

The Encyclopedia of Romantic Literature

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Volume I

A-G

WILEY-BLACKWELL 

A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

Bildungsroman

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A predominantly German development within the broader formal-aesthetic project of the modern novel, the *Bildungsroman* first makes its appearance in the later eighteenth century and continues well into literary modernism and beyond. Not without deeper historical reasons, attempts to define this sub-genre often come across as rather banal: 'a novel in which the chief character, after a number of false starts or wrong choices, is led to follow the right path and to develop into a mature and well-balanced man' (*Oxford Companion to German Literature*). To understand better the nature and significance of this formal innovation and its distinctive fusion of quotidian life with the development of average individuals, some preliminary remarks on the idea of *Bildung* are in order.

BILDUNG

The idea of *Bildung* as 'self-cultivation' (Bruford 1975) can be traced back to the classical Greek idea of *paideia* (see Jäger 1986). In Aristotle and Thucydides, the term denotes the progressive 'educating' (*παιδεία* = training and teaching, education) of young children and youths, whereas in Plato the word often signifies the result of such efforts (i.e., culture, learning, accomplishments). Central is the notion of the human individual as a dynamic being striving to attain the unique form (*εἶδος*) to which it owes its existence. The principal focus here is on the individual's self-government, albeit not in the modern sense of an autonomous self but as an agent whose flourishing hinges on his successful integration into (and distinct contribution to) the political and socioeconomic structures of the *polis*. Within Athenian culture, 'instruction' (*paideia*) and the art of 'inductive reasoning' (*επαγωγή*) aimed at enabling the child to derive general concepts from particular experiences are part

of a holistic and notably aristocratic ideal. Guided by the Platonic idea of the 'beautiful and the good', the individual strives to perfect an inherited social role and the concrete practices associated with it. *Bildung* in the Greek sense of *paideia* thus involves both the emulation of a metaphysical idea at the root (*εἶδος*) of the individual and the acquisition of 'practical reason' (*φρόνησις*) without which it would be impossible for the human individual to realize his metaphysically ordained end. Pedagogy thus is also frequently depicted as a 'shaping' or 'sculpting' (*πλαστική*) of the soul, a process guided by an underlying archetype or idea (Plato, *Rep.* 377c). Consistently, Platonic and neo-Platonic thought (from Socrates and Plato to Shaftesbury, Wieland, and Herder), 'pedagogy' and 'shaping' jointly define a creative process that aims to develop the human individual in accordance with the divine image as its proper telos. Thus Plato's demiurge 'desired that all things should be as like himself as they could be' (*Timaeus*, 29e). This conception anticipates the modern idea of *Bildung* and its narrative realization in the *Bildungsroman* at several levels. First, there is the emphatically practical and concrete (post-Scholastic) model of learning; second, the aim of *paideia* is to constitute the individual as *exemplary*; third, Athenian pedagogy is understood as leading the student towards an understanding of (practical) rationality. Consequently, *paideia* itself involves numerous instances of choice and judgment for which there can be no definitive art or technique (*τέχνη*). Instead, the development of the person is understood as an inherently unsystematic and difficult process, indeed a struggle; as Plato quotes the contemporary saying: 'fine things are difficult' (*Rep.* 435c). In the modern *Bildungsroman*, this tension between a rigid didacticism and a fluid, organic progression often plays itself out as a struggle between an older, rationalist parent-generation and a youthful protagonist of great affective and expressive intensity. Somewhat problematically, the classical Greek ideal of *paideia* came to merge with the

idea of human, embodied life as bearing its telos within itself (Grk. *entelecheia*). Later Pietism, by contrast, evades the Platonic-metaphysical conception of *Bildung* and its inherent optimism. Rather than situating the human being as striving to realize its latent meaning as the *imago dei*, the hyper-Augustinian writings of Francke, Zinzendorf, and other Pietists adopt a mimetic view of the finite human life as *imitatio Christi*, one that notably de-emphasizes the uniqueness of the individual and, indeed, typically views any sustained preoccupation with the self as inherently sinful.

Yet under the strong influence of Shaftesbury (translated into German in 1738) and that of Leibniz and Wolff, it is the eidetic model of the Platonic and Christian-Mystic traditions that ultimately prevails and substantially defines the conception of *Bildung* that we encounter in Weimar Classicism and German Romanticism. In ways that would prove crucial to the formation of the *Bildungsroman* and that even anticipate Freudian psychoanalysis, Shaftesbury's 'self-formation' and 'inward form' (translated into German as *Bildung* and *innere Bildung*, respectively) define *Bildung* as a narrative progression and spiritual ascent whereby latent images are gradually 'developed' (Leibniz's concept of *developmentum* is crucial here); likewise, Christian Wolff insists that the soul contains the images and unfolds them from within itself. Following Leibniz and the lyric poet Klopstock, Christoph Martin Wieland's *History of Agathon* (1766-7; rev. 1773 and 1794) is considered the first German Bildungsroman and a precursor of the psychological novel. Set in the late fifth century BC, the novel charts the growth and maturation of a gifted and beautiful Athenian youth. In Wieland's novel, *Bildung* oscillates between the artistic-creative sense of 'formation' and a more technical sense of 'education'. Wieland's emphatically Platonic formulation of such progress - 'Beings, spiritually formed, grow in beauty towards their archetype' (*Wesen, vom Geiste gebildet, verschönern sich ihrem Urbild entgegen*) - is taken up by J.G. Herder, the

Roman, proto-humanist idea of self-cultivation. In his *Tusculan Disputations* (II, 5), Cicero metaphorically connects the cultivation of mind to agrarian husbandry. Planting the field (*cultura*) yields fruit in notably uneven fashion, just as human efforts at self-cultivation do not always produce fully 'developed minds' (*animi culti*). The full realization of the individual's potential as a worthy representative of its 'humanity' (*humanitas*) thus hinges on the joint cultivation of several faculties (reason, speech, justice, and communication). In the event, though, the German term *Kultur* signifies, certainly beginning with the writings of Samuel Pufendorf (1632-94), something rather different from *Bildung* - namely, the broad and impersonal domain of 'cultivated life' (*vitae cultus* or *vitae cultura*). Not coincidentally, Pufendorf separates *cultura* from theology and, as an early Enlightenment thinker, sees 'cultivation' primarily as an attempt to subjugate the material world for the purpose of increased security and comfort. *Cultura* in the seventeenth century bears all the tell-tale signs of a modern, secular conception of life and, as such, signifies a process markedly different from the neo-Platonic and Christian idea of *Bildung* as the formation of the individual understood as the 'image of god' (*imago dei*).

The neo-Platonic notion of a gradual ascent is revived by Herder, Goethe, and Wilhelm von Humboldt, herein following influences of the Cambridge Platonists, Shaftesbury, and Berkeley. In Germany, this tradition becomes entwined with medieval mysticism (Meister Eckhart, Johann Arndt, Jacob Böhme) and early Pietism (Spener, Francke). For both strands, creation and rebirth, archetype and powers of the soul is to approach closer to the divine. Böhme in particular does much to strengthen the connection between the active 'forming' (*bilden*) of the soul and the knowledge of God. *Bildung* 'draws out' (*ausbilden*) the human being's divine potential, a claim that revives the Aristotelian and Leibnizian

young W. von Humboldt, J.H. Blumenbach, Goethe, and above all by Schiller.

At the same time, Wieland's use of *Bildung* and some neologisms derived from it (e.g., *bildsam* = susceptible of formation) amalgamates the Platonic notion of form (Grk. *εἶδος*; Ger. *Bild*) with residues of Erasmian humanism and, crucially, also with recent scientific research into plant biology. Here Cicero's agrarian trope of a 'cultivation of the soul' (*cultura animi*) reappears, first metaphorically, as the 'flourishing' and 'maturation' of the youth. Yet soon, *bilden* comes to signify both the biological and rational inner development of the human being as a fully integrated organism. Concurrently, the Platonic-mystic metaphysics gradually recedes, being supplanted by a more rationalist-scientific discourse about the 'husbandry' (*Pflanzenzucht*) for young people, a quasi-institutional model for realizing the individual's organic flourishing. It is in the later Wieland's writings, as well as in the botanical and historical speculations of Herder, Goethe, and the young Wilhelm von Humboldt during the late 1780s and early 1790s that a secularized, institutional, and morphological (i.e. formal-biological) conception of *Bildung* is being fully articulated (see Frau 2010b). In the second chapter ('Of the Individual Man, and the Highest Ends of His Existence') of W. von Humboldt's *Limits of State Action* (1792), the boundaries between the human being and the organic growth of plants have been effectively blurred. If, in the case of a given plant organism, we already observe it ascend slowly through the same stages of development as before, the sense of renewal and open-ended growth is far more palpable yet in the human being:

In man, the blossom fades away, it is only to give place to another still more exquisitely beautiful; and the charm of the last and loveliest is only hidden from our view in the endlessly receding vistas of an inscrutable eternity. Now, whatever man receives externally, is only as the grain of seed. It is his own active energy alone that can convert the germ of the fairest growth, into a full and precious blessing for himself. It leads to ben-

eficial issues only when it is full of vital power and essentially individual. The highest ideal, therefore, of the co-existence of human beings, seems to me to consist in a union in which each strives to develop himself from his own inmost nature, and for his own sake. (Humboldt 1993: 13)

For Humboldt, *Bildung* involves a distinctively middle-class programme of moral-aesthetic flourishing, as well as a broader philosophy of history in which discrete phases and 'cultures' organically succeed one another. Already in Herder's *Philosophy of History for the Bildung of Mankind* (1774), the intrinsic rationality of biological organisms is markedly aligned with human and divine creativity. Thus, while distinguishing the biological, theological, and aesthetic aspects of *Bildung*, Herder ultimately sees all of them working in perfect organic alignment. Just as the biological organism is teleologically ordered towards the fulfillment formally encapsulated in the seed, so the outward shape of the artwork realizes the idea (*εἶδος*) that had guided the artist in its creation; and all of these processes confirm the divine creator's conception, which is affirmed by the striving of individual beings as they advance to their intrinsic telos. From Herder's philosophy of history, to Kant's *Ideas for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* (1784), to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), all the way to Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* (1918/1922), *Bildung* thus comes to be employed as a master-trope for various philosophies of history. The *Bildungsroman* genre, which French philosopher Jean Hyppolite does not hesitate to apply to a reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, does indeed tend to enjambed micro- and macro-historical thinking. For Herder, who paves the way for nineteenth-century historicism, the objective of his 1774 book is to demonstrate that history involves an organic sequence of individual epochs which are not to be evaluated by some extrinsic set of criteria but, rather, on their own terms. His principal contention, namely, that history ought to be read *innamantly* – that is, as a formative process (*Bildung*)

the political and aesthetic culture of ancient Greece. An elegiac element – hinting that *Bildung* and indeed the *Bildungsroman* itself may be an unrealizable utopia of sorts – enters Hölderlin's novel and, between 1799 and 1804 grows more prominent in his lyric poetry. The same ambivalence also marks Schiller's aesthetic theory, less so his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* than his subsequent essay *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry* (1795). In this context, too, it is notable that a number of prominent *Bildungsroman* remain fragments, including Hölderlin's *Hyperton* and Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*; the hero's progression seems necessarily incomplete, and the significance of whatever advances these protagonists appear to have made remains deeply equivocal inasmuch as it is contingent on further developments; the vacillating nature of *Bildung* is nicely captured by some lines from the closing chapter of Hölderlin's *Hyperton*: 'I thought finally to have found the right path. I was wrong. Still, this latest jolt helped to return me to life' (*Ich glaubte, nun endlich auf dem rechten Wege zu seyn. Ich war es nicht. Indes brachte mich doch dieser neue Stoß wieder in's Leben* [Hölderlin 1943–88, vol. 3: 234]. Even in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1796), arguably most optimistic instance of the *Bildungsroman* genre, the central role of play, accidents, and coincidences suggests that the development of the protagonist is irreducibly contingent and provisional and that a straightforward teleological reading of the genre cannot be sustained even (see Moretti 1987; Redfield 1996; and Pfau 2010a).

BILDUNGSROMAN

Already in the so-called 'Oldest System-Program of German Idealism' (1799) typically attributed to Hegel, *Bildung* is closely tied to the project of a new 'ethics' whose 'first idea is of course the image of myself, as an absolutely free being. Along with the free, self-conscious being a whole world emerges – out of nothingness – the only true and conceivable *creatio ex nihilo*. Offering a *de facto* synopsis of the aesthetic program of the early *Bildungsroman*, the writer insists 'that the highest act of reason, that in which [reason] comprises all ideas, is an aesthetic act; and accordingly he proceeds to call for a new mythology of reason'. If one juxtaposes this one-page manifesto to Hölderlin's *Bildungsroman Hyperton*, written in the same year, Eckart Förster's alternative case for Hölderlin's authorship of the 'System-Program' (Förster 2005) seems quite convincing. In his *Hyperton*, Hölderlin (Hegel's former classmate from the Tübingen theological seminary) attempts an ambitious fusion of individual characterization typical of the novel with an analysis of the macro-historical shift from the ancient to the modern world. Strongly influenced by eighteenth-century neo-Platonism, and by Wieland and Herder in particular, *Hyperton* opposes a merely rationalist conception of human life. The Platonic realm of the idea remains the indispensable and inflexible foundation of all modern skepticism: 'Believe me, he who merely doubts will find contradiction and defect everywhere only because he knows the harmonious, flawless beauty that can never enter into thought proper' (*Denn, glaube es mir, der Zweifler findet darum nur in allem, was gedacht wird, Widerspruch und Mangel, weil er die Harmonie der mangellosen Schönheit kennt, die nie gedacht wird* [Hölderlin 1943–88, vol. 3: 81]). Unlike Wieland's Agathon, however, Hölderlin's protagonist remains deeply ambivalent, even despondent about the possibility of restoring

whose deep-structural logic tends to elude the individuals and communities caught up in a particular phase of it – will be extended and deepened in the 'Preface' to Hegel's *Phenomenology*.

conception of the human individual as *imago dei* – all contribute to the formal-narrative construct of the *Bildungsroman*. As the German word *Bild* gradually supplants the Latin *imago*, it is especially in those instances of the *Bildungsroman* that derive from a Catholic milieu (esp. in *Bildungsroman* by Novalis, Eichendorff, and Stifter) that marked emphasis is placed on the 'image' (*Bild*). The image here typically functions as a metaphysical source (Goethe's *Urbild*) motivating and guiding the youthful protagonist's gradual ascent towards a fully formed individual. The highly self-conscious ways in which Goethe, Novalis, Tieck, Eichendorff, Stifter, and others make use of *Bildung* and its numerous cognates (*Bilden*, *Bild*, *Bildsamkeit*, *einbilden*, *ausbilden*, *hinaufbilden*, *umbilden*, *anbilden*, etc.) also reflect the genre's unusually rich filiations with contemporary literary and aesthetic theory. The cross-fertilization of aesthetics and the *Bildungsroman* is arguably most conspicuous in the literary circles of Jena and Weimar between 1785–1805. Goethe's exchange of letters with Schiller during the composition of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795–6) is well known. As early as 1774, Friedrich Blanckenburg's *Essay on the Novel* had mounted a first defence of the modern novel as an aesthetic form legitimated by its manifest responsiveness to the historical conditions of the modern era. Blanckenburg emphasizes the difference between 'the customs of the former and the present world' and, in light of the novel's self-conscious historicity, insists that the genesis of the modern individual pivots on a struggle with the world as it is constituted. The novel is to depict the protagonist's 'becoming' (*Werden*) as 'a potential human being within the real world' (*eines möglichen Menschen der wirklichen Welt*).¹

The same focus on the 'inner history' (*die innere Geschichte*) and the powers of thinking and feeling' (*seine Denkkraft und Empfindungskraft*) also informs the young Wilhelm von Humboldt's writings on *Bildung* and Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1793–4). Yet in the Protestant, and particularly the Calvinist milieus of Germany, nar-

ratives of *Bildung* are often also consumed by soteriological questions facing the modern individual. Scrutinizing the self for signs of salvation here leads towards a markedly autobiographical and confessional inflection of the *Bildungsroman* as a type of life- or self-writing. By the later seventeenth century, Herdt remarks, 'individuals not only kept diaries but... also worked to "methodize" these, extracting from them a unified life-narrative; Far more than versions of the *Bildungsroman* produced from within a Catholic cultural milieu, however, the Calvinist emphasis on unflagging self-scrutiny (in Pepys and Bunyan, or in the German Pietist Jakob Spener) continually impairs the progression of the self because any claim of genuine self-transformation and moral purity is itself liable to be a manifestation of pride and, hence, inherently sinful. Puritan self-writing thus shows 'the self... simultaneously coming into focus and under suspicion. Confessing the utter bankruptcy of human agency, Puritan writers nevertheless established their agency through the act of narrative self-definition' (Herdt 2007: 205). This dynamic of self-scrutiny and -suspicion surfaces in its most exemplary form in book 6 of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. Entitled 'Confessions of a beautiful Soul', this book offers a self-contained autobiographical narrative of female *Bildung* with the protagonist gradually and at first reluctantly moving to accept aesthetic creativity and the 'image' (*Bild*) as a distinct and legitimate value not answerable to orthodox Pietist beliefs and teachings. Crucial for this development is the mediating agency of the Abbe, a 'secularized' former priest who, in a series of conversations late in the book, leads the female protagonist to embrace the material and creative worlds of nature and art as indispensable catalysts of fully realized personhood. Even so, it is generally the Calvinist strand of the *Bildungsroman* that proves more responsive to gender differences and to specifically female forms of self-cultivation and development. At least in part, this has to do with the much larger role of women in the rise of Pietism's anti-rationalist

the *Bildungsroman* is overwhelmingly defined by the enigma of socialization. Simply grasping the elusive rationality of everyday life becomes an enduring challenge, and the plot of the *Bildungsroman* is typically shaped by the protagonist's attempt at comprehending the structure of the Real, rather than by coping with extraordinary events. In later instances of the *Bildungsroman* – such as Stendhal's *Red and Black* (1830), Balzac's *Lost Illusions* (1837–43), Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861), Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* (1869), George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876), or Theodor Fontane's *Frau Jenny Treibel* (1892), the artistic and ennobling pursuits of earlier protagonists have for the most part been supplanted by conspicuously banal and materialistic concerns. As a result, boredom (*ennui*) and social estrangement (*anomie*), rather than a vision of plenitude and individual growth, tend to dominate the *Bildungsroman* of the later nineteenth century and, in turn, prepare for the dystopic versions of the genre found in high modernism (Joyce, Musil, Mann).

If Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1796) is typically seen as the consummate embodiment of the *Bildungsroman* genre, at least as it was received by the first half of the nineteenth century, it has also been pointed out (Sammons 1981) that Goethe's novel found virtually no successors; and its vaunted exemplarity may well be an illusion, given the far more dystopic and formally vexed later incarnations of the genre. In Goethe's novel – to which Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* was later conceived as a counter-example – the world confronted by the protagonist divides into the mercantile domain associated with his father (and found stale, conventional, and alien) and an unfamiliar, shifting, and often inscrutable kaleidoscopic array of different socio-cultural milieus: the bohemian world of itinerant theatre players; the mysterious circle of freemasons; the alien social grammar of the gentry and high aristocracy. The frequent choice of an artistic career by protagonists of the *Bildungsroman*, especially in the first half of the nineteenth century, reflects an

attempt to establish identities outside the social hierarchies and inherited convention of their parents' petit-bourgeois world. Concurrently, the protagonists' embrace of a bohemian, itinerant existence (in Moritz, Goethe, Eichenдорff, Keller, et al.) is entwined with a strong oedipal motif running through the *Bildungsroman* (see Swales 1976; Kittler 1978; Minden 1997). Thus, as the genre's pattern of socialization gradually contracts from broadly inclusive intergenerational kinship relations to the closed circuit of the modern nuclear family, the latter setting tends to be experienced as psychologically confining or as permeated by submerged and illicit sexual fantasies, such as the incest motif in Stifter's *Nachsommer* (1857), the sadistic sexual violence perpetrated among boys in the military academy of Musil's *Confusions of Young Törless* (1905), or the fusion of homoerotic fantasies with a longing for death in Mann's *Magic Mountain*. In Mann's novel in particular, the transformation of the Platonic image (*εἶδος*) by photography, film, x-ray, phonograph, also suggests that the genetic and organic continuity from a metaphysical source towards its fulfillment in the fully realized adult individual has all but broken down (see Pfau 2005; Downing 2006). The collapse of the ancient model of *paideia* is further signalled by the many absent or dead fathers in the modern *Bildungsroman*. Invariably, missing fathers cast a large and debilitating shadow over their prodigal or orphaned sons, with the result that the (mostly male) protagonists of the *Bildungsroman* experience their quest for a fully articulated understanding of the Real and their own place in it to be a task at once daunting and of existential urgency. That quest is further complicated by a pervasive sense of disorientation arising from the new reality of socio-economic and cultural mobility; identity in the *Bildungsroman* is not inherited but has to be creatively produced and expressively realized. In its narrative patterns, the *Bildungsroman* shows the protagonist often follows the 'withdrawal-and-return' figure that A. Toynebee had identified as a pervasive trait of Western narratives of culture. For Hegel, Goethe's

One of the strategies whereby the Romantic *Bildungsroman* signals the unreal, fantasy-like structure of the world inhabited by its protagonists involves the fusion of various genres. Fairytales, lyric poetry, Anacreontic songs, confessional writing, conversations, epistolary writing, etcetera all converge in a kind of meta-genre that Laoué-Labarthe and Nancy, building on Friedrich Schlegel's theory of a *Universaldichtung*, have explored at some length. Long before Mikhail Bakhtin was to develop his theory of the novel's polyphonic structure (*heteroglossia*), the Romantic *Bildungsroman's* fusion of different genres and modes also highlights the radically mediated character on which F. Schlegel had remarked in *Ideas* (1800, no. 44). Another strategy, continuing well into German Modernism (Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, *Death in Venice*, and *The Magic Mountain*) shows the genre and its purposes gradually losing sight of its erstwhile cultural and socio-economic objectives. At the same time, the idea of *Bildung* that had once furnished Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* with a deceptively teleological narrative structure succumbs to outright mercenary and philistine interests and petit-bourgeois values. Nietzsche's 1872 polemic *On the Future of our Educational Institutions* (*Bildungsanstalten*), Fontane's *Frau Jenny Treibel*, and Musil's *Confusions of Young Törless* show the bourgeois narrative fantasy of self-cultivation and moral self-authorization as an untrustworthy self-portrait with a hideous subtext (rather along the lines of Wilde's *Dorian Gray*). In these late instances of the genre, we find the *Bildungsroman* inexorably succumbing to its own unconscious, a sub-text that now usurps, unravels, and exposes both the psycho-sexual and ideological deformities of the late-nineteenth-century bourgeoisie, which continues to cling to its cultural fantasy of the *Bildungsroman* until both the genre and its demographic core-audience vanish in the trenches of World War I.

SEE ALSO: Austen, Jane; Godwin, William; Wollstonecraft, Mary.

William Meister confirms this pattern in that having 'sowed his wild oats' he gradually develops 'an appropriate attitude towards his surroundings world and 'at last gets his girl and some sort of position, marries her, and becomes as good a Philistine as others' (Hegel 1986, vol. 2: 220).

Yet Hegel's sardonic comment arguably overlooks the extent to which the *Bildungsroman's* frequently conventional plot-line is destabilized by complex, often uncanny and phantasmagorical inner developments. Not until the great modernist novels of Musil, Mann, or Woolf would the inwardness of the novel's protagonist present itself again as fully saturated by elements of fantasy. The Platonic origins of *Bildung* here play a particularly important role in that they explain why so often the developments betfalling the protagonist take on a quality of *déjà vu*, with seemingly novel empirical experiences merging with memories impossible to recover in full. Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and Eichendorff's *Presentiment and Presence* (*Ahnung und Gegenwart*), and Stifter's *Nachsommer* deploy the motif of 'recollection' (Grk. *αναμνησις*) to particularly rich effect. As Eichendorff puts it,

everything we have experienced, all things past, pass by us once more, only this time in greater seriousness and dignity; and, like the red of day-break, a promising future spreads out over the images [*Bilder*], and thus presentiment and recollection [*Ahnung und Erinnerung*] fashion a new world within us, and while we do indeed recall all the places and people, they now appear to us transfigured and altogether miraculous by a grander, more beautiful and powerful light [*in einem andern, wunderbaren Lichte*].

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, this phantasmagorical quality of the German *Bildungsroman* only intensifies, arguably culminating in the crystalline order of Adalbert Stifter's *Nachsommer* – a book whose contrast with the realism of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* of the same year (1857) could hardly be greater.

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- In the Author's Introduction to her novel, *The Last Man* (1826), Mary Shelley recounts her exploration, with a companion, of the ruined temples, baths, and classic spots (1) in the vicinity of Naples and Baiae in 1818. The central locale of this narrative is the cave of the Cumaean Sibyl, of Virgilian fame, in which, pressing onwards through passages untrodden by their superstitious guides, Shelley and her partner discover an inner cavern strewn about with leaves bearing writing in diverse ancient and modern languages – leaves that, once translated and (re)arranged, form the first-hand account of the apocalyptic events that constitutes the novel proper. Mary and Percy had explored the environs of Naples and Baiae
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