

# Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism

**NCLC**

**193**

Volume 193

# Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism

Criticism of the  
Works of Novelists, Philosophers, and Other  
Creative Writers Who Died between 1800  
and 1899, from the First Published Critical  
Appraisals to Current Evaluations



**Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism,  
Vol. 193**

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27500 Drake Rd.  
Farmington Hills, MI, 48331-3535

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER 84-643008

ISBN-13: 978-1-4144-0874-3

ISBN-10: 1-4144-0874-9

ISSN 0732-1864

## Preface

Since its inception in 1981, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism (NCLC)* has been a valuable resource for students and librarians seeking critical commentary on writers of this transitional period in world history. Designated an “Outstanding Reference Source” by the American Library Association with the publication of its first volume, *NCLC* has since been purchased by over 6,000 school, public, and university libraries. The series has covered more than 500 authors representing 38 nationalities and over 28,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical reaction to nineteenth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *NCLC*.

### Scope of the Series

*NCLC* is designed to introduce students and advanced readers to the authors of the nineteenth century and to the most significant interpretations of these authors’ works. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of this period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. By organizing and reprinting commentary written on these authors, *NCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *NCLC* presents a comprehensive survey of an author’s career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *NCLC* is devoted to literary topics that cannot be covered under the author approach used in the rest of the series. Such topics include literary movements, prominent themes in nineteenth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

*NCLC* continues the survey of criticism of world literature begun by Gale’s *Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)* and *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)*.

### Organization of the Book

An *NCLC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author’s actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the original date of composition.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose works have been translated into English, the list will focus primarily on twentieth-century translations, selecting those works most commonly considered the best by critics. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication. Lists of **Representative Works** by different authors appear with topic entries.



- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

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Frank, Joseph. "The Gambler: A Study in Ethnopsychology." In *Freedom and Responsibility in Russian Literature: Essays in Honor of Robert Louis Jackson*, edited by Elizabeth Cheresch Allen and Gary Saul Morson, 69-85. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1995. Reprinted in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Vol. 168, edited by Jessica Bomarito and Russel Whitaker, 75-84. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006.

The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a works cited list set forth in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 6th ed. (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2003); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

Franklin, J. Jeffrey. "The Victorian Discourse of Gambling: Speculations on *Middlemarch* and *The Duke's Children*." *ELH* 61.4 (Winter 1994): 899-921. Reprinted in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Eds. Jessica Bomarito and Russel Whitaker. Vol. 168. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006. 39-51.

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# Ludwig Börne

## 1786-1837

(Born Juda Löw Baruch) German-Jewish essayist, critic, journalist, letter writer, and editor.

The following entry presents an overview of Börne's life and works.

### INTRODUCTION

Ludwig Börne was a prominent German-Jewish essayist, critic, and passionate advocate for the cause of social freedom in early-nineteenth-century Europe. Although he published no major works, his collected essays, criticism, and letters reveal a breadth of political and cultural knowledge unrivalled in the literature of his era. One of Börne's most important contributions to the literary culture of his times was as a drama critic, and his satirical, often biting attacks on the frivolity and superficiality of popular German theater earned him considerable acclaim during his lifetime. More than anything, scholars have asserted, Börne was concerned with the practical social applications of literature. According to nineteenth-century Danish scholar George Brandes, Börne was more concerned with issues of political reform than with questions of style, imagination, or art. Mark M. Anderson traced Börne's preoccupation with social causes to his experiences growing up in the Jewish ghetto in Frankfurt, while suggesting that his outrage over discrimination toward Jews eventually evolved into a more general belief in the universal equality of all people. While some modern commentators recall Börne primarily for his scathing attacks on the later writings of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, many scholars, including Anderson, Hardin, and Jonathan M. Hess, consider Börne as one of the most influential political writers of the post-Napoleonic era.

### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Ludwig Börne was born Juda Löw Baruch on May 6, 1786, in Frankfurt am Main, the son of Jakob Baruch, a banker, and Julia Baruch. In spite of his family's middle-class standing, the law compelled them to live in the Jewish ghetto. In volume six of his landmark study *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature* (1890), George Brandes describes Baruch's childhood as "joyless," rendered deeply unhappy by the "severe discipline" and "coldness of his parents," as well as by

the spirit of oppression that characterized life in the ghetto. Indeed, Baruch grew up during a period of intense, government-sponsored anti-Semitism in the German city; according to scholar James Hardin, all aspects of Jewish life were dictated by regulation, including marriage (the law allowed only fourteen Jewish marriages a year) and the choice of a profession. As scholar Ralph P. Rosenberg has pointed out, Börne later described this period of his life as "Der Roman der Bosheit," or "a novel of cursedness."

In spite of these dismal origins, Baruch excelled at his studies, and in 1802 he moved to Berlin to study medicine with the acclaimed doctor Marcus Herz. Although medicine was one of the few respectable career paths available to Jews during this period, Baruch had little interest in becoming a physician, and as he settled into the lively cultural atmosphere of Berlin, he soon developed a passion for literature. His medical studies ended abruptly in 1803 with the death of Herz. A short time later he professed his love to Herz's widow, Henriette, who was twenty years older than he. Although Henriette felt sympathy for the young student, she was also horrified by his declaration and promptly contacted his father. A short time later Baruch entered the University of Halle to resume his medical studies.

The next three years proved trying for Baruch; he suffered from poor health and achieved little success as a medical student. Following Napoleon's defeat of the Prussian army at Jena, the University of Halle was closed, forcing Baruch to continue his education in Heidelberg and later in Gießen. Although Baruch felt deep bitterness toward the French in the wake of the war, Napoleon's conquest ultimately led to the liberalization of German restrictions on the rights of Jews, and Baruch experienced greater freedom to choose his course of study. He consequently abandoned medicine for law and political economy, earning his doctorate in philosophy in 1808. In his doctoral essay, *Freimütige Bemerkungen über die neue Stättigkeits- und Schutzordnung für die Judenschaft in Frankfurt am Main* (1808; unpublished), Baruch criticized the new, more liberal statutes in Frankfurt, arguing that they didn't go far enough to ensure complete equality for all citizens.

After completing his education Baruch returned to Frankfurt. In 1811 he accepted a post as an official with the police department. For the next two years he worked as a police administrator while also contributing articles

and satirical essays to the city newspaper, in which he criticized France's continued domination over the German states. Ralph Rosenberg pointed out in his 1936 essay on Börne that these diatribes against Napoleonic rule would prove ironic; in 1813, after French forces were driven out of Frankfurt by the Anglo-Prussian alliance, the old laws restricting Jewish freedoms were restored, and Baruch was fired from his position with the police department. For the next several years he supported himself through freelance journalism while considering the possibility of establishing his own journal. During this period Baruch met Jeannette Wohl, a woman recently divorced from her wealthy husband. Although Baruch and Wohl were not romantically involved, they developed a close bond, and Wohl soon became a major source of encouragement for the struggling writer.

In 1818, determined not to allow his Jewish upbringing to thwart his literary career, Baruch changed his name to Ludwig Börne; on June 5 of that year he converted to Christianity. In July Börne launched *Die Wage: Zeitschrift für Bürgerleben, Wissenschaft und Kunst*, a journal dedicated to discussing contemporary political and cultural issues. In addition to editing *Die Wage*, Börne contributed numerous essays and reviews to the journal and soon established himself as one of the most astute and fearsome theater critics in Germany. The targets of Börne's scathing critiques included some of the nation's most popular playwrights, among them August von Kotzebue and August Wilhelm Iffland. Over the next three years Börne also published a number of essays related to the political and social rights of Jews, in which he argued that universal equality for all people was a crucial element in the creation of a unified German state.

A year after founding *Die Wage*, Börne accepted the editorship of *Zeitung der freien Stadt Frankfurt*, a political newspaper. The city's censorship laws soon proved onerous to Börne, however, and he abandoned the newspaper after only a few months. In October 1819 he traveled to Paris for the first time, returning to Frankfurt a month later. The following March, Börne was arrested in Frankfurt under suspicion of engaging in revolutionary activities, although he was released after two weeks. Börne continued to publish *Die Wage* until 1821, during which time he earned a reputation as one of Germany's most talented prose writers. A year later he returned to Paris, where he wrote dispatches for German publisher Johann Friedrich Cotta's journal, *Morgenblatt*.

Over the next several years Börne traveled frequently, living for brief periods in Paris as well as Frankfurt, and other German cities. During these years he published *Denkrede auf Jean Paul* (1826), a memorial to the German author Jean Paul, whose work Börne admired. In 1827 he became friends with the German-

Jewish writer Heinrich Heine, with whom he shared many of the same political and social concerns. A year later Julius Campe, a publisher based in Heidelberg, approached Börne about printing an edition of his collected writings. Börne moved to Hanover to live with Jeanette Wohl and devoted the next year to preparing his work for publication. In 1830, encouraged by the overthrow of the French king Charles X in the July Revolution, Börne once again returned to Paris. Over the next several years he wrote prolifically on the subject of the struggle for political freedom in Europe, essays he later published in several volumes, collectively titled *Briefe aus Paris* (which can be translated as "Letters from Paris"). During this period Börne also published a series of harsh critiques aimed at Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller, whom he accused of being elitist and intellectually and morally divorced from important social causes.

In 1832 Börne returned for a brief period to Frankfurt and spent the next several months traveling throughout Germany and Switzerland. In November he returned to Paris. Börne's literary output decreased dramatically in the final years of his life, as he suffered repeated bouts of illness and severed contact with many of his friends, including Heine. Toward the end of his life, he produced one more important piece of political writing, *Menzel der Franzosenfresser* (1837), a criticism of the anti-Semitic journalist Wolfgang Menzel. Börne died in Paris on February 12, 1837, of influenza. He was buried in the Père Lachaise cemetery.

## MAJOR WORKS

Börne's most important contribution to German literature was as an essayist and a critic. During his three years as editor and publisher of *Die Wage*, he published numerous essays and reviews on subjects ranging from the question of Jewish political emancipation to contemporary German drama. His writings from this period are noteworthy for their sharp wit, irreverent humor, and passion. During his lifetime Börne enjoyed his greatest popularity as a critic; indeed, James Hardin has argued that Börne's insights into the dramatic form represented the most important contribution to German literature criticism since those of Enlightenment author Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. In his most noteworthy critiques Börne attacked the dramatic writings of Goethe and Schilling, condemning the acclaimed authors for sacrificing social and political relevance for the sake of purely aesthetic concerns. After *Die Wage* folded in 1821, Börne continued to publish articles in German journals and periodicals. In 1826 he published *Denkrede auf Jean Paul*, a long essay praising the works of fiction author and playwright Jean Paul, whom Börne described as "der Sänger der Armen" ("singer of the poor").

Börne composed his most important political writings while living in Paris in the early 1830s. Styled as letters, these essays explore such issues as Napoleon's attitude toward Jewish equality, the relationship between nationalism and freedom, and the corrosive effects of capitalism on social reform. Published as *Briefe aus Paris*, the letters were published in three two-volume editions between 1832 and 1834. These letters, along with Börne's other writings, were later collected in his *Gesammelte Schriften* (1835-47). With the exception of one short article titled "Goethe as a Patriot," translated by James D. Haas and published in his *Gleanings from Germany* (1839), Börne's work has never been translated into English.

### CRITICAL RECEPTION

Börne achieved modest fame during his lifetime, both as a theater critic and as a voice for liberal social causes. In his 1840 memoir *Ludwig Börne: Eine Denkschrift*, Heinrich Heine offers a somewhat mixed critique of Börne's life and career, praising the writer's commitment to social issues while at the same time accusing him of leading an immoral personal life; the work was translated by Jeffrey L. Sammons as *Ludwig Börne: A Memorial* in 2006. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, much of Börne's work had slipped into obscurity; in *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature* (1890), Danish scholar George Brandes attributed this neglect to the shifting political climate in Europe, suggesting that Börne's subjects and concerns had become increasingly irrelevant. Over the years, very little criticism on Börne has appeared in English. Since the 1980s, such scholars as Charlene A. Lea and Jonathan M. Hess have investigated the relationship between Börne's Jewish upbringing and his commitment to political and social emancipation. Other critics, notably Orlando Figes, have analyzed Börne's critiques of the role of wealthy Jewish financiers in bolstering the capitalist economy in the early nineteenth century. Sander Gilman has viewed Börne's conversion to Christianity as evidence of his lifelong struggle to come to terms with his Jewish identity, suggesting that this struggle helped shape his ideas concerning the relationship between politics and literature.

### PRINCIPAL WORKS

*Die Wage: Zeitschrift für Bürgerleben, Wissenschaft und Kunst* [writer and editor] (essays, criticism, and journalism) 1818-21  
*Zeitung der freien Stadt Frankfurt* [editor] (journalism) 1819

*Denkrede auf Jean Paul* (criticism) 1826  
*Gesammelte Schriften*. 8 vols. (essays, criticism, and journalism) 1829-34  
*Briefe aus Paris: 1830 bis 1831*. 2 vols. (letters) 1832  
*Briefe aus Paris: 1831 bis 1832*. 2 vols. (letters) 1833  
*Briefe aus Paris: 1832 bis 1834*. 2 vols. (letters) 1834  
*Gesammelte Schriften*. 17 vols. (essays, criticism, journalism, and letters) 1835-47  
*Menzel der Franzosenfresser* (essay) 1837  
 "Goethe as a Patriot" (essay) 1839; published in *Gleanings from Germany*

### CRITICISM

George Brandes (essay date 1890)

SOURCE: Brandes, George. "Börne." In *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature*. Vol. 6: *Young Germany*, translated by Mary Morison, pp. 39-102. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1905.

[In the following excerpts, originally published in Danish in 1890, Brandes evaluates Börne's ideals concerning the nature and purpose of literature and art, analyzing his views within the context of German literary culture in the early nineteenth century. Brandes suggests that Börne's iconoclastic personality played a major role in determining the originality and forcefulness of his writings.]

#### VII BÖRNE

Of the authors who in those days stood in the foremost rank, Ludwig Börne is now almost the most neglected. The subjects on which he wrote are obsolete, and none but those interested in the personality of the writer read his short prose pieces in the form of newspaper articles or letters, for the sake of the style, or of the spirit in which the subject is treated. It was in the later years of his life that Börne first really made a name for himself by his *Letters from Paris*; and the abstract hatred of princes and the republican faith which find expression in these letters are entirely out of place in the young Empire of to-day. No personality could be more utterly out of keeping with the new order of things. Where the idea of the State is by slow degrees becoming all-powerful: where, from above, despotically socialistic, it seeks to restrict initiative, transforms as many citizens as possible into paid officials, and gives the paid official precedence of the simple citizen, and from below, revolutionarily socialistic, strives with all its might to restrict individual freedom of action: there markedly self-reliant characters inevitably disappear, and the rugged,

independent individuality seems something illegal, something which no one can accept as a model of culture. Börne's was just such an angular individuality and perfectly independent character.

In the German middle-class of to-day, speaking generally, the only task that seems worthy of a man is to build up, to forward, to strengthen or remould the already acquired. The iconoclastic tendency of Börne's mind at once alarms. The fire which warmed his age and generation is to the new generation that of a Don Quixote who charges with his lance at fortress and castle walls. And yet Börne, too, had a hand in the production of the iron architecture of the new Iron Age of Germany. His fire melted the ore out of which the new pillars of society have been cast. . . .

The fact of Börne's being born without the pale of Christian society did not produce in him any excessive sympathy with his co-religionists; but the severe discipline of his joyless childhood, the coldness of his parents, the aversion aroused in him by the cupidity, cowardly caution, and other vices generated by oppression which he observed in those around him, all contributed to forge a spirit that could never be bent, softened, or broken—a character on whose adamant firmness neither flattery nor threats made the smallest impression. The severity of this character of ermine-white purity, a severity born of the burning love of justice, at times clad itself in the garment of humorous irony, at times in that of scathing ire. As a writer Börne was for Germany much what Paul Louis Courier was for France, that is to say, a political tribune, as satirical and as liberty-loving as the Frenchman, less clear-sighted in matters of the day, but with more feeling, more imagination, an all-round richer nature.<sup>1</sup>

For in Börne's case firmness of character did not preclude gentleness of disposition. The weak, always rather sickly boy, who grew up in a sunless street, shut off from fresh air and from nature, was tender-hearted. The germ of tenderness in his nature was perhaps first developed by reading that German author who exercised most influence on the formation of his opinions and his style—Jean Paul. It is from Jean Paul, his best comforter in the dark days of his youth, that Börne, the author, is directly descended.

To him Jean Paul was the poet of those who are born in obscurity. He loved him as the spokesman of those who suffer wrong. He saw in him a priest of justice, an apostle of mercy. His famous commemorative oration gives us some idea of his youthful enthusiasm, and at the same time shows what it was in Jean Paul's style that he endeavoured to make his own. . . .

It was possibly Jean Paul's political attitude which first brought Börne under his spell. Jean Paul early took his place in German literature as the inheritor of Herder's

cosmopolitan sentiments and doctrines. Herder had persistently exalted love of humanity, at the expense of patriotism and national antipathy. Jean Paul continued to proclaim the common brotherhood of man. All his writings were, moreover, pervaded by a general spirit of political liberalism, resembling that formulated in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, which had electrified him; and he treats of sovereigns, courts, and the great world generally, in a tone of sustained irony. At times he regards as close at hand a coming golden age, in which it will no longer be possible for nations, but only for individuals, to sin, and from which the spectre of war shall have disappeared; at other times he relegates it to a very far off future; but the rapidity of what was and is called *historic progress* induced both him and his disciple to imagine that universal brotherhood was not very distant.

It was, however, not only his grand conception of the future that made Jean Paul so attractive to Börne, but also the idyllic and satiric qualities of his talent. Börne adopted some of his comical names of places (*Kuhschnappel*, *Flachsenfingen*), and as a young man imitated his humorous style. Many of the short tales and sketches contributed to periodical literature—the comic *Esskünstler am Hoteltisch*, *Allerhöchstdieselben*, *Hof- und Commerzienräthe*, *Die Thurn und Taxissche Post* (the postal system of the day), &c. &c.—are in Jean Paul's manner, though Börne keeps closer to reality both in his facts and his local colouring than Jean Paul does. Börne attacks State, Church, executive, manners, and customs in Jean Paul's farcical fashion; but he has not his predecessor's stores of observation to fall back on, and does not approach him in variety of knowledge.

By way of compensation, his style is in many ways superior to Jean Paul's.

Börne, who was not gifted with any profound artistic feeling, or delicate appreciation of style, admired the inartistic in Jean Paul as being unartificial. He did not feel that the profusion of imagery was collected from here, there, and everywhere, and was seldom the natural outgrowth of the subject it adorned. That Oriental wealth of simile, that flowery luxuriance of language, pleased his taste as being poetical; and the want of harmony in the periods, the heavy ballast of the innumerable parenthetical clauses, were to his ear only evidences of the naturalness of the style. To him, too, Goethe's plastic art was only coldness, while the impersonal style of Goethe's old age was a horror. When he read Jean Paul's works, the living, restless ego in them came forth to meet his own warm-hearted, passionate ego.

He unconsciously remoulded Jean Paul's style on the lines of his own individuality, that individuality which discloses itself in his earliest letters, and whose distin-



guishing traits were modified or developed, but never altered. There were no wildernesses, no primeval forests in his mind, as there were in Jean Paul's. He did not think of ten things at a time, all inextricably entwined. No; in his case both fancy and reasoning-power were clear, and concise in expression. His acquaintance with Johannes von Müller's works early produced a propensity for pithy, Tacitus-like brevity. From the first there was a half French, half Jewish tendency to antitheses and contrast in his style. He loved symmetry of thought and symmetry of language; his spiritual *tempo* was quick; as a writer he was short-winded. Hence short, sharp, strong sentences following each other at a gallop; no rounded periods. Metaphors abound; yet they are not so numerous as to jostle each other out of place, and all are apt and suggestive; he did not ransack notebooks for them, like Jean Paul; they presented themselves in modest abundance. He employed similes freely; but in his clear-headed fashion he arranged them almost algebraically in his sentences, so that they produce the effect rather of equations than of scattered flowers.

By degrees his decidedly marked individuality took shape in a decidedly individual humorous style. Jean Paul's humour spreads itself throughout lengthy and discursive investigations, narratives, romances; not so Börne's. He was never able to produce a political, poetical, critical, or historical work of any length; he could not write books, only pages. His was an essentially journalistic talent.<sup>2</sup> And this determines the character of his humour.

Playful humour was his, but also that sarcastic wit which stings like a lash, and yet thrills and touches by an indirect appeal to the feelings; his that bitterness of complaint and accusation which assumes the conciliatory form of an attempt to comfort; and that melancholy, which with a smile and a whimsical conceit rises above time and place. But something similar to this might be said of other great humorists. What distinguishes Börne (from Sterne, Jean Paul, and others) is, in the first place, the strength, the violence of the reaction produced in him by all the occurrences of the day which came within the bounds of his horizon. A comparatively trifling incident in real, and especially in public, life is sufficient to set all the chords of his being in vibration. The second peculiarity is that all occurrences directly act upon one and the same point in his spiritual life, that passion for liberty which was born of the keenest sense of justice. One of his critics, Steinthal, explains in a masterly manner the connection between this fact and the fact of his inability to produce a great work. He never thought systematically, never combined with each other all the many things that one after the other occupied and affected his mind, but looked on each separately in its relation to the centre point of his being.<sup>3</sup> His humour brought the miserable reality into

juxtaposition with the ideal demand of his intellect; but he gave no picture of the different elements of reality, he merely focussed them. . . .

From the summer of 1818 onwards, Börne, who till then had only published an occasional pamphlet, appears as an independent journalist, publisher of the *Die Wage* ("The Balance"), most of the articles in which he wrote himself. He was the first German journalist in the grand style, and first to make the periodical press of Germany a power. The possessors of the now rare numbers of that old epoch-making magazine "of politics, science, and art," look on them as treasures. Its success is to be ascribed to its publisher and chief contributor's lively style and apt wit. . . .

Börne was devoid of artistic sense in the strict acceptance of the term. He frankly confessed the fact himself, and, moreover, betrays it in his intolerance of those to whom it is a matter of indifference what the artist represents, but all-important how he represents it. Artists and connoisseurs of this type are utterly repugnant to him. It disgusts him that any man can prefer a painting of still life to a painting of a Madonna. His natural bias towards the lofty, the sublime, the divine, leads him to demand these qualities in art, and to declare frankly that all works of art in which these qualities are wanting, are to him simply daubs or monstrosities.<sup>4</sup>

We cannot agree with Steinthal when he says that Börne was at home in every domain of culture, every sphere of artistic production; for that very branch of art to which the name art is more specially applied, was a sealed book to him. This naturally did not prevent his writing much that is sensible and instructive about works of art; but what he wrote is not art criticism.

Börne has been often and much praised for his energetic condemnation of the German fatalistic tragedies (*Schicksalstragödien*) which began in his day to take possession of the stage and to confuse men's minds. But it is to be observed that it is not as aesthetically reprehensible that he objects to them; he looks at the matter from the moral or religious point of view. The belief that a certain date, say the 24th of February, is peculiarly fraught with fate for any family, is stupid and futile. It has no connection whatever either with the belief of the ancients in an inevitable, pre-ordained fate, or with the Christian belief in an omniscient Providence, or with the modern determinist theory of cause and effect, which has undermined the earlier belief in so-called freewill. But to Börne the belief in question is an unreasonable one only because it is a confusion of two theological systems. His chain of reasoning is this: death is either a loving father, who takes his child home, in which case fate is not tragic, or a Kronos, who devours his own children, in which case it is unchristian.<sup>5</sup> As if that were any objection! It might still be extremely poetical.

Börne is so clever and clear-headed that his opinion as to the worth or worthlessness of the many dramas it falls to his lot to criticise is almost always correct. He thoroughly enters into the spirit of Oehlenschläger's *Correggio*, and is full of indulgence for the weaknesses of the play, but quite oblivious to its scenic effect. He shows thorough appreciation of dramatists like Kleist and Immermann and young Grillparzer. But when he begins to give his reasons for blame or praise, the inartistic temperament invariably betrays itself, and he frequently displays all the many prejudices of the idealist. He is undoubtedly justified in his unfavourable opinion of Iffland's *Die Spieler* (*The Gamblers*), for instance. But the justification he offers is most peculiar: "What has gambling to do on the stage?" he cries; "one might as well dramatise consumption in all its different stages." There is only this difference, one would imagine, that consumption is a physical ailment, gambling a vice. His position is one that is characteristic of idealism, namely, that there is no need to go to the theatre to see what we can see at home. He gives as examples poverty, debt, a faithful wife's patient endurance of hardships; and instead of remarking on the dull, inartistic spirit in which such things are represented, he exclaims: "Are these such rare sights that we should pay money to see them? On the stage, humanity ought to be raised a step above its common level." And he goes on to explain that it was for this reason the Greek and Roman tragedians had recourse to mythic fable, and to maintain that the modern dramatist ought to represent the real characters of ancient days; or, if nothing will serve him but to grapple with the present, that he must only venture to reproduce its passions. We perceive that Börne is possessed by the naïve belief that the "classic" characters of olden times stood on a higher level than the human beings of to-day; and that he does not understand how every-day reality, properly treated, can be refined into art.

A still stronger proof than these academic utterances of Börne's inability to appreciate simple, primitive poetry, is his indifference to the Old Testament. In a letter to Henriette Herz, written in his nineteenth year, we come upon a passage of absolutely alarming sterility, dry and senile as a joke on the Pentateuch by Voltaire—and this after Goethe: "It has always appeared to me as if it had been the intention of the old Jews, from Abraham down to Solomon the Wise, to parody the history of the world. Read Joshua or the Book of Kings, and you will at once be struck by their resemblance to Blumau."<sup>6</sup> A comparison between these venerable compilations of memorable legends and historical events and a clumsy German parody of Virgil's *Æneid* could only be instituted by a critic who, devoid of all appreciation of antique literary form, set himself to find in every work some modern sentimental, religious, or political moral.

It is quite of a piece with this that Börne should end by blindly admiring the vague, half Biblical, half modern unctuous pathos of Lamennais' *Paroles d'un Croyant*.

#### VIII BÖRNE

But for this lack of poetic-artistic understanding, it would be difficult to explain how Börne came to take the share he did in the reaction against Goethe which was set on foot by some of the leading men of the day. For, though he had a quite individual, spontaneous animosity to Goethe, Börne was certainly not the originator of the reaction, which was in full swing before he took any part in it. About the time when the Pietists were gloating over Pastor Pustkuchen's parody of the *Wanderjahre*, with its attack on the impiety of Goethe, the pagan, progressive, youthful politicians were beginning to approve of investigations into Goethe's political convictions, which measured them by the very latest standard and made him out to be an "aristocrat," with no feeling for the people, and in reality with no genius.

The first writer of any note who perseveringly and fanatically devoted himself to the systematic disparagement of Goethe was Wolfgang Menzel (born in 1798), a man who before the age of thirty had made his name famous and feared by the help of a certain coarse literary ability, tremendous self-assurance, and the severity of his creed as a Liberal, Nationalist, and moralist. Like Börne, he was originally a disciple of Jean Paul. But his *Streckverse* (1823), which were much admired in their day, and which are unmistakable imitations of that master, carry Jean Paul's peculiar kind of humour to the verge of caricature. Things that have no natural connection whatever with each other are forced into juxtaposition to produce an aphorism, in much the same manner as totally unconnected ideas are coupled together in a pun. He writes: "All Saints' Day comes before All Souls'; the prophets reach heaven before the people." "The religion of antiquity was the crystal-matrix of many resplendent gods; the Christian religion is the mother-of-pearl that encloses one god only, but one beyond all price." "This mortal life is a bastinado." "Every church bell is a diving-bell, beneath which the pearl of religion is found."

In his periodical, *Deutsche Litteratur*, he began, in 1819, an attack upon Goethe, which he carried on with insane conceit and immovable faith in the justice of his cause. He first tried to undermine the admiration of the reading world for Goethe's originality, examined his works with the aim of discovering imitations or plagiarisms, and demonstrated the existence of foreign influence everywhere throughout them.

In his first connected work on the history of literature, *Die deutsche Litteratur*, which was published in 1828, in two parts, he calmly accuses Goethe of having flat-

tered all the prejudices and vanities of his time. He declares him to be possessed of nothing more than great descriptive ability, great "talent," which is a thing unattended by inward conviction, "a hetaira, who is at every one's beck and call." Goethe has always, he declares, swum with the stream, and on its surface, like a cork; he has ministered to every weakness and folly that happened to be in fashion; under the fair mask of his works a refinement of sensuality lies concealed; these works are the blossom of that materialism which prevails in the modern world. Goethe has no genius, but a very high degree of "the talent for making his readers his accomplices," &c., &c.<sup>8</sup> Heine, who was uncritical enough in his review of the book to praise both it and its author—praise which he was soon to regret—would have nothing to say to Menzel's doctrine that Goethe's gift was not genius, only talent. He expresses the opinion that this doctrine will be accepted by few, "and even these few will confess that Goethe at times had the talent to be a genius."<sup>9</sup>

Menzel continued the cannonade in his numerous contributions to periodicals, and in a new, very much enlarged, edition of his work on German literature. He convicts Goethe of three distinct kinds of personal vanity and six kinds of voluptuousness ("dreierlei Eitelkeiten und sechserlei Wollüsteleien"). He analyses his works, great and small, one by one, measures them by his own patriotic standard, and declares them to be despicable. *Clavigo* he condemns, because Goethe makes Clavigo desert Marie. That he afterwards makes him die by the hand of her brother goes for nothing, in fact is only an additional cause of offence to Menzel, who knows that in real life Clavigo lived on happily, which make his death on the stage a mere *coup de théâtre*.<sup>10</sup> To find sufficient immorality in the play, the critic must, we observe, take advantage of his knowledge of circumstances that do not concern it. *Tasso* is to him Goethe's *Höflingsbekenntniss* (Confessions of a Courtier), in which he betrays the vanity of the *parvenu*, to whom the high rank of a woman is an irresistible attraction.<sup>11</sup> The reader will have no difficulty in imagining for himself all the moral reflections for which Menzel finds occasion in *Die Mitschuldigen*, in *Die Geschwister*, where "voluptuousness casts sidelong glances at the pretty sister," in *Stella*, where it craves the excitement of bigamy ("nach dem Reiz der Bigamie gelüftet"), and in the *Mann von fünfzig Jahren*, which is the special object of his indignation. Even *Wilhelm Meister* is to Menzel only an expression of the shamefully light esteem in which Goethe held true virtue, and the strong attraction which the outward conditions of rank possessed for him.<sup>12</sup> *Die Wahlverwandschaften* he regards as the type of "the novel of adultery," which takes for its theme the desire of voluptuousness after untried sensations ("die Wollüstelei, die das Fremde begehrt"). *Die Braut von Korinth* is simply the expression of the voluptuousness whose desire is set on corpses, "die sogar

noch in den Schauern des Grabes, in der Buhlerei mit schönen Gespenstern einen *haut goût* des Genusses findet"—(which even amidst the horrors of the grave finds a *haut goût* of sensual enjoyment in intercourse with beautiful spectres).

Where it is impossible to bring an accusation of immorality, Menzel returns to his accusation of want of originality. It is not only its glorification of middle-class Philistinism that stamps *Hermann und Dorothea* as an inferior work, but also the direct imitation of Voss's *Luise*. According to Menzel, Goethe showed real originality only in *Faust* and *Wilhelm Meister*, because in these two works he copied himself. In his youth he borrowed from Molière and Beaumarchais, from Shakespeare and Lessing, and his later iambic tragedies are "the fruits of his rivalry with Schiller." Added to all this, he was, God knows, no patriot.

Let us compare Börne's attacks on Goethe with Menzel's, and we shall find, in spite of similar extravagance of expression, this great difference, that Börne does not attempt to judge, still less to condemn Goethe's great works, nor does he condescend to accusations of sexual immorality; he invariably confines himself to attacking Goethe in his political relations. Saint-René Taillandier correctly observes that Börne gave expression to everything that was rankling in his heart when he took as motto for his review of Bettina's *Goethe's Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde* (*Goethe's Correspondence with a Child*), these words from *Prometheus*:—

Ich dich ehren? Wofür?  
Hast du die Schmerzen gelindert  
Je des Beladenen?  
Hast du die Thränen gestillet  
Je des Geängsteten?<sup>13</sup>

Though he could only appreciate those of Goethe's works in which the fire of youth was perceptible, his attacks are not based on contempt for the other works, but on the fact that Goethe, so highly favoured in the matter of ability and of social position, never thought of devoting that ability, that position, to the improvement of the existing conditions of life in Germany. It is easy to cull foolish passages conceived in Menzel's strain from Börne's works. In his *Journal* of 1830, for instance, he writes of Goethe's luck in having succeeded in imitating with his talent the handwriting of genius for sixty years without being detected; and in another place he calls Goethe the rhyming, Hegel the rhymeless, thrall.<sup>14</sup> But to understand these wild and regrettable outbursts, we must make ourselves acquainted with Börne's bill of accusation against both Goethe and Schiller.

He started from the premise (in all probability quite a false one) that Goethe, by making timely and energetic protest, could have prevented the Resolutions of Karls-



bad, could have secured the liberty of the press and the other spiritual rights of which the reaction had deprived the German nation. In any case, whatever the results might have been, he was firmly convinced that it was Goethe's duty to have protested. Instead of this, what happens? "Geheimrath von Goethe, the Karlsbad poet," as Börne, knowing that he goes there every year to drink the waters, satirically nicknames him, subscribes himself *servant* among other servants of his Prince ("wir sämmtlichen Diener"); confesses in his *Tag- und Jahres-Hefte* that he wrote his stupid little play *Der Bürgergeneral* (the whole plot of which hinges on the stealing of a pail of milk from the peasant Martin), with the intention of ridiculing the French Revolution; also confesses that, far from taking Fichte's part when that philosopher was accused of teaching atheism in the University of Jena, he was much annoyed at the vexation caused to the court by the outside interference which Fichte's utterances provoked.<sup>15</sup> Another cause of offence was the way in which, when Oken's *Isis* was published, Goethe bewailed the peaceful times brought to an end by the establishment of the liberty of the press in Weimar, "the further consequences of which every right-thinking man with any knowledge of the world foresees with alarm and regret."<sup>16</sup> And the same feeling of disappointment and mortification was aroused in Börne when he read that Schiller, whom he highly esteemed, had at the very crisis of the French Revolution declared in his announcement of the new periodical *Die Horen*, that from this publication everything in the nature of criticism of the government, of religion, or of the political questions of the day, would be expressly and strictly excluded.<sup>17</sup>

We must bear all this in mind when we read Börne's flaming denunciations—ablaze with a passion for liberty that forgets to be just—of Schiller and of Goethe, his lament that in their correspondence these two greatest minds of Germany show themselves so small that nothing at all would be better ("so Nichts sind—nein weniger als Nichts, so wenig"), and that they actually are what he, the confirmed democrat, considers the worst thing possible, a pair of confirmed aristocrats. He sees in Schiller a worse aristocrat than Goethe, for Goethe's partiality is merely for the upper classes of society, whereas Schiller will associate with none but the *élite* of humanity. It is Börne's belief that Goethe might have been the Hercules who should cleanse the Augean stables of his country; but he rather elected to fetch the golden apples of the Hesperides, and to keep them for himself.<sup>18</sup> He compares him in his own mind with the great productive spirits of other countries; with Dante, who championed the cause of justice; with Alfieri, who preached liberty; with Montesquieu, who wrote the *Lettres Persanes*; with Voltaire, who dared everything and gave up all his other occupations to assist a persecuted man, or to vindicate the memory of one who had been unjustly condemned to death; with the republican Milton; with Byron, whose life was one struggle against

tyranny, intelligent or unintelligent—and he summons him before the judgment seat of posterity. "That terrible, incorruptible judge will say to Goethe: A mighty mind was given to thee, didst thou ever employ it to oppose baseness? Heaven gave thee a tongue of fire, didst thou ever champion justice? Thou hadst a good sword, but it was drawn to defend thyself alone."<sup>19</sup>

We cannot deny that Börne has pointed to real flaws in Goethe's greatness, and to real limitations in his nature, even though we know that some of his qualities were bought at the price of these defects, and that a certain limitation was inevitable if the many-sidedness of his genius was not to be its bane. It was not for him to do what Börne required of him. Still we must understand the proportion of justice there is in Börne's attacks, to be able to forgive him this violent and foolish expression of resentment against Goethe during those years when the hopes of the Liberals in the results of the Revolution of July were receiving their double death-blow, from the subjection of the French Government to the power of the great financiers, and from the suppression of the Polish revolt. He is now more bitter and violent than ever. He calls Goethe a prodigious *obstructive* power, compares him to a cataract on the eye of Germany, and expresses the opinion that not until the old man of Weimar dies will German liberty be born. (Nov. 20, 1830.)<sup>20</sup>

It was on the 1st of October 1831, after whole days spent in despair over events which conveyed the impression, specially painful to this obstinately hopeful man, that France was lost and the reaction victorious, that his anger reached boiling-point. He took up Goethe's *Tag- und Jahres-hefte*, and was horrified by its author's "apathy." Goethe tells how, when he was with the army in Silesia in 1790, he wrote one or two epigrams, and how later, at the royal headquarters in Breslau, he lived the life of a hermit, completely engrossed in the study of comparative anatomy. He adds that what originally led to his taking up this study was his finding a half-cloven sheep's skull one evening in Venice on the sand-hills of the Lido.

"What!" writes Börne, "Goethe, a highly gifted man, a poet, in the best years of his manhood . . . to be in the council of war, in the camp of the Titans, on the very spot where, forty years before, the audacious yet sublime war of kings against their peoples began, and to find no inspiration in these surroundings, to be moved to neither love nor hatred, neither prayer nor curse, to nothing but a few epigrams, which he himself does not consider worth offering the reader. And with the finest of regiments, the handsomest of officers passing in review before him, he finds nothing better to turn his attention to than comparative anatomy! And walking by the sea-shore in Venice—Venice, that *Arabian Night* in stone and mortar, where everything is melody and co-