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German Intellectual History and American Romanticism: Spirit, Nature Philosophy, and the Occult

When Theodore Parker wrote in 1841 that German writings are "the most religious literature the world has seen" ("German Literature," 327) since the days of ancient Greece, he was expressing a common belief among the Transcendentalists that German intellectual history is the documentation of spiritual thought. From the various publications of German horror stories in *Blackwood's Magazine*, German Romanticism also received the reputation of being an eerie and mysterious literature that probed into the dark side of nature and the human mind. One critic expressed this ambiguous attitude towards German writings by stating "there are those who associate with the German mind all that is pure and lofty, and others, all that is to be dreaded in infidelity and mystical atheism."[1] This difference in viewing German writings as religious and pagan, and inspiring and horrifying at the same time, is rooted in German intellectual history, which combines the ideas of mysticism, nature philosophy, and the occult in the writings of Romanticism.

In the 1830s and 1840s, writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Edgar Allan Poe were attracted to a new kind of literature from Germany that provided a glimpse into man's involvement with the spiritual world. Although the religious and political life of America was founded on the empirical philosophy of Locke and the English Enlightenment, Romanticism drew its strength from the spiritual and metaphysical tradition of German Idealism, which had its roots in religious history. Emerson and the writers of Concord such as Theodore Parker, George Ripley, Margaret Fuller, James Freeman Clarke, Frederic Henry Hedge, James Elliot Cabot and Charles Sterns Wheeler generated the Transcendental movement from the German Idealist belief that the harmony of man and nature, spirit and substance, brought about a higher understanding of God. These authors were held together as a group through their appreciation of German writings and the belief that their lives contained a higher spiritual truth.

As a representative of the dark side of Romanticism, Poe drew inspiration from the German "schwarze Romantik," which investigated the belief that the interaction between man and spirit revealed the dark and mysterious side of the individual. Poe delved into man's connection to a spiritual world through the scientific and medical investigations of mesmerism, trance, sleepwalking, and metempsychosis. One can say

that for Emerson and the Transcendentalists the belief in spirit represented an upsurge of faith in mankind, while the emphasis on spiritual forces in Poe's writings signified the ominous presence of a supernatural world and the inexplicable dimensions of the human mind. What these authors shared was the conviction that man is connected to a higher spiritual force that is documented in the theological, philosophical, and literary writings of Germany.

The concept of "spirit" in German intellectual history has its roots in Mysticism, Pietism, philosophical Idealism, the scientific theories of the early nineteenth century, and Higher Biblical Criticism.[2] Although these influences were not incorporated into German Romanticism as one unified system, they were certainly contributing factors to the idea of an *unio mystica* at the center of German thought. As the foundation of German spiritual writings, Mysticism in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries emphasizes the belief that the spirit of God reveals itself to the human soul in order to provide life with meaning. As a collection of spiritual testimonies that were written by nuns in monasteries throughout Germany, early Mysticism proclaims a spiritual closeness to God through divine visions and revelations. In *Sci Vias* [know the ways] (1141-51), Hildegard von Bingen testifies that the light of God descended upon her "from the open heavens" (52) and flowed through her "heart and chest like a flame that did not burn, but rather warmed" (53). This same intimacy with the divine is found in Elisabeth von Schönau's prophetic work, *Visiones* (1152-60), in which a revelation from heaven enables her to witness "a light, endlessly brighter and more radiant than any light [she] was used to seeing, and in this light [she] saw many thousands of saints" (80). Mechthilde von Magdeburg in *Fließendes Licht* (1250-70) expresses an infinite longing of her soul to be with the spirit of God "so that after the death of this body" her soul "may remain unaffected and untarnished" (103) and her "enemies cannot cause [her] harm" (104). As the spiritual descendant of these early mystical visionaries, Meister Eckhart proclaims his intimacy with the divine through love and passion rather than prophetic visions. In the sermon of 1320, "Scitote, quia prope est regnum dei" [you should know the Kingdom of God is near], Meister Eckhart asserts that closeness to God results from surrendering one's identity to the spirit of God because "if one's soul is to recognize God, it must also lose and forget itself" (39). As part of his belief that God encompasses all things, Eckhart declares that communication with the divine can take place in church or in the fields "for God is in all things and in all places at the same time" (37).

In the realm of natural philosophy an important work that caught the imagination of the German Romantics is Theophrast von Hohenheim's treatise on elementary spirits entitled *De nymphis, sylphis, pygmaeis et salamandris et de caeteris spiritibus* (1530). In this mystical and scientific investigation that explores the existence of spiritual beings in the world, Paracelsus classifies elementary spirits into the four groups: undinae, sylvestres, gnomi, and vulcani which reside in the natural elements water, air, land and fire respectively. As human beings move about freely in the realm of air, these spirits live in their respective natural elements, experience day and night, and are in no danger of either "drowning, nor suffocating, nor burning" (126). Paracelsus explains that elementary spirits are both human and spiritual and embody the characteristics of

both: like spirits they wander freely "through solid walls" without "breaking anything" (120) and like human beings they bear "children and offspring, eat and talk, drink and walk, which are things that spirits do not do" (120). As the hybrid of both "spirits and human beings" (121), elementary spirits are "special creatures" (121) which have no human soul and are mortal. Since elementary spirits "do not have a soul" (123), they acquire spiritual life through marriage to human beings, just as mankind gains salvation through the spirit of God. Whereas vulcani are mostly seen as "burning lights in meadows and fields that run through and against one another" (135), and the gnomi remain in the mountains as visionaries and prophets, undinae "come out of the water, allow us to meet them, interact and walk with us, return to the water, and come back again" (132).

Although Poe never realized that Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's *Undine* was derived from Paracelsus's work, he wrote an applauding review of the German fairy tale in Burton's *Gentleman's Magazine* in September 1839, calling it "the finest romance in existence" (173). In this review, Poe reiterates some of Paracelsus's important ideas by quoting from Fouqué's work. He writes that Undine belongs to a "race of water-spirits" that differ from mankind in that they possess no soul and "have no other means of obtaining a soul, than by forming, with an individual … the most intimate union of love" (171). However, without marriage to human beings, these elementary spirits "vanish into air at death, and go out of existence, spirit and body, so that no vestige" (171) of them remains. Burton R. Pollin argues that Poe's sonnet "The Island of the Fay" borrows heavily from Fouqué's *Undine* for its use of "the many atmospheric and descriptive touches, and the central theme – of the elementary beings whose soulless life and death arouse melancholy reflections in the mind of the observer" (72).

As the synthesis of the German mystical thinkers who paved the way for a spiritual relationship with the divine, and the natural philosophy of Paracelsus, Jakob Boehme maintains in his post-Reformation work *Aurora* (1612) that all of nature is part of one divine system "including all of creation, the heavens and the earth, as well as the stars, the natural elements, and the creatures" (1.1) and that within God Himself are the qualities of both good and evil. As part of a long tradition of spiritual nature philosophy that achieves its high point in German Idealism, Boehme asserts that each element of nature reveals the signature of God's greatness so that the "round sphere" (3.18) of the universe without beginning or end expresses the magnitude of God the Father, "the sun" (3.20) at its center signifies the love and joy of the Son, and the "moving spirit" (3.35) of nature represents the Holy Spirit. Boehme's writings are a theosophical approach to Christianity which attempt to reveal to man the creation of the universe, the existence of good and evil, and the possibility of the soul's rebirth through the light of God.

The American Transcendentalist Amos Bronson Alcott was greatly influenced by Boehme's writings and his "Boehmenist mysticism appears overtly in virtually all of [his] books" (Versluis, 155). Emerson's interest in Boehme's works stems from Alcott who encouraged him to read "the German mystic and also played a considerable role in promoting the popularity of Boehme's writings among the chief members of the

Transcendentalist movement" (Hurth, "Uses of a Mystic Prophet," 222). Emerson read Boehme's *Aurora* in English translation in 1835 and wrote in a journal entry in 1836 that the German mystic was one of the unprecedented thinkers of modern Germany. In another entry from 1835, Emerson wrote that "Swedenborg, Guyon, Fox, Luther & perhaps Bohmen [*sic*]" each show that the discovery of God "must be sought within, not without" and "each perceives the worthlessness of all instruction, & the infinity of wisdom that issues from meditation" (*Journals*, 5:5). Similar to Boehme who moved away from "closely-worded doctrines of faith" in "Protestant Orthodoxy" by searching for the meaning of "God within" (Hurth, "Uses of a Mystic Prophet," 227), Emerson was able to escape from the confines of traditional Unitarianism and a literal reading of the Bible through a personal relationship with God in nature itself.

The religious movement of Pietism, which extends from the late seventeenth century to the Enlightenment and includes authors such as Philipp Jacob Spener, August Hermann Francke and Graf Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, consciously draws on the tradition of German Mysticism that flows through the writings of Paracelsus and Boehme. As a response to the confines of orthodox Protestantism, Pietism stresses a personal experience with God through active devotion, the expression of one's inner self in the form of subjectivity, independence from the doctrines of the Church, and participation in the congregation as the spiritual body of Christ. In the central document of the movement, *Pia Desideria* [pious desires] (1675), Spener instructs his parishioners to know the word of Scripture for themselves, "to read from them openly, to instruct one another as brothers" (57), to practice the word of God through good deeds, and to extend "fervent love among Christians" (62). With these ambitions in mind, Spener encourages the establishment of "collegia pietatis" in order to study Scripture so that "everyone can express whatever seems important to him about each verse and how he believes he can apply these verses to himself and to others" (76). Although Emerson and the Transcendentalists were not directly affected by the reforms of German Pietism, these ideas certainly brought about reforms in the Church that later led to one's personal involvement in the ministry and the freedom to experience God for oneself in Transcendentalism.

The philosophical movement of German Idealism combines the ideas of mysticism and nature philosophy in one system as the basis of man's spiritual relationship with God. One can regard the development of philosophical thought in the writings of Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Wilhelm Josef Schelling, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel as the gradual realization that the divine spirit reveals itself to mankind through nature itself. While Kant argues that a priori ideas connect one to the essence of phenomena, and Fichte provides the ego with infinite moral and imaginative power in creating the world, Schelling and Hegel propose that nature possesses spirit that is analogous to the spirit of man. In "Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Nature" (1797), Schelling moves beyond the limitations of analytical science which investigates only the quantitative, qualitative, and mechanical movement of objects but not the essence of phenomena itself. He argues that while Newton examined the external motion of objects and Leibnitz regarded the spiritual aspect of phenomena, the two sides must be brought together in one system that combines both spirit and

substance (1:674-75). For this reason, Schelling draws upon the pantheistic philosophy of Spinoza and the principles of nature philosophy to show that man and nature originate from a common spiritual source that joins them in transcendental harmony. Schelling's belief that natural bodies are made of "matter and mutually attract one another" (679) and that a physical body "can move another body without being moved itself" (677), lead to later investigations in speculative science concerning the relationship of nature to the human mind.

The writings of Kant and Schelling enabled the Transcendentalists to liberate themselves from the confines of conservative Unitarian theology and showed them that "transcendental" knowledge allows one to move beyond mere sensory experience and provides a glimpse into nature itself. In *The Transcendentalist* (1842), Emerson clearly states that New England Transcendentalism received its name and philosophical basis from Kantian a priori philosophy over the empirical philosophy of Locke.[3] Emerson also received a great deal of information on Schelling's writings from Coleridge and Carlyle, which helped him to develop his own philosophy of nature. In *Nature* (1836), Emerson asserts that the spirit of man and the innate spirit of nature are joined in transcendental harmony when these two spiritual forces come together.[4] Other Transcendentalists such as Hedge, Clarke, and Cabot played an important role in the reception of German philosophical thought. In 1833, Hedge applauded Coleridge for his accomplishments as a philosopher and his interpretation of German philosophy in "Coleridge's Literary Character." Most importantly, Hedge provided the *Dial* in 1843 with an English translation of Schelling's introductory lectures in Berlin and outlined the writings of several prominent German writers and philosophers in his *Prose Writers of Germany* in 1848. Clarke paid tribute in 1838 to the work of the Scottish writer Carlyle in "Thomas Carlyle: The German Scholar" for having introduced the Transcendentalists to numerous German writers and philosophers. Cabot contributed to the Transcendentalists' understanding of Kant by writing "Immanual Kant" in 1844, outlining Kant's philosophical ideas for a New England audience. Cabot also translated sections of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and Schelling's *On the Relationship of the Plastic Arts to Nature* in 1848.

German intellectual thought at the beginning of the nineteenth century also involved the scientific and medical theories that examined the relationship between natural forces and the human soul. In *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft* (1808), Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert investigates how the phenomena of sleepwalking, clairvoyance, and animal magnetism connect the human spirit to a world-soul which extends from the planets to the smallest organisms. Schubert asserts that all elements of nature are part of a "world-soul" which makes possible "the transition from one existence to another and the eternally harmonious interaction of the universe in all its parts" (372). In this sense, the world-soul is continuously in the process of developing "new creations" (373) and bringing about the harmony of individual components of nature. Schubert explains that all elements of nature have a magnetic effect upon one another so that bodies nearest in proximity are most influenced by this natural power. Since the "spirit of life" is present in all living organisms, this magnetic force also has an influence on human beings especially in "such moments of mesmerized trance,

sleepwalking, insanity" (363) and similar conditions. Patients in a mesmeric trance have a heightened awareness of metals with magnetic power, share the sensations of other patients through telepathic communication, and even detect objects around them. Another aspect of animal magnetism is the relationship between the patient and mesmerist, which causes their minds and souls to merge and form a situation of dependency. In the state of mesmerism, patients are able to draw upon an "inner light" which flows through "their whole bodies" (357) and recognize individuals entering a room, to look inside their own bodies to detect internal disorders, and to come into contact with the spiritual forces of nature. These writings became the foundation of the German "schwarze Romantik" in dealing with the phenomena of sleepwalking, clairvoyance, telepathy, melancholy, psychopathology, premonitions, criminality, and the divided self.

As an investigator in the field of mesmerism, Poe attended lectures on the subject and even wrote a review of William Newnham's book, *Human Magnetism*, for *The Broadway Journal* in 1845. Although Poe disagreed with some of the "*curative* effects of magnetism" in Newnham's work, he claimed that "the prodigious importance of the mesmeric influence in surgical cases: – that limbs, for example, have been amputated without pain through such influence, is what we feel to be fact" (210, Poe's italics). The extensive use of mesmerism in his writings shows a profound influence of these German writings. Poe concentrates on the topic of mesmerism in his trilogy "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains" (1844), "Mesmeric Revelation" (1844) and "The Facts in the Case of Mr. Valdemar" (1845). In the first tale, Poe depicts the mesmerist as someone who exercises psychological control over his patient as a display of his own magnetic powers. Dr. Templeton forces his patient Bledloe to experience a strange vision from his own past in Calcutta during "the insurrection of Cheyte Sing, which took place in 1780" (*Collected Works*, 3:949) through a "water-colour drawing" (948). "Mesmeric Revelation" involves a discussion between the narrator and his mesmerized subject who dies while in a trance, and "The Facts in the Case of Mr. Valdemar" describes a patient in a mesmerized state, who according to the doctors, should already have died.

In "Berenice," (1835) the theme of mesmerism takes on an added dimension through the use of sleepwalking and trance. In this tale, the narrator is driven by the will of his subconscious to live out his "frenzied desire" (*Collected Works*, 2:215) to remove his wife's teeth in a trance. The narrator describes his illness as kind of "monomania" (211) and an "*intensity of interest*" (211, Poe's italics) that causes him to focus on objects and lose himself in their contemplation. Like the sleepwalker who carries out actions that are rooted in the subconscious, the narrator learns that his wife's grave has been desecrated, "the disfigured body enshrouded" (218), and her teeth removed. Worst of all is the fact that the woman was "still breathing – still palpitating, *still alive*" (218, Poe's italics) when the crime took place and that "some instruments of dental surgery, intermingled with thirty-two small, white, and ivory-looking substances" (219) are found scattered on the floor of his room.

In "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843), the narrator commits murder because of his fixed idea about the old man's "pale blue eye, with a film over it" (*Collected Works*, 3:792). Although he cannot "say how first the idea" (792) entered his mind, the mere

sight of the eye causes his blood to run cold so that he "made up [his] mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid [himself] of the eye forever" (792). During one of his nocturnal vigils at the threshold of the old man's bedroom, a "dim ray" (794) of light shoots from the crevice of the door onto the old man's "vulture eye" (794) and fills the narrator with uncontrollable rage that drives him to commit murder. "It was open – wide, wide open – and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness – all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones" (794). In "The Cask of Amontillado" (1846), the narrator carries out his fixed idea for revenge by luring his enemy, Fortunatus, into the catacombs of his estate and then burying him alive. Although the narrator never elaborates on "the thousand injuries" (*Collected Works*, 3:1256) that he suffered from Fortunatus, he carefully executes his revenge by informing him that he has purchased a shipment of Amontillado wine and is on the way to Luchesi to request his advice. "Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry," Fortunatus replies, "come, let us go" (1258). The narrator craftily carries out his fixed idea for revenge by chaining Fortunatus to the walls of a recess in the catacombs and with "building stone and mortar" (1262) buries his enemy alive under ten tiers of masonry.

Another work in the field of natural science is Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling's *Theorie der Geisterkunde* (1808), which provides a connection between the natural sciences and the occult by investigating the composition of the spiritual world through reports and documentation. Jung-Stilling asserts that the "material world consists largely of beings that are unknown to us" (468) and that we are unable to perceive them because we exist in time and space and our senses are limited to the surface of the material world. In the spiritual world there are good and bad spirits as well as "the souls of dead people" (657) which contact human beings through the spirit of God. These spirits are composed of a substance that resembles "light" and "electricity" and provides the sensation of "cool air" (657) when passing the human body. There are numerous ways in which the spiritual world comes into contact with human spirit such as through mesmerism, premonitions, prophecy, and witchcraft. Jung-Stilling argues that our connection to the spiritual world is through our souls, which radiate a "sky-blue shimmer of light" (488) and allow us to come into contact with the souls of both the living and the dead.

The theme of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of the soul, can be readily found in Poe's tales "Morella" (1835), "Metzengerstein" (1836), and "Ligeia" (1838). In the first tale, the narrator asserts that through his wife he became acquainted with a number of those mystical writings of early German literature and that the "wild Pantheism of Fichte" (*Collected Works*, 2:226) and "the doctrines of *Identity* as urged by Schelling" (226, Poe's italics) was "almost the sole conversation of Morella" (216) and himself. As the central theme of this story, the narrator is foremost interested in what happens to the soul (which he calls identity) "*which at death is* or *is not lost forever*" (226, Poe's italics). The narrator's wife, Morella, dies at an early age and leaves her husband with a child who is identical to the mother. After the death of his daughter, the narrator discovers that Morella's soul had been residing in his daughter throughout the years because his wife is missing from her tomb when he prepares his daughter's

enshrinement: "she died; and with my own hands I bore her to the tomb; and I laughed with a long and bitter laugh as I found no trace of the first, in the charnel where I laid the second—Morella" (236).

In a similar story about metempsychosis, the narrator in "Ligeia" experiences the death of his wife whom he met in a "large, old, decaying city near the Rhine" (*Collected Works*, 2:310) and who was well versed in "the many mysteries of transcendentalism" (316). Out of grief of losing her, the narrator marries Lady Rowena Tevanion of Tremaine, whom he grows to despise "with a hatred belonging more to a demon than a man" (323), and he hopes that Ligeia will return to "the pathway she had abandoned" (323). Immediately following Lady Rowena's death, the narrator detects "some palpable although invisible object" (325) that passes by his body, "a gentle foot-fall upon the carpet" (325), and a distinct "tremor upon the lips" (328) of the corpse. As Lady Rowena opens her eyes, the narrator recognizes "the full, and the black, and the wild eyes . . . of the Lady Ligeia" (330) whose spirit has returned to the body of his second wife.

An important spiritual influence on the New England Transcendentalists involves the so-called Higher Biblical Criticism of Johann Jakob Griesbach, Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, David Friedrich Strauß, Johann Gottfried von Herder, and Friedrich Schleiermacher. Like their religious predecessors in the tradition of Mysticism and Pietism who emphasized a personal relationship with the divine, these theologians attempted to establish an intuitive and spiritual connection with God by re-evaluating religion and the traditional reading of the Bible. For the Unitarian ministers Emerson, Parker, Ripley, Hedge and Clarke, these religious authors helped to liberate Transcendentalism from the confines of a literal interpretation of the Bible.[5] As the forerunner of the German historical speculators, Griesbach proposes a spiritual reading of the Bible by interpreting the New Testament as a single narrative that is shared by the apostles. In his 1776 "Commentatio qua Marci Evangelium totum e Matthaei et Lucae commentariis decerptum esse monstratur" [a study which shows that the entire Gospel of Mark was taken from the texts of Matthew and Luke], Griesbach offers a parallel reading of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke without interrupting the chronology of these stories. By using the tools of synoptic research and listing events from the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke in columns next to one another, Griesbach shows that all three gospels are derived from a common source and that Mark borrowed heavily from both Matthew and Luke. Griesbach asserts that Mark retained the chronological order from Matthew and Luke while borrowing from both sources (108), that all of Mark's stories are found in the texts of the other two apostles (110), and that Mark is in alternating agreement with both Matthew and Luke (113). In a similar manner, Eichhorn attempts to prove in *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (1804) that the gospels of the New Testament are derived from a common source in Aramaic or vulgar Hebrew. Eichhorn asserts that the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were taken from a "common source" (155) which not only provided the story of Christ's life, but also served as a guideline for the translation of the gospels into Greek (182). Since the gospels of the three apostles often correspond word-for-word with one another, similarities in the gospels stem either from an original Aramaic text or

the congruity of a single Greek translation. Griesbach and Eichhorn did not attempt to disprove the historical existence of Christ's life, but rather to demonstrate that one should search for spirit beyond the literal word of the Bible.

The most extreme position of the historical speculators is presented by Strauß in *Das Leben Jesu* (1835) by asserting that the New Testament is comprised of a series of myths built on the prophesies of the Old Testament with no basis in fact. Strauß argues that since Christ was part human and part God one cannot hope to reconstruct his life according to chronological history. Instead he employs the tools of synoptic research along with the study of myths from the Hebraic tradition to illuminate the life of Jesus. The miracles of the New Testament are not to be understood in a literal sense but rather for their prophetic and symbolic worth. The curing of the blind is meant in the metaphorical sense of opening one's eyes to the Lord (138), being possessed by demons "has the same meaning as being insane or crazy" (168), touching Christ's garments to become cured has the same psychological power that is associated with sacred relics (172), the story of Jesus awakening the dead illustrates that he has the power to do so on judgment day (184), and the stories of calming the seas and walking on water have mythological worth that is derived from the Old Testament (216-17). Strauß's purpose is not to discredit the historical validity of Christ's life, which centers around the tradition of miracles and divinity, but rather to show that the New Testament is witness to the presence of spirit that exists beyond a literal reading of the Bible.

Higher Biblical Criticism was at the center of the controversy between the Transcendentalists and the Unitarian ministry and a contributing factor for Emerson's decision to leave the ministry on the issue of the Lord's Supper. Emerson was first introduced to writings of German biblical criticism through his brother William, who studied theology in Göttingen in 1824 and attended "Eichhorn's lectures on the first three evangelists" (Packer, 72). These writings had such a revolutionary impact on William that when he returned to New England "he defied family expectations, announcing that his ministerial ambitions had come to an end" (Hurth, "Historical Speculators," 192). These theological works also had great influence on Ralph Waldo Emerson's theological thinking since he resigned as a Unitarian minister in 1832 unable to serve the Lord's Supper in good conscience. Subsequent works such as *Nature* (1836) and *The Divinity School Address* (1838) bore the revolutionary spirit of these theological writings, challenging Unitarian authorities and spurring on the controversy with Andrews Norton on the question of "miracles" and "Christ's divinity."[6] In 1839 Norton accused the Transcendentalists of heresy in "A Discourse on the Latest Form of Infidelity," referring to them as "the German school of infidelity" (21-22).

Higher Biblical Criticism also had a profound effect on other Unitarian ministers such as Ripley and Parker. In 1835 Ripley wrote a review of Herder's *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* and an essay on Herder in 1840 entitled "Letter to a Theological Student," in which he recommended the writings of Herder as a means of reforming the Church. In 1836 Ripley also published "Schleiermacher as a Theologian," referring to him as the greatest thinker to fathom the philosophy of religion. He also responded directly to the Norton controversy in "'The Latest Form of Infidelity' Examined" (1839) by criticizing Norton for his "insistence that miracles are the only possible

proof of Christianity" (Hutchison 197). Parker defended this position in a review of Strauß's *Das Leben Jesu* in 1840, arguing that "miracles" and "Christ's divinity" are not necessary for true faith. He reinforced this opinion in 1841 in *A Discourse on the Transient and Permanent in Christianity*, claiming that the existence of "spirit" is more important than the religious institutions themselves.

Emerson and the Transcendentalists borrowed openly from the literary, philosophical, and theological writings associated with German intellectual history and witnessed in these documents an inherent spiritual truth. It was not uncommon for these theologians to perceive the writings of Boehme, Kant, Schelling, Schleiermacher, Herder, and Strauß as belonging to the same intellectual tradition that testified to the existence of a spiritual world. For this reason they called their religious and literary movement "Transcendentalism" for it proclaimed that knowledge exists beyond mere sensory experience and provides insight into a higher spiritual world. While Emerson and the Transcendentalists drew upon the tradition of spirit and nature philosophy that flowed through the writings of German intellectual history, Poe borrowed from motifs of the German "schwarze Romantik" that are found in the writings of Paracelsus, Boehme, Schubert, and Jung-Stilling. Although Poe strongly denied the influence of German Romanticism as a source of terror in his writings, the German motifs of the mesmerism, trance, metempsychosis, and fixed ideas in his tales point to an overwhelming affinity with these German writings.

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Notes

[1] "*Undine*, from the German of Baron de la Motte Fouque." *Christian Examiner* 27 (1840): 398.

[2] All translations in this article are my own and are based on the respective German texts in "Works Cited."

[3] "It is well known to most of my audience, that the Idealism of the present day acquired the name of Transcendental, from the use of that term by Immanuel Kant, of Konigsberg [sic], who replied to the skeptical philosophy of Locke, which insisted that there was nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the experience of the senses, by showing that there was a very important class of ideas, or imperative forms, which did not come by experience, but through which experience was acquired; that these were intuitions of the mind itself; and he denominated them *Transcendental* forms. The extraordinary profoundness and precision of that man's thinking have given vogue to his nomenclature, in Europe and America, to that extent, that whatever belongs to the class of intuitive thought, is popularly called at the present day *Transcendental*." (Emerson, *Collected Works*, 1: 206-7.)

[4] For Schelling's influence on Emerson's *Nature* see Patrick Labriola, "Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature*: Puritan Typology and German Idealism," *The Concord Saunterer* 10 (2002): 125-133.

[5] For the influence of German literary, philosophical, and theological writings on the American Transcendentalists see Patrick Labriola, "Germany and the American Transcendentalists: An Intellectual Bridge," *The Concord Saunterer* 6 (1998): 99-113.

[6] For a comprehensive investigation of the controversy between Andrews Norton and the Transcendentalists see Henry A. Pochmann, *German Culture in America*, 207-22.

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