.[ürger] had achieved the sublime in some of his ballads, but not that this lends credence to his claiming to be a great poet'].¹² He echoes Schiller's opinion: 'ich begreife nicht, was Du Schönes oder Großes in seinen Werken findest' [I cannot fathom what you find so beautiful or great in his works].¹³ This statement stands in stark contrast to the position of his elder brother, who had a deep veneration for Bürger, whom he once in a letter called 'des heiligen deutschen Reichs erwählten

10 KFSa 3, 103.

11 For the first quote see Gottfried August Bürger, 'Gedichte. Erster Theil. Vorrede', *Dr. Rudolf Brandmeyer, Universität Duisburg-Essen Fakultät für Geisteswissenschaften / Germanistik; Projekt Lyriktheorie*, https://www.uni-due.de/lyriktheorie/texte/1789_buerger.html#popula (retrieved on 4 August 2019). For the second quote see Friedrich Schiller, '[Rezension] Göttingen, b. Dieterich: Gedichte von G. A. Bürger. Mit Kupfern. 1789. Erster Theil. 272 S. Zweyter Theil. 296 S. 8. (1 Rthlr. 16 gr.)', *Dr. Rudolf Brandmeyer, Universität Duisburg-Essen Fakultät für Geisteswissenschaften / Germanistik; Projekt Lyriktheorie*, https://www.uni-due.de/lyriktheorie/texte/1791_schiller.html (retrieved on 4 August 2019).

12 KFSa 23, 165 (letter no. 82, 11 December 1793).

13 KFSa 21, 155 (letter no. 77, 13 November 1793).

Volkspoëten, allzeit Mehrer des guten Geschmacks etc. etc.’ [the favourite people’s poet of the Holy German Empire, perennial augments of good taste etc. etc.]¹⁴ Friedrich then turns to the subject of the English antiquarian Bishop Thomas Percy (1729–1811):

Ich gestehe Dir, daß die Griechen und Göthe mir volksmäßig genug sind, und daß die *Volkspoesie* des Percy u.s.w. für mich – zur gelehrten Litteratur gehört, bis auf äusserst wenige Ausnahmen.

[I admit that the Greeks and Goethe are folkish enough for me and that Percy’s folk poetry etc. – for me at least – falls into the category of academic literature, with very few exceptions].¹⁵

This is a reference to Percy’s ballad collection *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), which inspired the romantics’ obsession with folk ballads. Schlegel utters a critique very similar indeed in a review of a selection of lyrical ballads in Schiller’s journal *Musen Almanach für das Jahr 1796* [Almanack of the muses for the year 1796]. He finds some of Herder’s romance-inspired ballads worth reading, but notes their overall imperfection. Ludwig Gotthard Kosegarten’s (1758–1818) ballad *Schön Sidselil und Ritter Ingild. Nach dem Altdänischen* [Beautiful Sidselil and the knight Ingild. From old-Danish] displays the same flaw: ‘*Sidselil* von Kosegarten könnte rührend sein, wenn es von einigen widerlichen Zügen gereinigt, und weicher gehalten wäre’, [*Sidselil* by Kosegarten could be moving, if it were cleansed of some abhorrent characteristics and kept in a softer tone].¹⁶

We find Schlegel’s lengthiest pondering on the ballad in his 1808 review of Johann Friedrich Cotta’s Goethe edition *Goethes Werke* of 1806. In this case, he seems to be fond of the genre, as he writes: ‘Lieder wie diese sind es vorzüglich, die ... im lebendigen Munde des Gesanges als ein Eigentum des gesamten Volks die Jahrhunderte überdauern mögen’ [it is primarily ballads such as these ... that endure for centuries in the vibrant oral song, as a relic of the whole people].¹⁷ The doubts he had concerning Bürger are still present, yet he praises him ‘trotz der Einseitigkeit seines Geschmacks, und der Übertriebenheit seiner Behandlungsart’ [despite the bias of his taste and the exaggeration of his style], for his ‘große unleugbare Verdienste um das Volkslied, dessen Tiefe zu erforschen er redlich bestrebt war’ [great indisputable merits concerning the ballad, the depths of which he rightly strove to scrutinise].¹⁸ In the review of Büsching and

14 August Wilhelm Schlegel, ‘August Wilhelm Schlegel an Gottfried August Bürger’, *Digitale Edition der Korrespondenz August Wilhelm Schlegels [Version-07-19]*, <http://august-wilhelm-schlegel.de/briefedigital/letters/view/494?left=text&right=druck> (retrieved on 4 August 2019).

15 KFSa 23, 165 (letter no. 82, 11 December 1793).

16 KFSa 2, 4.

17 KFSa 3, 115.

18 *Ibid.*, 116.

Hagen's collection of ballads from 1807, he repeats the critique, stating the plea: 'wenn nur nicht so manches Schlechte mit aufgenommen, so manches Eigene und Fremdartige eingemischt wäre' [would that not so much bad poetry be incorporated, so much peculiar and alien intertwined].¹⁹ The primary error of the collected ballads is 'gesuchte ... Seltsamkeit' [artificial oddity] and that 'man das Rohe und Gemeine ... mit dem Volksmäßigen verwechselt' [one mistakes the crude and ordinary ... for the folkish].²⁰ Having said that, Schlegel proceeds to lampoon the popularity of the bad ballads:

... es vergeht wohl kein blauer Montag, an dem nicht in größern und kleinern Städten des ehemaligen heil. römischen Reichs zusammengerechnet einige hundert solche Lieder gedichtet werden. Und sollte dies alles noch nicht zureichen, so könnten wir einen leichten und unfehlbaren Handgriff angeben, wo es an Volksliedern, die man sammeln könnte, gebrechen sollte, dergleichen selbst in beliebiger Mengen *zu machen*: Man nehme das erste beste Gedicht von *Gellert* oder *Hagedorn*, und lasse es von einem Kinde von vier oder fünf Jahren auswendig lernen; es wird gewiß an romantischen Verwechslungen und Verstümmlungen nicht fehlen, und man darf dieses Verfahren nur etwa drei- bis viermal wiederholen, so wird man zu seinem Erstaunen statt des ehrlichen alten Gedichts, aus dem goldenen Zeitalter, ein vortreffliches Volkslied nach dem neuesten Geschmack vor sich sehen.

[... there does not pass a single Monday, on which in total some hundred such ballads would be written, in the big and small towns of the former Holy Roman Empire. As if this was not enough, we could show you an easy and infallible means of *making* as many as you like, if collecting them should fail: One takes any poem of *Gellert* or *Hagedorn* and gives it to a child of four or five years to memorise. Surely, there will be no lack of romantic confusions and mutilations, and one need only repeat this three or four times, and you will to your surprise see before you a perfect ballad, in the newest fashion, instead of the honest old poem from the Golden Age.]²¹

In this passage, the first and foremost proponent of romantic fragmentation and irony criticises 'romantic confusion' and the simplicity and popularity of the ballads. In Schlegel's theory of universal romantic poetry, 'Verwechslung' [confusion] and 'Verstümmlung' [mutilation] exemplify a negative chaos, in which the romantic confusion is not intellectually pleasing. In the classicist text *Über das Studium der Griechischen Poesie*, he compared the well-liked chivalric romances of the medieval and baroque periods, i. e. 'die geistlose Monotonie der barbarischen Chevalerie' [the trivial monotony of barbaric chivalry] with the truer heroism of Greek epic poetry, using such terms as whole, unity, and mass.²² In

19 KFSa 3, 103.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid, 107.

22 KFSa 1, 280. The passage on unity in chaos is extensive, see KFSa 1, 280-281.

the same text, we find a second instance, where Schlegel dismisses modern Gothic literature as tantamount to cheap consumer goods:

Wie in einem ästhetischen Kramladen steht hier Volkspoesie und Bontonpoesie beisammen, und selbst der Metaphysiker sucht sein eignes Sortiment nicht vergebens; Nordische oder Christliche Epopöen für die Freunde des Nordens und des Christentums; Geistergeschichten für die Liebhaber mystischer Gräßlichkeiten, und Irokesische oder Kannibalische Oden für die Liebhaber der Menschenfresserei; Griechisches Kostüm für antike Seelen und Rittergedichte für heroische Zungen; ja sogar Nationalpoesie für die Dilettanten der Deutschetit!

[Here one finds – as if one were in a general store of aesthetics – folk poetry and courtly poetry next to each other. Even the metaphysician can find there his own assortment. There are Nordic or Christian epopees for the admirers of the north and Christianity; ghost stories for the lovers of mystical horrors, Iroquoian or cannibalistic odes for the lovers of cannibalism; Greek costume for antique souls; knightly poems for heroic tongues; and even national poetry for the dilettantes of Germanness!]²³

The ‘general store of aesthetics’ is obviously not a place of true art, and the ‘assortment’ no list of great works. As Asko Nivala points out, the ‘epopees’ might refer to Ossian.²⁴ The ‘ghost stories’ might in the same manner be a reference to Bürger’s ballads, which Schlegel associated with popular literature and mass entertainment. To Schlegel, Bürger’s poetry is a paradox: On the one hand, it exemplifies popular mediocrity at its worst. On the other hand, it offers a return to simple, folkish literature. This paradox is a general characteristic of the romantic movement in Jena: the romantics were an elitist group of academics who, in academic aphorisms and essays written for the learned, praised romantic literature as ‘kunstlos’ [artless, naïve], i.e. not necessarily following classicist poetics.²⁵ In the *Athenaeum*, Schlegel characterises the ballad as a romantic genre par excellence. He muses on the ‘Romanze’ [ballad], acknowledging its nature as ‘unendlich bizarr’ [infinitely bizarre] as well as confusing in a positive way.²⁶ His prime example of such a ballad is Goethe’s *Braut von Korinth* [The bride of Corinth] published in Schiller’s *Musenalmanach* in 1798. This is a ballad that depicts a female specimen of the vampiric undead and thereby epitomises the type of ghostly ballads that Schlegel denounced in the case of Bürger. He had read Bürger as early as 1793 as a young classicist, but reading Goethe’s ballad in 1798 must have been a different experience, because Goethe, a supporter of the Jena romantics, was not in their eyes connected with vulgarity and entertainment

23 KFSa 1, 222–223. In the English translation, I quote Stuart Barnett’s English translation from Asko Nivala, *The Romantic Idea of the Golden Age in Friedrich Schlegel’s Philosophy of History* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 132, doi: 10.4324/9781315206523.

24 Ibid.

25 KFSa 2, 182, fragment 116.

26 KFSa 2, 250, fragment 429.

literature. Instead, Goethe represented the court at Weimar as well as the composition of certain classicist genres, such as tragedy.

2. Connections between Jena and Copenhagen: Friedrich Schlegel and the Copenhagen German Circle

Copenhagen was with its fellow academy town Sorø a literary centre in the years 1750 to 1770, not at all unlike Weimar and Jena, the seat of academia in the small duchy of Sachsen-Weimar. During these years, the German-born prime minister of Denmark, Count Johann Hartwig Ernst von Bernstorff (1712–1772) invited a number of prominent foreign academics and poets to entertain the Danish King Frederik V. Among these royal invitees were the German poet laureate Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, Gerstenberg, and Swiss historian and translator Paul Henri Mallet (1730–1807). On the periphery of this cultural hub were members of the Schlegel family, namely three brothers, the playwright Johann Elias Schlegel (1719–1749), the historian Johann Heinrich Schlegel (1726–1780) and Johann Adolf Schlegel (1721–1793), the father of Friedrich and August Wilhelm. This circle of friends and associates popularised medieval Germanic literature for a large European readership. Johann Elias Schlegel found inspiration in Germanic myth and the historiography of the North in tragic plays such as *Hermann* (1743) and *Canut* (1746), the latter of which was influential in German as well as Danish literature.²⁷ He thereby laid the foundation of the romantic preference for Northern mythology over Greco-Roman mythology. Mallet translated parts of the Icelandic *Poetic Edda* into French and gained huge success with his bestselling *Monuments de la mythologie et de la poesie des Celtes, et particulièrement des anciens Scandinaves* [Monuments of the mythology and poetry of the Celts, and particularly of the ancient Scandinavians] (1756), which most people today know from Percy's translation *Northern Antiquities* (1770), into which it is incorporated. In addition, Gerstenberg, inspired by British antiquarians, wrote extensively about the Danish ballad tradition, thereby drawing Herder's attention to Nordic medieval poetry.

Strangely, Mallet seems not to appear anywhere in the critical edition of Schlegel's work. Schlegel also largely ignores his uncle Johann Elias Schlegel, who died as a relatively young man in 1749. In a letter dating from 10 March 1796 to Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813), a friend of his father's and a famous Shakespearian translator and poet in his own right, the young critic denounces

27 See my article 'Gravhøjen åbnes. Fra rokoko-middelalderisme i Johann Elias Schlegels *Canut til vikinge-romantik i Johannes Ewalds Rolf Krage*', *Passage: tidsskrift for litteratur og kritik* 81 (2019): 121–135.

the works of his father and uncle as ‘das Wenige, was er und sein Bruder Elias zur Zeit der Morgenröthe der Deutschen Kunst als *Schriftsteller* gethan hat’ [the little which he and his brother Elias had accomplished as *writers* during the dawn of German art].²⁸ However, Schlegel praises his uncle in the 1811 review of literary historian Wilhelm Körte’s (1766–1846) biography of Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim (1719–1803). He mentions Johann Elias in connection with Herder, Lessing, Klopstock, and the rebirth of German literature during the Late Enlightenment, and does not forget to lament his premature death.²⁹

Gerstenberg does not figure prominently in Schlegel’s published fragments, notebooks, or critical essays either. Nonetheless, subtle signs do point to the fact that he was an influence on the young Schlegel. In 1798, Novalis wanted to invite not only Franz von Baader (1765–1841) but also the ageing Gerstenberg to contribute to the *Athenaeum*, but it remains unclear whether Schlegel knew of the plan to include him or not.³⁰ However, Schlegel had come across Gerstenberg’s name in a newspaper article that inspired him to write one of his countless fragmentary notes.

The yet unpublished early notebook *Studien des Alterthums* [Studies of Antiquity] contains a parenthetical mention of the playwright William Mason (1724–1797): ‘(Mason’s Versuche d[en] Chor wieder in die Engl.[ische] Tragödie einzuführen – in Elfriede und Caractacut)’ [(Mason’s attempts at reintroducing the choir into the English tragedy – in Elfriede and Caractacut)].³¹ The first title mentioned is *Elfrida, A Dramatic Poem. Written on the Model of The Ancient Greek Tragedy* (1752). Schlegel or the transcriber of the manuscript misspells the second title, but it must be a reference to Mason’s 1759 play *Caractacus. A Dramatic Poem: Written on the Model of The Ancient Greek Tragedy*. This paragraph, tucked away among hundreds of short quotations and philological musings, reveals that Schlegel had come across Mason’s eulogy in the 1797 December edition of the *Intelligenzblatt der Allgemeinen Literaturzeitung* [News magazine of the general literary review]. The anonymous eulogist characterises two of Mason’s plays about Anglo-Saxon history, druids, kings of old, and Roman Britain in the following manner:

Die Elfride, die wir auch durch Hrn. Bertuchs deutsche Bearbeitung kennen, und der Caractacus, sind bekanntlich im Zuschnitt nach dem griechischen Trauerspiel, mit

28 KFSa 23, 288.

29 KFSa 3, 218.

30 See KFSa 24, 418.

31 Fragment 233 of the *Studien des Alterthums*, page 15^f. This collection of notes will be published in a future volume of the KFSa. See Christian Benne and Ulrich Breuer, ‘Einleitung’, in *Antike – Philologie – Romantik. Friedrich Schlegels altertumswissenschaftliche Manuskripte*, ed. Christian Benne and Ulrich Breuer (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009), 7–14.

Chören, das glücklichste, was von solchen Nachahmungen in neuern Zeiten versucht worden ist.... Unsere Literatur kann ihnen nur Gerstenbergs Minona entgegenstellen.

[Elfride, also known to us in Mr. *Bertuch's* German translation, and Caractacus are, as is generally known, in their being modelled on the Greek tragedy, with their tragic choirs, among the most fortunate of such imitations that have been tried in recent times.... In our literature, only Gerstenberg's Minona rivals them.]³²

Hence, Schlegel knew the title of Gerstenberg's Ossianic drama *Minona oder die Angelsachsen. Ein tragisches Melodrama in vier Akten* [Minona or the Anglo-Saxons. A tragic melodrama in four acts], published in Hamburg in 1785. From early on, he wanted to reshape German theatre on the stylistic model of Greek tragedy, but with medieval themes. He framed his famously criticised *Alarcos. Ein Trauerspiel* [Alarcos. A tragedy] (1802) as a play 'im antikken Sinne des Worts, aber in romantischem Stoff und Costum' [in a classical sense, but in romantic fabric and costume].³³ The often-quoted footnote reads: 'Vorzüglich nach dem Ideale des Aischylus' [Preferably modelled after Aeschylus].³⁴ In the *Alarcos*, the interest in musicality and form (e.g. embedded sonnets and end rhymes by means of assonance) far outweigh any concerns Schlegel might have had with the plot or lack thereof. Debates on the reintroduction of the tragic choir constitute a central problem in the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. I have found only one mention of Gerstenberg in Schlegel's work. It occurs in a review article written for the *Österreichischer Beobachter* [Austrian spectator] in 1811 on stylistic decorum in contemporary German authors. He dedicates one short sentence to him: 'Gerstenberg ist späterhin in andere Gattungen übergegangen' [Gerstenberg has at a later time gone into other genres], revealing a knowledge of the romantic genres in which he wrote.³⁵

Schlegel was thus aware of the labours of the German Circle in Copenhagen. He associated his famous uncle J. E. Schlegel and Gerstenberg with the romantic drama, which had very different genre characteristics as well as a medieval European setting when compared to the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. William Mason's plays, which bore a similarity to Gerstenberg's *Minona*, and indeed to J. E. Schlegel's *Canut* and Schlegel's own *Alarcos*, were a strange mix of classicist and medievalist literature typical of eighteenth-century early romanticism.

32 *Intelligenzblatt der Allgemeinen Literaturzeitung*, Numero 170, 30 December 1797, 1411. Friedrich Justin Bertuch published his German version of the play in Weimar in 1775, entitled *Elfriede: ein Trauerspiel in drey Aufzügen*. The paragraph is clearly based on the eulogy and therefore dates the manuscript to a date not earlier than 30 December 1797.

33 KFSa 3, 14.

34 *Ibid.*

35 KFSa 3, 212.

3. Friedrich Schlegel and the English Antiquarians

Ernst Behler (1928–1997) characterised Schlegel's infatuation with English literature as 'schon sehr früh einsetzend ...' [present from very early on].³⁶ From their very beginning, Schlegel's studies centred on Shakespeare. There is scattered evidence of Schlegel's studies of the English antiquarians, who in their turn influenced the German Circle in Copenhagen as well as Herder. The most influential are Bishop Thomas Percy, Richard Hurd and Thomas Warton the younger. As James Engell points out, the connections between early English and German romanticisms make up 'a larger comparative map of English criticism and German romanticism, a map whose intricate territories remain relatively uncharted by Germanists and virtual *terra incognita* for readers of English literature'.³⁷ Another recent study points to similarities between James Harris (1709–1780) and Schlegel, yet concludes that Harris might have influenced the German scholar Friedrich August Wolf (1759–1824), whose significance for the Jena romantics cannot be overstated. Dorit Messlin writes that 'vermutlich der klassische Philologe Friedrich August Wolf mit seiner Rezeption der Überlegungen von James Harris die Anregung gegeben hat' [probably the classical philologist Friedrich August Wolf had inspired him by means of his review of the thoughts of James Harris].³⁸ As seen in this article, Schlegel mentions Harris in several notes. The exact nature of the influence of the earlier generation of learned Englishmen eludes us. However, Engell finds that Schlegel's criticism at its earliest stage was under the sway of Hurd, from his borrowing of Hurd's concept of 'universal poetry' and 'romance', as well as the 'fantastic', 'sentimental' and 'mimetic'. He equally idolises Homer, Shakespeare, and Spenser.

Schlegel quoted Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) as early as 1797, disagreeing wholeheartedly with Hurd's appreciation of criticism and literature from the Hellenistic and Roman eras.³⁹ Schlegel preferred the severe style of texts from the archaic and classical era. In 1797, he was still very much the radical neoclassicist and stern philologist, who thought that only he who 'sich die Objektivität der ganzen Masse, den schönen Geist der einzelnen Dichter, und

36 KFSa 11, 336.

37 James Engell: 'Romantische Poesie: Richard Hurd and Friedrich Schlegel', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* (1993), 6–17, quotation on p. 17. Engell concludes: 'Any grasp of Schlegel or of German Romanticism may reach out to include not only the role played by Herder and of course Schiller, but the role played by Hurd and the English Critics', *ibid.*

38 Dorit Messlin, 'Ordo inversus. James Harris und Friedrich Schlegel', in *Friedrich Schlegel und die Philologie*, ed. Ulrich Breuer, Remigius Bunia and Armin Erlinghagen, (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2013): 59–69, quotation on p. 69.

39 Engell quotes this place, see Engell, 16 (see footnote 37). For the quote showing Hurd's appreciation of Hellenistic and Roman literature, see KFSa 1, 350.



Fig. 2: Johann Peter Krafft, *Ossian and Malvina*, 1810. Private collection.

den vollkommenen Stil des goldnen Zeitalters zueignet' [acquires the objectivity of the whole mass, the beautiful soul of the individual poet, and the complete style of the golden age] would be able to produce a true work of art.⁴⁰ This was about to change. Schlegel did not forget about Hurd, as can be seen from one of his critical fragments written in 1810 on the subject of British scholarship:

40 KFSa 1, 331.

Wie die Englische Litteratur unter *Beda* und *Alcuin* d[en] andern <Ländern> zuvorgeeilt, so auch in neuern Zeiten. *Locke* und die andern haben die *französische* φσ[Philosophie] veranlaßt; *Warton*, *Hurd*, *Harris*, <Blair> pp die deutsche Kritik

[As English literature during the times of *Bede* and *Alcuin* rush ahead of other <countries>, in this manner also in recent times. *Locke* and others have laid the foundation for *French* φσ[philosophy]; *Warton*, *Hurd*, *Harris*, <Blair> pp German criticism....]⁴¹

Schlegel praises the medieval scholars, the Venerable Bede (early eighth-century) and Alcuin (eighth-century) for being ideal philologists. Locke is a precursor to French philosophy, and the four British critics seem as forerunners of German literary criticism. Schlegel has not mentioned Blair before, but he must be thinking of James Macpherson's Scottish ally and author of the *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal* (1763) Hugo Blair (1718–1800). In the same fragment, he connects 'romantische Poesie' [romantic poetry] with Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. This is a reference to Hurd, who coined the phrase 'the romantic Spirit of his Age' in connection with Spenser.⁴² Notwithstanding the fact that this fragment ends with the curious notion of English insularity ('Die Engl.[ische] φσ[Philosophie] bloß für ihre Insel brauchbar' [Engl.[ish] φσ[philosophy] only useful for its island]), he readily pledges his allegiance to English criticism in the second part of the 1812 Vienna lectures *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur* [A history of old and modern literature], published in 1815.⁴³ Schlegel in this case writes about classical philology:

Die Kritik der Engländer und einige ihrer Schriften über Poesie, oder auch über bildende Kunst waren freier, eigentümlicher, und meistens auch gelehrter in der Kenntnis des Altertums, als die französischen Schriftsteller dieser Gattung, entsprachen daher dem deutschen Geiste mehr. Doch hat die deutsche Kritik nur die erste Veranlassung von den Engländern *Harris*, *Home*, *Hurd*, *Warton* genommen, und sich bald durchaus selbstständig entwickelt, mehr vielleicht als irgend ein anderer Zweig unsrer Literatur.

[The criticism of the English, as well as some of their writings on poetry, or perhaps also on painting, were more free, original and for the most part also more learned in their knowledge of Antiquity, than were the French writers of this genre, and they therefore better match the German spirit. However, the Englishmen *Harris*, *Home*, *Hurd* and *Warton* prompted German criticism, which has evolved into something much more independent, perhaps more so than any other branch of our literature.]⁴⁴

In this canon of English critics, Schlegel fails to mention Thomas Percy, to whom he had referred, two pages earlier in the context of Germanic medieval poetry:

41 KFSa 17, 191, fragment 82.

42 Richard Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (London: A. Millar & W. Thurlbourn and J. Woodyer, 1762), 116.

43 KFSa 17, 191, fragment 82.

44 KFSa 6, 336. See Engell, 16 (see footnote 37).

Früh schon erwachte durch Percy und mit der Liebe zum Shakespeare, zugleich auch die Liebe zu den alten Balladen und Volksliedern; je größer nun der Reichtum derselben ist, den man aufgefunden hat, besonders der schottischen, je mehr scheint das Gefallen daran jede andere Gattung von Poesie verdrängt zu haben, den alltäglichen Hausbedarf von Romanen und Schauspielen ausgenommen In England begann sie mit ersten Betrachtungen oder dichterischen Naturbeschreibungen, und endigte mit der allgemein verbreiteten Liebhaberei an den alten Volksliedern, einzelnen Anklängen von der verlorenen Poesie einer noch ältern Zeit.

[From early on, at the behest of Percy and concurrent with the love for Shakespeare, awoke also the love for the old ballads and popular songs; the greater one found their richness, especially in the case of the Scottish ballads, the more seems their popularity to extrude that of other genres, apart from the household's everyday need of novels and plays In England, it [higher poetry] began with the first contemplations or poetic descriptions of nature, and ended with the common and widespread pastime pleasure of reading old ballads, solitary reminiscences of the lost poetry of an even older time.]⁴⁵

The Vienna lecturer apparently holds the English critics in high esteem, yet the description of the development of English romanticism turns out slightly, if not alarmingly, pejorative: it has become 'alltäglich' [pedestrian] and part of the cultural 'Hausbedarf' [household needs] along with novels and plays, probably of a certain popular kind. What took its beginning as high poetry, petered out as a 'widespread pastime' and 'solitary reminiscences'. Schlegel has a wide, positive vocabulary for expressing longing for the past, God, or hidden knowledge. Reminiscences, expressing the hollow echoes of something not quite as sturdy as the original, is not part of it. On a later page, he sarcastically welcomes contemporary English drama as successful 'poetische Manufakturware' [poetic consumer goods], hardly a welcome praise for romantics of any nationality.⁴⁶

The third important English critic is the literary historian Thomas Warton the younger, an important romantic predecessor according to Eichner.⁴⁷ He encouraged Gerstenberg and Herder's interest in Spenser, but only appears in Schlegel's notebooks as the author of the *Inscriptionum Romanarum Metricarum Delectus* (1758) a critical edition of Roman epigraphy.⁴⁸ Schlegel does, however, quote another critic named Warton: 'Sacchetti published tales before Boccaccio' in which are many anecdotes of *Dante* and his contemporaries⁴⁹

45 KFSA 6, 334.

46 KFSA 6, 336.

47 KFSA 2, p. LIV in the preface.

48 KFSA 16, 51, fragment 190, see also the commentary to the fragment, KFSA 16, 531.

49 KFSA 16, 125, fragment 485. The fragment is part of the *Fragmente zur Litteratur und Poesie* [Fragments on literature and poetry] (1797). The note is in English. Sacchetti is not earlier than Boccaccio is, as Eichner notes, *ibid.* 550. Schlegel quotes page 64 of the 1782 first edition of the second volume of Warton's book.

In this case, he cites Thomas Warton's brother, Joseph Warton's (1722–1800) *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (1756). Other philologists mentioned are Richard Bentley (1662–1742), William Warburton (1698–1779), both of whom have 'φλ [philologische] Natur' [a philological nature], and Harris, the latter of whom Schlegel characterises as 'bedeutender φλ[Philolog] vielleicht nur durch sein bischen φσ[Philosophie]; desgleichen ein bedeutender Kritiker' [an important φλ[Philologist], perhaps only because of his traces of φσ[Philosophy], therefore also an important critic].⁵⁰

In conclusion, Schlegel became an enthusiastic recipient of English philological treatises who preferred philosophical criticism, in which readings of Greek and Latin texts intertwined with cultural history and a proscriptive poetics of modern literature. Schlegel's own literary criticism was of this kind. He made the distinction between pedantic and philosophical criticism in the polemical *Athenaeum* fragment no. 389, that denounces the dull positivism of some English critics: 'Denn von Sinn für die Poesie findet sich in Harris, Home und Johnson, den Koryphäen der Gattung, auch nicht die schamhafteste Andeutung' [For there is not an ounce of sense for poetry in Harris, Home, and Johnson, the luminaries of the genre].⁵¹ This fragment constitutes a blatant attack on the classicist opponents of Hurd and other preromantics and a staunch defence of what we could call philosophical literary scholarship.

4. The Re-Invention of the Wheel? Jena Romanticism and Eighteenth-Century Medievalism

A vast number of critical studies show us that Schlegel in his late phase politicises the medieval era. But what, in fact, *did* Schlegel write himself on Germanic medieval literature in his young years – when not quoting Herder or English critics? In a notorious fragment from the third volume of the journal *Athenaeum*, he rejects the heroes and heathen gods of old as ideals for the new age. Renaissance and Enlightenment artists and philosophers take their place:

Nicht Hermann und Wodan sind die Nationalgötter der Deutschen, sondern die Kunst und die Wissenschaft. Gedenke noch einmal an Kepler, Dürer, Luther, Böhme; und dann an Lessing, Winckelmann, Goethe, Fichte.

50 For the first quotation consult KFSa 16, 76, fragment 165, for the second KFSa 16, 55, fragment 229.

51 KFSa 2, 238, fragment 389. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) was an opponent of romanticism. See KFSa 2, p. LIV in the preface.

[Not Hermann and Odin, but art and science are the national deities of the Germans. Think only upon Kepler, Dürer, Luther, Böhme; and then on Lessing, Winckelmann, Goethe, Fichte].⁵²

Was he truly disinterested in the Germanic past? In the *Epochen der Dichtkunst* [Epochs of poetry], part of the *Gespräch über die Poesie* [Dialogue on poetry] from 1800, we find an apparently roseate description of Germanic poetry: ‘Mit den Germaniern strömte ein unverdorbener Felsenquell von neuem Helden-gesang über Europa’ [A pure fountainhead of new heroic poetry flowed across Europe with the appearance of the Teutons].⁵³ This paragraph on North-European literature is short when compared to what he writes about Greek, Roman and Romance poetry. On the following pages, he mentions Petrarch, Boccaccio, Ariost, Boiardo, Guarini, Cervantes, and Shakespeare as well as the genres romance, canzone terza rima, chivalric novel, pastoral novel, and the novella. At the end of the text, Goethe, Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), Paul Flemming (1609–1640), Georg Rudolf Weckherlin (1584–1653), and the *Nibelungenlied* [The Song of the Nibelungs] are listed, but these latter German authors, as well as the national epic, are merely mentioned without any further characterisation. What matters is Italian and Spanish poetry, as well as Shakespeare. In *Über das Studium der Griechischen Poesie*, Schlegel notes the following:

So wie viele Reisende in weiter Ferne suchen, was sie in ihrer Heimat ebenso gut und näher finden könnten: so bewundert man nicht selten im Homer allein das, worin der erste der beste Nordische oder Südliche Barbar, wofern er nur ein großer Dichter ist, ihm gleich kommt.

[So many travellers sought in the remoteness what they could just as easily and at a shorter distance find in their home country: Therefore, one often praises in Homer only that with which any northern or southern barbarian, provided that he be a great poet, would bear comparison.]⁵⁴

Schlegel, who played a part in the discovery of the mutual root of most European languages, must be thinking of the fact that all Indo-European peoples share the same tradition of oral poetry, the tradition of storytelling by singing:

52 KFSA 2, 269–270, fragment 135. See also Gottfried Salomon’s discussion of Schlegel’s ‘Europeanism’ in *Das Mittelalter als Ideal der Romantik* (München: Drei Masken Verlag, 1922), 66.

53 For the German quote, see KFSA 2, 296. In the English translation, I quote Friedrich Schlegel’s *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms. Translated, introduced, and annotated by Ernst Behler & Roman Struc* (University Park, PA; London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968), 67.

54 KFSA 1, 278.

Der allgemeine Umriß eines Charakters, wie Achilles hätte vielleicht auch in der Fantasie eines Nord- oder Süd-Homerus entstehen können: diese feineren Züge der Ausbildung waren nur dem Griechen möglich.

[The general outline of a character such as Achilles could also have originated from the imagination of a northern or southern Homer: These, the finer points of experience were only feasible for the Greek.]⁵⁵

Later, he connects this Homeric poetry with the concept of 'Wahrheit' [truth], 'Kraft', [power] 'Anmut' [grace] and 'Natürlichkeit' [naturalness], hallmarks of romanticism. The use of the word 'Barde' and not 'rhapsode' reveals an early Ossianic influence:⁵⁶

Die treue Wahrheit, die ursprüngliche Kraft, die einfache Anmut, die reizende Natürlichkeit sind Vorzüge, welche der Griechische Barde vielleicht mit einem oder dem andern seiner Indischen oder Keltischen Brüder teilt.

[The loyal truth, the original vigour, the simple grace, the charming naturalness are advantages, which the Greek bard perhaps shares with one or other of his Indian or Celtic brothers.]⁵⁷

Nevertheless, something uniquely Greek does exist in the character Achilles, which no barbarian would be able to capture in a piece of poetry: 'Die Homerischen Helden, wie den Dichter selbst unterscheidet eine *freiere Menschlichkeit* von allen nicht-Griechischen Heroen und Barden' [A *freer humanity* differentiates the Homeric heroes as well as the poet himself from all non-Greek heroes and bards].⁵⁸ Another early example of Schlegel delving into Germanic literature is the one and a half page long lecture *Die nordische Literatur* [Nordic literature] dating from the Paris lectures of 1804. In this lecture, Schlegel writes: 'Die deutsche Poesie ... vereinigte schon frühe alle Eigenschaften der nordischen und romantischen' [Already at an early point in time, German poetry ... united all qualities of the Nordic and romantic].⁵⁹ The only Germanic texts mentioned are the *Prose Edda* and *Poetic Edda*. Schlegel lets Nordic poetry precede romance literature:

55 KFSa 1, 279.

56 Wolf Gerhard Schmidt notes the lack of an analysis of Schlegel's reception of Ossian, but lists numerous passages in which Schlegel mentions or paraphrases Ossian, at least dating back from the Jena years around 1799. Wolf Gerhard Schmidt, '4.2 Zwischen "alter" und "neuer" Mythologie. Zur Funktion der ossianischen "Wehmut" in Friedrich Schlegels transzendentalpoetischem Modell', in *'Homer des Nordens' und 'Mutter der Romantik'*. James Macphersons Ossian und seine Rezeption in der deutschsprachigen Literatur, Vol. 2, ed. Howard Gaskill et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 952–969.

57 KFSa 1, 279.

58 Ibid., 280.

59 KFSa 11, 178.

Mit den deutschen ergoß sich der neue Strom dieser nordischen Dichtungen über alle eroberten Länder. Aus ihm schöpfte die romantische Poesie jene Sagen von Riesen, Zwergen, zauberischen Kräften, wunderbaren Tieren

[With the Teutons, this new wave of Nordic poetry flowed across all conquered countries. Out of this wave, romantic poetry created tales of far-off giants, dwarfs, magical powers, fantastical creatures⁶⁰

This Paris lecture from 1804 formed the basis of the Vienna lectures *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur* [A history of classical and modern literature] (1812/13), in which medieval Germanic literature plays a much larger role.⁶¹ The one and a half page on medieval Germanic literature from 1804 expands into four long lectures, nos. 6, 7, 8, and 10.

The most vibrant text by Schlegel concerning Germanic medieval literature is the essay *Über nordische Dichtkunst. Ossian. Die Edda, Sigurd und Shakespeare* [On Nordic poetry. Ossian. The Edda. Sigurd, and Shakespeare] (1812), a text known for its subtle apology of Ossian's songs, which Schlegel, in part, acknowledged as medieval, even though he would not date them to the earliest days of the post-Roman era of the British isle, but rather to the later Norman period.⁶² In *Über nordische Dichtkunst*, Schlegel vehemently defends the concept of literature as a national phenomenon and the Middle Ages as suitable material for a poet. He rejects the common expression 'Finsternis des Mittelalters' [The Dark Ages], admitting that medieval man might have lived in a kind of cultural night, compared with the 'light' of the common man in early nineteenth-century Germany, but in that case, the medieval era was 'eine sternenhelle Nacht' [a starry night] in the history of humanity.⁶³ He indirectly refers to the antiquarian tradition in the remark that literary criticism 'fast durchaus *Geschichte* sein muß' [must almost entirely be *history*].⁶⁴ In a similarly indirect reference, he compares the romantic critic with the miner, who digs deep into the foundations of the land in order to excavate precious metals, 'alles zerstreut und begraben unter den Ruinen einer versunkenen Riesenwelt' [all of it displaced and buried under the ruins of a lost heroic world].⁶⁵ He gives thanks to the Copenhagen German Circle in his appraisal of the Danish romantic N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783–1827)

60 Ibid., 179. The quote is quite similar to the one from *Gespräch über die Poesie*, see footnote 53.

61 See Andrea Polaschegg, '52. "Geschichte der europäischen Literatur"', in *Friedrich Schlegel Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, ed. Johan Andres (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler Verlag, 2017), 233–234, doi: 10.1007/978-3-476-05370-1_52.

62 Wolf Gerhard Schmidt, 'Zwischen "alter" und "neuer" Mythologie'. Zur poetologischen Funktion Ossians bei Friedrich Schlegel', *Athenäum – Jahrbuch der Friedrich Schlegel-Gesellschaft* 14 (2004), 129–150, quotation on p. 134.

63 KFSa 3, 234.

64 Ibid., 224.

65 Ibid.

who, as a medievalist poet, academic, and translator, was very much influenced by the Copenhagen German Circle: ‘Ein sehr geistvoller dänischer Schriftsteller, Grundtvig, dessen Werk [NORDENS MYTOLOGI ELLER UDSIGT OVER EDDALAEREN, 1808] als die beste Einleitung dieses ganze Studium betrachtet werden kann’, [a very talented Danish writer, Grundtvig, whose work [MYTHOLOGY OF THE NORTH, OR A SURVEY OF EDDA SCHOLARSHIP] can be seen as the best introduction to this field].⁶⁶ Schlegel even translates a couple of pages from Grundtvig’s introduction to the book.⁶⁷ Interestingly, Schlegel translates the beginning chapter on Danish romantic literature, in which Grundtvig celebrates the earlier generation of Danish medievalist poets, namely Johannes Ewald (1743–1781), Christen Henriksen Pram (1756–1821) and Jens Baggesen (1764–1826) as well as Adam Oehlenschläger (1779–1850), whom Grundtvig in Schlegel’s translation calls a ‘Skalde’ [skáld], using an Icelandic word that Gerstenberg had made famous.⁶⁸ Thereby, he continues an interest in contemporary Danish literature first seen in his 1811 review *Axel und Walburg. Eine Tragödie von Öhlenschläger* [Axel and Walburg. A tragedy by Öhlenschläger]. In the German romantic’s opinion, Oehlenschläger’s tragedy has the same flaw as the ‘großen Hafen unsrer Ritterstücke’ [abundance of our knightly plays], namely the caricatured depiction of the villain.⁶⁹ He finds that Oehlenschläger, whom he had met in Paris in 1807, should not have observed the classicist unity of place.⁷⁰ However, he concludes that the portrayal of the mutual roots of the Germans and Scandinavians are most pleasing, concluding, ‘[d]aß sich *Normannen* und *Germanen* lieben’ [‘that *Normans* and *Germans* love one another’].⁷¹

Friedrich Schlegel would not publish scholarly texts focused on Germanic medieval poetry during the famous two years in Jena. However, it is evident that

66 Ibid., 239.

67 Friedrich Schlegel translated this passage from Danish into German himself, as Grundtvig records in a letter from 28 April 1812. He also wrote to Grundtvig and invited him to write on a Nordic subject for the journal *Deutsches Museum* [German museum], to Grundtvig’s surprise. See *Breve til og fra Grundtvig. I (1807–1820)*, ed. Georg Christensen and Stener Grundtvig (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1924), 72. Schlegel’s letter to Grundtvig, from 17 January 1812, is printed on p. 55–56 in this volume. On 10 November 1812, Danish historian Christian Molbech stated in a letter to his friend Rasmus Nyerup that August Wilhelm had shown him the translated passage in Stockholm and that his brother Friedrich was very fond of Grundtvig’s northern mythology. For Molbech’s letter, see S. Birket Smith, *Til Belysning af literære Personer og Forhold i Slutningen af det 18de og Begyndelsen af det 19de Arhundrede. En Samling Breve* (Copenhagen: Andr. Fred. Høst & Søns Forlag, 1884), 307. I thank Flemming Lundgreen-Nielsen for these references.

68 KFSa 3, 240.

69 Ibid., 215.

70 See Adam Oehlenschläger, *Oehlenschlägers Erindringer. Første Bind* (Copenhagen: Andr. Fred. Høsts Forlag, 1850), 124.

71 KFSa 3, 216.

he leaned on the Germanic medievalist tradition that he primarily knew from Herder and Bürger, but also from his own comprehensive studies of European literary history. It still seems unclear why we find so few passages on Germanic Medieval literature in the published text. I can think of two explanations: He was tired of the vast popularity of knightly plays, novels, and ballads set in a northern medieval world, and, he wanted to distance himself from the generation of his father and uncles. In 1802, when his chivalric play *Alarcos* was staged in Weimar, he had thought to become a playwright, contemplating also on Nordic medievalist titles such as ‘Robinhood’ or ‘Der Krieg auf d.[er] Wartburg’ [The Wartburg Contest].⁷² Schlegel never wrote these other plays, but he did publish a number of medievalist poems with a Germanic medieval setting, published in volume 5 of the critical edition under the title *Romanzen und Lieder* [Romances and Ballads], one of which carries the title *Bei der Wartburg*, [At the Wartburg] (1802), an homage to the medieval castle Wartburg as a symbol of chivalric culture and the minstrels’ singing contest.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, it does not seem correct to attribute Schlegel’s Germanic turn – on the whole – to the growing nationalism in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars. There are traces of a Germanic medievalism present in the earliest of his texts. We therefore cannot ridicule these post-1800 texts as purely ‘nationalist’, even though it seems clear that Schlegel in his later life understood the Middle Ages primarily as a political ideal in opposition to the French Revolution. The German-American sociologist Gottfried Salomon (1892–1964) discusses this in his 1922 book *Das Mittelalter als Ideal in der Romantik* [The Middle Ages as an ideal in romanticism] on the political romantics’ vision of the Middle Ages. But he ignores the medievalist tendencies in the time of the journal *Athenaeum*, whose classicist aesthetics he calls ‘das Objektive’ [the objective]. He dates Schlegel’s German medievalism, the ‘Wiedergeburt altdeutscher Kunst und Religion’ [Rebirth of ancient German art and religion] or ‘ästhetischer Nationalismus’ [aesthetic na-

72 The first title can be found in KFSa 16, 365, no. 15. The second title can be found in KFSa 16, 368, no. 29. For a contribution to Schlegel’s reception of medieval Latin literature see Mark-Georg Dehmann, ‘Eine “neue Epoche in der Geschichte der Poesie”. Friedrich Schlegels philologische Poesie der Moderne am Beispiel des *Roland-Epos*’, in *Friedrich Schlegel und die Philologie*, ed. Ulrich Breuer, Remigius Bunia and Armin Erlinghagen (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2013), 203–217, as well as Andreas Härter, ‘The Ring of Longing: A View on Friedrich Schlegel’s Medievalist Poetry’, *Poetica. An International Journal of Linguistic-Literary Studies* 39–40 (1994), 207–223.

tionalism], to his 1808 review of Adam Müller's lectures on German literature.⁷³ This is one of the first of Schlegel's published texts dealing with the German medieval period, but, as we have seen, there are a number of earlier comments in the form of side remarks in published texts or unpublished notes. The rise of non-classicist literary forms, a most important element of romanticism, based itself on a true historical interest in the Middle Ages. Nationalism plays an increasingly large part in the history of romantic medievalism, but was not the sole force. We see this in Schlegel's affinity to Hurd, Herder, and other romantic predecessors, in his experiments with the Germanic medieval drama, in his reception of Ossian, as well as in his lifelong preoccupation with Bürger. Schlegel himself notices the nationalist turn in *Über nordische Dichtkunst*, commenting on the rise of the medieval in contemporary Germany:

Besonders aber ist seit den letzten zehn oder zwölf Jahren, wie das Gefühl des Vaterlandes überhaupt von neuem erweckt und aufgeregt, so auch die Liebe zu unsern alten vaterländischen Dichtern sichtbar allgemeiner und lebhafter geworden

[Especially in the last ten or twelve years, as the love for king and country has been awoken and stirred, so has also the love for our good old national poets become visibly more common and more vital]⁷⁴

I therefore concur with David E. Barclay who lists five different types of medievalism within German romanticism. He calls the beginning of the medievalist turn in the late eighteenth-century 'cosmopolitan medievalism' or the 'Gothic revival': the Medieval as a literary space yet open to interpretation and influenced by Northern vernacular literature, neither necessarily devoid of nationalist ideas nor driven solely by a wish to strengthen the nation.⁷⁵ From early on in his career, Schlegel had a poetological interest in medieval northern literature, but his fascination with Antiquity overshadowed it. The rise of 'national romanticism' spurred Schlegel to intensify his study of medieval literature, but this study was on its part overshadowed by his wish to find a historical model for his own political and religious ideas. Barclay even notes that 'scattered remarks and observations of Friedrich Schlegel' bear witness to 'a developing linkage between medievalism and nationalism before 1806'.⁷⁶ As we have seen, the earliest 'scattered remarks and observations' are in fact primarily poetological in nature.

73 Salomon, 64 (see footnote 52).

74 KFSa 3, 225.

75 David E. Barclay, 'Medievalism and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Germany', *Studies in Medievalism* 5 (1993), 5–22, quotation on p. 7.

76 Both quotations can be found in Barclay, 8 (see footnote 75).