



A Romantic Circles Scholarly Resource

***William Taylor of Norwich:
A Study of the Influence of Modern German
Literature in England (1897)***

By Georg Herzfeld

Translated by Astrid Wind

Edited with an Introduction by David Chandler

And with a Foreword by Frederick Burwick

ABSTRACT: This is a critical biography of William Taylor of Norwich (1765-1836), translated from the German of Georg Herzfeld (1897), with additional introduction and notes. Apart from J. W. Robberds' long and ponderous *Memoir of the Life and Writings of William Taylor of Norwich* (1843), this is the fullest introduction to Taylor and his work available. Herzfeld pays particular attention to Taylor's German interests, and shows him to have been a key figure in Anglo-German literary relations in the Romantic era.

Foreword

By Frederick Burwick

William Taylor's contribution to the reception of German literature in Britain would have been significant if he had done nothing more than translate Gottfried Bürger's "Lenore." The strident rhythms of his English version gave a new thrust to the "ballad revival" of the period, and both William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge expressed their excitement upon first reading it in 1796 (Wu 20-21, 101). Taylor, of course, contributed much more. His many translations from the German were a major factor in furthering the British interest in German literature. In addition to the reception of primary texts, Taylor also shaped the reception history. His three-volume *Historic Survey of German Poetry* (1830) is, in fact, both reception and reception history. It is part of the primary reception because its 1,455 pages are filled with translations of German poetry. It is also a history of the literature, tracing the developments from Old and Middle High German up to the present time. Most usefully for today's scholars, it is a reception history, identifying an entire historical range of English translators and their interests in German literature.

Reception history in literature is not linear. Even when traced within the boundaries of an author's own language, there are entangled knots. Seamus Perry, for example, has recently given close attention to the mediating role of T. S. Eliot underlying the opposing views of I. A. Richards and William Empson in their respective assessments of Coleridge as poet and critic. Far more entangled is the history that attempts to trace the transnational reception. The literary response from one country to another is subject to the same political, economic, and cultural currents and counter-currents that are everywhere operative in international relations.

As part of the response to the literature of one country among the readers, translators, and critics in another country, is the awareness of a degree of reciprocity. It would be crass and unfair to reduce this reciprocity to a trade agreement: "I will read your books if you read mine." Nevertheless, a cursory look into reception history confirms that from the international perspective reception almost immediately gives rise to a reception of the reception, and then to a reception of the reception of the reception. Here's an example: Shakespeare's plays had a huge impact in Germany

during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The extent of that impact can be appraised in the plays of Friedrich Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the translations and the criticism of August Wilhelm Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck. The German reception of Shakespeare is then followed by the English reception of the German reception, evident in Coleridge's translations and criticism (Burwick, "Coleridge and Shakespeare"). Soon Coleridge's reception becomes the subject of another wave of German reception (Burwick, "The Reception of Coleridge"). And so it goes. Literary reception operates as a kind of international cultural currency.

As a major figure in this international trade during the Romantic period, Taylor stands alongside Coleridge, Thomas De Quincey, and Thomas Carlyle as a leading mediator in Anglo-German literary relations. For an understanding of the British reception of German literature, Taylor's *Historic Survey of German Poetry* is indispensable. And for the reception of that reception, the indispensable text is Georg Herzfeld's *William Taylor von Norwich: Eine Studie über den Einfluss der neueren deutschen Litteratur in England* (1897).

During the period in which Taylor wrote, the Hanoverian kings were on the British throne. This dual-rule created an effective liaison between Britain and Germany which was made even stronger by the mutual opposition to the "Bloody Reign of Terror" in France and, subsequently, the Napoleonic Wars. Taylor's *Historic Survey of German Poetry* repeatedly affirms a sense of national affinities. At the time Herzfeld wrote, Wilhelm II had become Kaiser (1888) and had visited London (1891) to cement relations between the two countries. Further, the two countries reached accord on the Cameroons. It was a period in which Anglo-German relations were again amicable. In his monograph on Taylor, Herzfeld reminded an academic and literary audience in Germany of the strong cultural affinities shared by the two countries at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Hampering the reception of the reception of the reception is the fact that Herzfeld's work has not been easily accessible and has not been previously translated. There is good reason, then, to welcome Astrid Wind's carefully executed translation. She has the double advantage of being a native speaker of German and an outstanding scholar of British Romanticism. As editor of her translation, David Chandler has also provided an astute and succinct introduction to the careers of both William Taylor and Georg Herzfeld, and his annotations add depth, accessibility, and enrichment to Herzfeld's commentary. For example, when Herzfeld discusses the harsh review in

which Carlyle condemned the inaccuracies and omissions of Taylor's *Historic Survey of German Poetry*, most readers will not be aware of Carlyle's motives. In his notes, however, Chandler points out that Carlyle himself had accepted a commission to write such a survey, which he then had to abandon when Taylor's three-volume work appeared. Carlyle had been equally venomous in responding to De Quincey's review of Carlyle's translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*.

This edition adheres to the highest scholarly standards. Astrid Wind and David Chandler have restored for our present generation of scholarship one of the most valuable studies in Anglo-German reception history.

Editor's Introduction

By David Chandler

George Borrow described William Taylor of Norwich (1765-1836) as “the founder of the Anglo-German school in England” and “the father of Anglo-Germanism” (Borrow 6:219, 220). Two modern critics, well equipped to judge the point, have stated that Taylor “probably did more than any other man before Carlyle, through translations and critical papers in the *Monthly Review* [and other forums], to spread the knowledge of German literature among his countrymen” (Morgan and Hohlfeld 51). Interest in Taylor in no sense ends with his “Anglo-German” activities, however. In *The Spirit of the Age* Hazlitt asserted that: “The style of philosophical criticism, which has been the boast of the Edinburgh Review, was first introduced into the Monthly Review about the year 1796, in a series of articles by Mr. William Taylor, of Norwich” (308)—a remarkable claim that has never been properly investigated. As a reviewer, critic, Germanist and general controversialist Taylor was in fact to be found almost everywhere in British literary culture between the 1790s and the 1820s, but his influence was largely an underground one, being mainly disseminated through his approximately 2,000 contributions to the various periodicals of the period. By the time of his death most of his best work was largely inaccessible; in any case, the sceptical, paradox-loving character of that work was not likely to endear him to early Victorian readers. Although Taylor’s friend, John Warden Robberds, was able to publish a bulky two-volume *Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late William Taylor of Norwich* with John Murray in 1843, it was not enough to arrest Taylor’s gradual slide into oblivion. Today he is generally remembered, if at all, only as the translator (or, more fairly, adapter) of a very successful English version of Gottfried August Bürger’s celebrated ballad “Lenore.”

William Taylor devoted much of his life to promoting German literature and ideas in the English-speaking world. Given this, he has inspired surprisingly little interest in Germany. The one book-length (and at 70 pages it only just qualifies) study of Taylor in German is Georg Herzfeld’s *William Taylor von Norwich: Eine Studie über den Einfluss der neueren deutschen Litteratur in England* of 1897. In his Foreword Herzfeld makes the remarkable claim that the only “ausführliche lobende

Erwähnung von Taylor” (“detailed and laudatory mention of Taylor”) located by him in earlier German scholarship is a paragraph in Wilhelm Henkel’s 1869 essay, “The German Influence on the Poetry of England and America.” Henkel’s essay, which was written (unusually) in English, had merely stated that

. . . the knowledge of all branches of our [German] literature spread every day more rapidly all over Britain. . . . A very praiseworthy and deserving man in the work of intermediating and interpreting was M. [sic] Taylor of Norwich, whose historical survey of German Literature illustrated by his own versions we remember to have studied with pleasure but who seems to be somewhat undeservedly neglected, perhaps in consequence of the sharp criticism with which Carlyle has received him. Considering the comparatively small number of Britons who have devoted themselves with zeal and sincerity to this study, he deserves acknowledgment for seriously endeavouring to contribute to a better knowledge of the German and to give rise to imitations. Some of his own metrical versions are very good, even such in which he tried the classical metres, and make us forget deficiencies in his volumes that have been sufficiently censured by others. (10-11)

Henkel sandwiched this description between much longer, and much more laudatory, accounts of Coleridge and Carlyle, making it clear that he did not consider Taylor to be in their league of “Anglo-German” achievement. Yet if Taylor was more or less forgotten in Germany by the mid-nineteenth century, it should be stressed that he earlier stood out as a cultural mediator of real importance. His 1793 translation of Goethe’s *Iphigenie auf Tauris* was accorded the remarkable accolade of being republished in Germany, by the Berlin bookseller Johann Friedrich Unger. And it was almost wholly because of Taylor and his proselytising activities that the influential *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* could declare in 1796 that “Uebrigens hat die deutsche Literatur aus sehr begreiflichen mercantilischen Gründen die zahlreichsten Anhänger in *Norwich*” (“Incidentally, German literature has the greatest number of followers in Norwich, for understandable commercial reasons,” *Intelligenzblatt* 1796: 468).¹ Other testaments to Taylor’s early impact in Germany are cited in Herzfeld’s study.

¹ As to the “commercial reasons” referred to here, from 1766 a large proportion of Norwich textiles were shipped to Hamburg via Great Yarmouth (Priestley 33-34). It was around this time that the Norwich merchants started to cultivate German connections; Taylor being sent to Germany for a year in 1781-82 was, culturally speaking, the most important part of this development.

Georg Herzfeld studied philology at the University of Heidelberg in 1880, and again in 1882-84, obtaining a doctorate for his thesis “Zu Otte’s Eraclius.” In 1881 he appears to have studied at the University of Berlin.² His first major publication was *Die Räthsel des Exeterbuches und ihr Verfasser* (Berlin, 1890), a work which still gets cited today. *William Taylor von Norwich* (Halle, 1897) evidences a shift in his interests towards the Romantic period, though he continued to study Old and Middle English literature. Of his later publications the most significant are *An Old English Martyrology. Re-edited from manuscripts in the libraries of the British Museum and of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge* (London, 1900), and *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Litteratur in England* (Braunschweig, 1927).³ There are also a number of specialised articles concerned with English literature of the Romantic period.

The limitations of Herzfeld’s study of Taylor are obvious enough. As he admits in his Forword, he was forced to rely almost entirely on Robberds for biographical information, occasionally repeating mistakes, and sometimes obfuscating his source. For his understanding of what was most remarkable in Taylor’s critical writing, Herzfeld also leaned rather heavily on Robberds. Moreover he had little temperamental affinity with his subject and appears to have disliked the more irreverent, paradox-loving side of Taylor’s work. This led him to place undue emphasis on technical aspects of Taylor’s German translations rather than considering them as vehicles for ideas; though he does briefly speculate, surely rightly, that Taylor was attracted to *Iphigenie* and Lessing’s *Nathan der Weise* because of their intellectual and philosophical content. But for all this, Herzfeld’s remains the best extended introduction to Taylor and his work published in any language, simply because of the absence of competition. His special interest, moreover, is his ability to focus Taylor’s achievement from a German point of view. Astrid Wind and I believe that Taylor deserves to be substantially better known than he is at present, and that making Herzfeld’s study widely available will help forward this end.

This is not a complete translation, though it includes everything of immediate interest to anyone studying William Taylor. We have omitted a short introductory chapter giving a general survey of German literature in English translation prior to 1790 (and emphasising that the majority of these translations were of very inferior

² For these details of Herzfeld’s academic career I am indebted to Dr. Werner Moritz, Director of the University Archives, University of Heidelberg.

³ The latter work appeared as *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Litteraturen*, volume 105.

quality). Herzfeld's research was valuable for the time he wrote, but the bibliographical value of this chapter was dwarfed by B. Q. Morgan's magisterial *Bibliography of German Literature in English Translation* (1922; a greatly revised second edition published as *A Critical Bibliography of German Literature in English Translation, 1481-1927* in 1938), and critically it was superseded by Violet Stockley's fine reception study, *German Literature as Known in England, 1750-1830* (1929). Herzfeld concluded this opening chapter with the sentence: "The person who, through the whole of his educational background, as well as his knowledge of German, and his critical judgement and feeling for form, became the true herald and pioneer of German literature [in Britain] is the man to whom this work is dedicated: William Taylor of Norwich." We have also omitted Herzfeld's Appendix, "Remarks Concerning Norse Material in the English Poetry of the Last Century." Herzfeld argues that "the introduction of Norse material in England stands in close proximity to what became known as the 'back to nature' tendency," and that "it was the cruel, horrible, ghostly in Norse tradition that formed the main point of attraction: one wanted to be free from the cold, rational poetry of pseudo-classicism at any price." The Appendix has little relevance to Taylor, and seems to have been included mainly because Taylor's friend, Frank Sayers (1763-1817), had published a volume of *Dramatic Sketches of the Ancient Northern Mythology* (1790). Its critical and bibliographical interest was quickly superseded by Frank Edgar Farley's *Scandinavian Influences in the English Romantic Movement* (1903). The opening chapter and the Appendix apart, everything Herzfeld wrote has been translated.

Herzfeld's referencing was somewhat erratic, bibliographical references sometimes being combined into the main text, sometimes relegated to footnotes. I have standardised on the MLA model, using parenthetical citations as much as possible. I considered updating Herzfeld's references in cases where more modern versions of texts that he quotes exist, but eventually decided that the period integrity of his study should be preserved. I have, however, added a number of notes of my own, some pointing out mistakes and omissions, some referring the reader to more recent scholarship, and some simply amplifying Herzfeld's points. These are placed in square brackets and distinguished by a "DC." In several cases where Herzfeld has misquoted a source or omitted a page reference I have silently amended. In cases where he refers to minor German writers, or largely forgotten critics, merely by family name, I have added the Christian name to assist the reader. And where he

refers to literary works merely by title I have added a reference to the author, unless the work is still very well known.

Warm thanks to Michael Sharp, who helped kick-start this project and assisted with the earliest stage of translation; to Christoph Bode and Frederick Burwick for advice on specific points in the translation; and to Marshall Brown, the Romantic Circles reader, whose advice greatly improved the final version. Other acknowledgements appear in connection with specific notes.

Author's Foreword

By Georg Herzfeld

The merits of William Taylor, with whose life and work the present essay is concerned, have not been sufficiently recognised in Germany. His countrymen certainly appreciated his importance, and even today his name is not forgotten among them. Soon after his death a monument to his achievement was produced by a friend: John Warden Robberds' *Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late William Taylor of Norwich* (1843). In English books his name appears again and again, whenever English literature at the beginning of our century is concerned (for example Oliphant 1:386-87).⁴ In Germany the case is opposite, although there was certainly sufficient cause to preserve the memory of the man who first emphatically directed the attention of his countrymen to the importance of the German language and literature, and was continually instrumental in its spread. I have found only one detailed and laudatory reference to Taylor, and that is in an otherwise unimportant essay by Wilhelm Henkel.⁵ In Alois Brandl's biography of Coleridge his name is mentioned in several places, and a few of his achievements are briefly outlined.⁶ Other critics, such as Theodor Süpfle, Friedrich Otto Weddigen, Wilhelm Streuli and Thomas Sergeant Perry, either completely ignore Taylor or judge him incorrectly. There is thus no need of justification if a somewhat more detailed treatment of the life and writings of this remarkable man is here attempted.

Unfortunately, in spite of all my efforts, I have not succeeded in uncovering new sources for the life of Taylor, such as letters, memoirs, and the like; I have thus, except on certain individual points, followed the above-mentioned biography of

⁴ [In the course of her account of Southey, Oliphant refers in passing to "William Taylor of Norwich, a name which intrudes itself continually into the literature of that time." DC]

⁵ [The relevant passage from Henkel is given in my "Editor's Introduction." As far as I know, Henkel's essay only appeared in the privately printed *Programm von der Realschule II*, which is now exceptionally scarce. I am very grateful to Andreas Bendlin, formerly of the University of Erfurt, for managing to locate a copy for me. DC]

⁶ [Brandl actually has almost nothing to say about Taylor. His fullest statement, in the words of Elizabeth Eastlake's English translation is: "He [Coleridge] burned with the desire to become acquainted with German literature and German writers. This was at that time no unprecedented desire. The brilliant concourse of the muses at Weimar had already attracted, between 1780-89, a visit from William Taylor of Norwich, who, by his translation of 'Iphigenia,' had made his countrymen acquainted with the sound of Goethe's verse" (230). Brandl elsewhere describes Taylor's translation of Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* as "kräftig, aber klappernd" ("powerful, but clattering" (273)—almost the only negative comment ever made about the work. DC]

Robberds, which was written in an attractive manner, and in a spirit of devotion, but turned out rather too long. In addition, I have followed in detail Taylor's activity as a critic in various journals and believe that I am providing much that is new here, as well as in the introductory section.

It is my duty to offer thanks for all the assistance rendered me: in Germany to Prof. Dr. Bernhard Scuffert in Graz, Hofrat Dr. C. Ruland and Dr. Carl Schüddekopf in Weimar, but especially to my friend Prof. Dr. L. Kellner in Vienna; in England to Dr. F. J. Furnivall, W. Rye, J. Jacobs, J. Gollancz and to Mr. James Dykes Campbell, who has unfortunately died in the meantime. I owe special thanks to a fellow-townsman of Taylor, Mr. James Reeve, who has looked after me with exceptional friendliness during my research visits to Norwich.

I hope that I have succeeded in setting in the right light the personality of a man who has failed to be appreciated for all too long.

William Taylor of Norwich

William Taylor was born on 7 November 1765, the same day as Plato, Sir Isaac Newton and Friedrich Leopold Stolberg, as he sometimes jokingly pointed out. His father was a wealthy merchant in Norwich, and his mother came from a respected family of the city. Both were members of the Unitarian church, which was important in Norwich at this period (for a full discussion of Unitarianism at this time see Stephen 1:421-46). Under these favourable conditions, and as an only child, he enjoyed a particularly careful education, in which great attention was paid to the learning of modern languages that would be useful when he joined his father's business. Until Taylor was nine, John Bruckner, pastor of the French and Dutch Protestant churches in Norwich, gave him French lessons, including French grammar. Taylor was then placed under the care of another clergyman, the Rev. Rochemont Barbauld of Palgrave, in the county of Suffolk.⁷ Here he laid the foundations of the sound classical education that we encounter later in his writings; he also formed his style under the direction of Mrs. Barbauld, well known in English literature as a poet and author of books for children. Frank Sayers, one of Taylor's fellow students at this time, and later his closest friend, tells us just how valuable and important her lessons were: in his opinion her teaching was the most useful thing to be obtained at Palgrave (Taylor, *Collective Works* 1:xii). Taylor, who later called Mrs. Barbauld "the mother of my mind," always expressed his grateful devotion to her. In 1779 his schooling with the Barbaulds came to an end, and soon afterwards he made his first journey to the Continent. Travelling through the Netherlands, France and Italy with one of his father's business partners, his attention was focused on the acquisition of foreign languages, with a view to the career in commerce his father intended for him. Extracts from his letters in the previously mentioned *Memoir* document how fast the talented lad made progress in French and Italian, as they are written in one of these languages (Robberds 1:13-18). It is understandable that the letters of a fourteen-year-old cannot excite any deeper interest, but what he wrote home demonstrates great elegance in expression, and an unusual precociousness of mind. In January 1781 he was back in

⁷ [Barbauld and his famous wife opened a boarding school at Palgrave in 1774; Taylor was among the first group of pupils. For a full account of the school see McCarthy. DC]

Norwich, but as early as April the same year he set out on a second journey, which would be significant for the whole course of his later life. This time his route took him first to the industrial cities of England, but after six weeks he embarked for Ostend, stayed some time in Brussels, and in July arrived in Detmold,⁸ Germany, where, according to his father's wish, he was to study the German language under the direction of Pastor Roederer. Although Detmold did not participate very much in the intellectual movements of the time, men with literary interests could be found there. Taylor entered a circle which included Johann Lorenz Benzler, a friend of Herder and Karl Wilhelm Ramler, well known for his translations from English, who corresponded with Taylor for some time after his departure (for Benzler see Jacobs). Communicating with such men, the young Englishman made such rapid progress in our language that, after five months, he could read and comprehend Klopstock's *Messiah*. In a letter to his father of 26 December 1781, written in Italian, Taylor also mentions Johann Kaspar Lavater, next to Klopstock, as the subject of his reading. There is no doubt that he endeavoured to acquire a thorough knowledge of the best poetic and scientific writing during his stay, and that he managed to fully master spoken and written German within a year. Taylor not only remained faithfully attached to these studies throughout his life, but also sought, always, to interest others in them. He appears to have enjoyed great popularity and general appreciation in his Detmold environment; we hear that even the princess of the principality inquired about him, and his teacher Roederer, who told him about it, exclaims with a comic emphasis after this news: "O my dear Briton, there are many besides myself who will never forget you" (Robberds 1:30). At the same time Roederer makes Taylor the compliment that he would become "a German Pliny" (Robberds 1:25). In July 1782 Taylor left Detmold and, equipped with letters of recommendation to Goethe, August Ludwig von Schlözer, and Angelika Kaufmann, set out on a journey through Germany. Unfortunately, we are not informed about his experiences on this trip. He appears to have been in Göttingen and Kassel, since we learn from Roederer's letters to Taylor that he indeed saw Schlözer and Kaufmann; whether he also saw Goethe in Weimar is unclear. Neither in his very short travel narrative nor in his later writings did Taylor mention such a meeting. He continued his journey through Leipzig,

⁸ [Detmold is a small town approximately 45 miles south-west of Hanover. In the 1780s it had a population of less than 4,000. DC]

Dresden, Berlin, and Königsberg, embarked on a ship in Pillau and, after much travelling, returned home in November 1782.

This was an important period in Taylor's life, the years of his apprenticeship and travels ended: he had achieved a certain maturity of mind, received manifold stimuli, and obtained knowledge which would soon bear the most beautiful fruits. For the time being he followed his father's wish and dedicated himself to a career in commerce; but alongside that he eagerly continued his studies, and still had time to cultivate respectable society, for which he often had opportunity in his parents' house. Norwich, at the end of the eighteenth century, was by no means lacking in men of intellect and taste, cherishing an avid interest in everything of a scientific or artistic nature. In the middle ages, and probably later too, the town was one of the most important in the country.

Urbs speciosa situ, nitidis pulcherrima tectis,
Grata peregrinis, deliciosa suis—⁹

this is how a poet once sung of it. By means of trade, in particular the trade in woollen goods, Norwich had always been in continuous contact with foreign countries. The town had lost some of its significance, especially in the wake of London's mighty flourishing, but contemporary testimony still referred to it, "though in the language less of truth than of flattery, the Athens of England" (*Monthly Magazine* 7 [1799]: 279). Of the men who enjoyed a more than local fame, there remain to be named—apart from Taylor and his already mentioned friend Sayers—Sir James Edward Smith, one of the outstanding English botanists; Hudson Gurney, poet and archaeologist; Joseph John Gurney and his sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Fry, both known through their efforts in prison reform and the abolitionist movement. Belonging to a younger generation, three women who distinguished themselves are Amelia Opie, whose novels were widely read at the time, Sarah Austin, translator of Ranke's *History of the Popes* and other German works, and finally the most widely known of them all, Harriet Martineau, whose life extended into our own time. Among the visitors who entered this circle from time to time, three in particular have to be mentioned: Mrs. Barbauld, Taylor's motherly friend (*mütterliche Freundin*); Sir James Mackintosh, a splendid speaker and essayist, author of the polemical *Vindiciae Gallicae* directed

⁹ [The lines translate as: "A city attractive in its location, and a most beautiful sight with its gleaming rooftops / Pleasing to strangers and a delight to its inhabitants." The quotation is from a poem by John Johnston (1565-1611), which was first published in the expanded 1607 edition of William Camden's *Britannia* (347). DC]

against Burke; and finally Robert Southey, who first visited Norwich in 1798, and who formed a close friendship with Taylor, maintaining a very interesting correspondence with him until his death, to which we will have to return frequently.

The intellectually stimulating elements in Norwich society met in different clubs and societies, discussing not only science and literature, but also philosophy and religion. A commendable tolerance prevailed at that time, which made it possible for those of different religious and political persuasions to communicate peacefully with each other. It must be emphasised that all this changed soon after the outbreak of the French Revolution.

It is simply cheap entertainment to deride such provincial coteries and “mutual admiration societies,” as Harriet Martineau did in no small measure in her autobiography, where she accuses her compatriots of cultivating “literary pretension and the vulgarity of pedantry,” claiming about Taylor in particular that “[h]e was completely spoiled by the flatteries of shallow men, pedantic women, and conceited lads” (1:298). Her judgement is of little importance given that she was only a child during the heyday of Norwich, and that, owing to physical suffering and great misfortune, she was embittered from an early age. If lesser intellects proliferated in Norwich, as usually tends to happen, the substantial achievements of the most talented citizens of the town are a succinct refutation of her overly severe judgement. In particular, those of William Taylor. He did not distinguish himself at this time through his productivity, but instead enriched his wealth of information about different fields of knowledge. The precise kind of stimulation which emanated from him we can clearly see in one case: his relationship with his previously mentioned friend Sayers. Sayers appears to have been a reserved, introverted type, tending towards melancholy; not surprisingly, he soon came under the sway of his lively, energetic, experienced friend, who directed the course of his studies. Naturally German was a priority. Together they read Goethe’s *Proserpina*, Johann Heinrich Voss’s *Luise*, dramatic works by Klopstock, and odes by Friedrich Leopold Stolberg; we will see later what fruit this reading bore. In the biographical sketch that Taylor dedicated to his friend in 1823, he admitted, however, that Sayers “did not . . . persevere in the study of the German language . . . nor was he a warm admirer of the literature” (Taylor, *Collective Works* 1:xxxvii). The friends soon went their different ways as Sayers entered the University of Edinburgh to study medicine. Taylor visited him there the following summer; they went on a tour through the Scottish Highlands,

with the poetry of Ossian in their pockets, as they wanted to test how far the description of nature in the poems corresponded with reality. They were somewhat disappointed, and Sayers remarked that, although it would be difficult to convince oneself of the blindness of Homer, one would be inclined to consider Ossian blind. Taylor made a second journey to Edinburgh in 1788, and this time the two friends travelled to the English Lakes. Here Taylor's poetic instincts seem to have been awakened; we can assume with some certainty that at least an "Ode to Lake Keswick" originated at this time.¹⁰

Political interests soon joined Taylor's poetical interests and forced the latter into the background. The outbreak of the French Revolution fervently excited the hopes of all those who were passionate about religious and political liberty. William Taylor's position was assured from the very start. He belonged to the class of Dissenters, who still regarded themselves as frequently disadvantaged and oppressed by narrow-minded laws; hence it is not surprising that he zealously joined the party that advocated the abolition of slavery, the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and parliamentary reform. In Norwich a "Revolution Society" was founded for the purpose of political agitation, counting Taylor and his father among its members. The former even had the opportunity, in the spring of 1790, to visit Paris, where he attended the meetings of the National Assembly day after day, writing enthusiastic reports home. He was happy to be in a country that, according to his view, presented a sublime spectacle: "a nation of heroes obeying by choice a senate of sages" (Robberds 1:69). But for him, too, there was a moment of disillusionment. Returning to Norwich, he gave a lecture about the National Assembly decree of 22 December 1789, which introduced what Taylor called a "delegative constitution," and he severely criticised individual points.¹¹ To this time can be dated one of his poems, a song which was first sung in public on the second anniversary of the Fall of the Bastille (14 July 1791) and continued to be the battle cry of the liberal party in Norwich until the 1832 Reform Bill.¹² It begins thus:

¹⁰ [Taylor mentions the writing of this poem in *Collective Works* 1:xxxiii. It was published in the *Annual Anthology* 1:1-9 as "A Topographical Ode." DC]

¹¹ The lecture was published in the *Monthly Magazine* 8 (1799): 953-59 with the title "A Contribution to the Theory of Representation." The same periodical had earlier published Taylor's "Plan of a Constitution [for a Republic]" (6 [1798]: 109-11).

¹² The text is given in the *Norfolk Chronicle* for 16 July 1791. The copy of this paper in Mr. Colman's library in Carrow Abbey was made accessible to me with the kind help of Mr. James Reeve. [Herzfeld wrongly attributes this poem to Taylor. It was actually written by John Taylor (1750-1826), another of the many Norwich Taylors (but no relation of William). It was also written rather earlier than 1791,

The trumpet of liberty sounds thro' the world,
And the Universe starts at the sound.
Her standard Philosophy's hand has unfurled,
And the Nations are thronging around.

The refrain is:

Fall, tyrants, fall!
These are the days of Liberty! fall, tyrants, fall!

It is strange how little these verses reveal of the excitement and enthusiasm that the immense events of the time must have stirred in their author. The whole poem appears to us rather cool and rational. However much he was receptive to poetical beauty, Taylor simply was not made to be an original poet. The Revolution Society was, incidentally, soon disbanded by a government little inclined toward reform and concerned about public quiet, making it impossible for Taylor to remain politically active.¹³

This circumstance came to benefit his literary activities.¹⁴ At the beginning of the 1790s his translation of Gottfried August Bürger's "Lenore" was among the best-known renditions into English. The text circulated first in manuscript form but was eventually printed in 1796, in the March edition of the *Monthly Magazine*; earlier, though, it had already had peculiar consequences, so that it has to be called a literary event. Mrs. Barbauld was the mediator in this case. During her visit to Edinburgh in 1794, she read out Taylor's translation of the ballad at the house of the philosophy professor, Dugald Stewart. Walter Scott heard about it,¹⁵ was inspired to emulate it,

possibly as early as 1788, which may explain why Herzfeld found it "rather cool and rational" (John Taylor 151, 153). DC]

¹³ [Herzfeld is wrong to suggest that the Government actively disbanded the Norwich Revolution Society; the Society dissolved itself in 1794 because it feared prosecution (Jewson 49). DC]

¹⁴ [Herzfeld confuses the chronology here. The Revolution Society was not dissolved until 1794 (see previous note and reference), by which time all Taylor's major translations from the German had been made. DC]

¹⁵ [Scott later told Taylor that he heard about the latter's translation from "My friend Mr. Cranstoun, brother-in-law to Professor Stuart [sic], who heard your translation read by a lady in manuscript" (Robberds 1:95). DC]

and only now clearly recognised his calling as a poet. (For a fuller account of “Lenore” in England see Schmidt 244-48.)¹⁶

There is no doubt that the credit is Taylor’s in this case; without him Scott’s effort, however respectable, would have been unimaginable. Scott owed to his predecessor the meter, the four-line stanza; like Taylor, he set the scene in the middle ages, and transferred it to England; finally, he took two lines verbatim from Taylor’s version (“Tramp, tramp across the land they speed; / Splash, splash across the sea”), verses that became necessary through the shift in scene. When Scott published his translation—together with “The Chase,” a translation of Bürger’s “Der Wilde Jäger”—he sent Taylor a copy with a very polite letter (dated Edinburgh, 25 November 1796) in which he admitted his plagiarism and asked for forgiveness (Robberds 1:94). Taylor replied in a letter of 15 December, tactfully declining to criticise the translation of “Lenore” (“praise might seem hypocrisy—criticism, envy”). He criticises “The Chase” minutely, finding “a few passages written in too elevated a style for the general spirit of the poem,” but calling the whole “a most spirited and beautiful translation” (Robberds 1:98). The correspondence concludes with a letter from Scott, where he admits some mistakes, but defends (and justifiably so, it seems) some passages criticised by Taylor. Highly as one has to regard Taylor’s merit as a translator, his shortcomings cannot be overlooked. Here it is interesting to hear the opinions of men like Coleridge and Wordsworth, who exchanged letters during their stay in Germany (see Coleridge’s letter to Taylor of 25 January 1800, printed in Robberds 1:318-21). Coleridge thought that Taylor’s translation, even though it was distinguished by great poetical beauty, lacked “the rapidity and oneness” of the original. Further, he rightly emphasised that the choice of meter (a four-line stanza, rather than the eight-line stanza in Bürger) is an unlucky one,¹⁷ and Wordsworth agreed with him, stating that “In [Bürger’s] Lenore, the concluding double rhymes of the stanza have both a delicious and pathetic effect: ‘Ach, aber für Lenoren war Gruss und Kuss verloren.’”¹⁸ Taylor missed exactly this effect as he uses

¹⁶ [This short account of “Lenore in England,” contributed to Schmidt’s *Charakteristiken* by Alois Brandl, has been completely superseded by Evelyn B. Jolles’s book-length study of the same topic. DC]

¹⁷ Here one has to be reminded of August Wilhelm von Schlegel’s observation: “In dasselbe Silbenmass zu übersetzen, sofern sich die Sprache demselben nicht ganz weigert, sollte ein Grundgesetz aller poetischen Nachbildungen sein” (“Translating into the same meter—if the language does not resist this entirely—should be the basic law of all poetical reproductions”) (Schlegel 11:325).

¹⁸ [In Taylor’s translation this reads as “But greete or kiss Lenora gave / To none [upon that daye].” DC]

only masculine rhymes throughout. One cannot object that he was handicapped by the English language; in his *Tales of Wonder* (1801) M. G. Lewis proved that a closer connection with the German is possible when he, introducing Taylor's version, and praising it in the highest terms, gave a translation of the first stanza in its original form. Lewis rejects this, incidentally, as "producing an effect very unsatisfactory to the ear" (Lewis 2:469)! Coleridge rightfully objects, further, that Taylor had not tried to reproduce the biblical allusions in the dialogue between mother and daughter. In contrast to the two poets, the critical reviews had nothing but praise for Taylor's achievement: the *Critical Review* and *Monthly Review* in England, as well as the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* in Germany.¹⁹ Benzler states in a letter to Taylor of 19 November 1791: "Of your translation, as a whole, I must again repeat, that in my opinion you have perfectly caught the tone of your ancient ballads, which is not, however, that of Bürger. The latter is manly, concise, full of fire and strength; the former, somewhat feeble and garrulous, but, at the same time, softer and more agreeable" (Robberds 1:106). One has to add that Bürger learned about Taylor's translations (probably from Benzler) and highly approved them (see *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen* for 10 December 1796 [3:1962]).

It can be proved, however, that another Englishman before Taylor attempted a translation of "Lenore." In the *Tableau de l'Allemagne et de la littérature allemande: par Anglois à Berlin pour ses amis à Londres* (1782), we read about our ballad: "J'en connois une traduction Anglaise, que le traducteur a communiqué à quelques uns de ses amis; mais le ridicule que ceux-ci ont jetté sur ce petit poëme l'a empêché de la [sic] faire paroître" (Dyck 71). The author, who appears to have had no sensitivity with regard to Romantic folk poetry, states further: "Le mélange du facétieux et du

¹⁹ [The *Critical Review*, in a review of translations of "Lenore" by J. T. Stanley and Henry James Pye, stated: "We cannot forbear mentioning, that we have seen some years ago, in private circulation, a translation of this piece, which has lately been inserted in a periodical publication, and which is superior to either of these. Though it does not boast of rendering the German line for line, but, on the contrary, displays some judicious alterations, it has transfused in the happiest manner the spirit of the original, and the very march and cadences of the verse; while at the same time it is so idiomatical as not to suggest the least idea of having been originally written in any other language than English. Those who have read the excellent translation of Goethe's Iphigenia may perhaps guess to whom they owe the obligation" (second series 17 [1796]: 306). The *Monthly Review*, in a review of the pamphlet publication of Taylor's translation, compared it to other English translations and stated "it will by no means be deemed inferior to the rest in point of poetical merit, and on some accounts a more decided praise will be assigned to it" (second series 22 [1797]: 187) The *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, in a notice of several of the English translations of "Lenore," stated its conclusion that: "Die zierlichste und dem deutschen Romanzenton am glücklichsten nachbildende Uebersetzung ist von eben der Hand, die Göthes Iphigenia übersetzte" ("The most elegant translation, and the one that most successfully imitates the style of the German Romantic ballads, is by the same hand which translated Goethe's Iphigenia") (*Intelligenzblatt* 1796: 921). DC]

sacré me dégoûte dans ces ballades” (Dyck 69).²⁰ England’s lively interest in ballads also comes to light in the letter of an Englishman travelling in Lower Saxony (dated Hamburg, 9 April 1799), printed in the *Monthly Magazine* (8 [1799]: 602-03). He heard the story on which “Lenore” is based from J. Francis Cordes, the postmaster in Glandorf near Osnabrück, and hence arrived at the conviction that Bürger’s poem really has its origin in folk traditions, rather than in the “Suffolk Miracle.” Some of the passages from the Münsterland tale, which Erich Schmidt cites, re-appear verbatim (Schmidt 220). The Englishman correctly remarks: “If even the whole ground-work of the poem were not of Bürger’s own invention, it can however not be denied, that it has considerably gained under his hands” (603).²¹

The praise his work earned in rich measure encouraged Taylor to make further attempts at translation, and hence we find two new efforts appearing one after another: *Nathan the Wise* (1791, in a private printing) and *Iphigenia in Tauris* (1793).²² The latter must have been finished some time earlier; this can be proved with a letter by Benzler of 10 August 1791, where he pronounces his pleasure in Taylor’s acceptance of the small changes he had suggested (Robberds 1:105).

The selection alone of these two dramas sheds a clear light on Taylor’s cast of mind and taste. One sees plainly here how fruitful the residence in Germany had become, how completely Taylor had absorbed the fundamental philosophy of German culture, the principle of pure humanity, and that of tolerance and humanitarianism (*das Prinzip des reinen Menschentums, der Duldung und Humanität*). The translation of *Nathan* is a measure of the progress he made after “Lenore.” The form, though, was unchangeable in this case, and how hard it was for him to make Lessing’s jerky iambic feet palatable to his fellow countrymen, and yet remain faithful to the meaning! One can observe how his power grew when measured against the task. The beginning, and the first scene in particular, appears less successful than the later parts.

²⁰ [I am indebted to Anette Hagan of the National Library of Scotland for tracing these quotations, which were neither referenced by Herzfeld nor quoted altogether accurately. The French can be translated: “I know of an English translation that the translator has shown to some of his friends, who, however, ridiculed the little poem in such a way as to discourage its publication”; and “The mixture of the facetious and the sacred in these ballads disgusts me.” DC]

²¹ In connection with “Lenore” in England see, further, the Italian translation of Bürger’s poem by an otherwise unknown Mrs. Taylor, and Eschenburg. The former is reviewed in the *Monthly Review*, second series 27:111. [The remark by “the Englishman” that Herzfeld quotes here is actually from a letter of Cordes that the English writer gives in translation. DC]

²² [The chronological order in which Herzfeld places the translations is highly questionable, and seems to have been arrived at with reference to (his judgement of) their internal excellence, rather than such external evidence as is available. It is probable that *Iphigenia* predates both *Nathan* and “Lenore.” See Chandler, “William Taylor’s Pluralist Project.” DC]

For example, in response to Daya's exclamation, "Thanks to the Almighty," there is a filler verse (*Flickvers*) inserted: "Yes, Daja, thanks, / that I have reached Jerusalem in safety." The sentence, "wie elend hättet Ihr indess hier werden können," is furthermore awkwardly translated as: "how miserable you had nigh become during this little absence"—whereas Daja had just before lamented his long absence. But the beginning of the second act, the chess-playing scene between Saladin and Sittah, is far better. Here the difficulties posed by the short, fragmented sentences of the progressive dialogue (*vorwärtsschreitende Dialog*), and by the technical expressions of the game, are brilliantly surmounted by the translator. The narration of the parable of the three rings, to add one more example, is no less excellent. Lessing's drama never gained a foothold in England, even though Taylor's translation recently appeared in a new edition (among other places in Cassell's National Library [1886]). When Taylor published his *Nathan the Wise* in 1805, a critic noted in his discussion in the *Annual Review*: "It [Lessing's play] would not be tolerated . . . in this age of orthodoxy" (4 [1805]: 634). Even less favourable is the judgement of the famous Edinburgh critic, Francis Jeffrey (*Edinburgh Review* 8 [1806] 148-54). He discusses the piece in an ironic tone, which reveals a complete lack of understanding. Southey writes an indignant letter about this to Taylor on 27 May 1806: "I cannot express to you how strongly I am displeased with Jeffrey's conduct about 'Nathan,'" and he labels the review "a rascally hypocritical article" (Robberds 2:129). Strangely enough, Taylor replies that: "I agree with Jeffrey in most things about *Nathan* and am well satisfied with his reviewal [sic]" (Robberds 2:135). One has to remember that this resigned-sounding pronouncement was made at a time when the enthusiasm for German literature had already abated a little.

It has to be particularly lamented that Lessing's drama did not gain access to the English stage, which admitted German pieces of far less value. The same can be said of Taylor's translation of a work which even orthodox critics could not have objected to: the *Iphigenia*. This is undoubtedly the high point of Taylor's work as a translator. Even today we believe we can sense the enthusiasm and love with which he worked on it. To a rare extent he was able not just to reconstruct in English Goethe's melodic flowing verse, but also to reproduce the meaning and individual expressions in a faithful, comprehensive manner. His work deserves even greater recognition as this was the first attempt to translate any of Goethe's dramas in England. One has to agree with such a competent critic as Henry Crabb Robinson,

when he wrote to Goethe on 31 January 1829 that “Taylor’s ‘Iphigenia in Tauris’, as it was the first, so it remains the best, version of any of your larger poems” (Robinson 2:390). Among the brilliant passages of the translation have to be mentioned: Iphigenia’s entrance monologue, the dialogue between Orestes and Pylades in the second act, and finally the prayer of the priestess in the last scene. As Taylor’s translation is not generally accessible, the following excerpt will serve as a sample (Iphigenia’s first monologue):

Beneath your waving shade, ye restless boughs
Of this long-hallow’d venerable wood,
As in the silent sanctuary’s gloom,
I wander still with the same chilly awe
As when I enter’d first: in vain my soul
Attempts to feel itself no stranger to you.
A mightier will, to whose behest I bow,
For years hath kept me here in deep concealment;
Yet now it seems as foreign as at first.
For, ah! the sea, from those I love, divides me;
And on its shore I stand the live-long day
Seeking, with yearning soul, the Grecian coast,
While the waves only echo back my sighs
In hoarser murmurs. O how luckless he,
Who from his parents and his brethren far
Lonesome abides! The approaching cup of joy
The hand of sorrow pushes from his lip.
His thoughts still hover round his father’s hall,
Where first the sun-beams to his infant eye
Unlock’d the gates of nature—where in sports
And games of mutual glee the happy brothers
Drew daily closer soft affection’s bonds.
I would not judge the gods—but sure the lot
Of womankind is worthy to be pitied.
At home, at war, man lords it as he lists;
In foreign provinces he is not helpless;
Possession gladdens him; him conquest crowns;
E’en death to him extends a wreath of honor.

Confin'd and narrow is the woman's bliss:
Obedience to a rude imperious husband
Her duty and her comfort; and, if fate
On foreign shores have cast her, how unhappy!
So Thoas (yet I prize his noble soul)
Detains me here in hated hallow'd bondage.
For, tho' with shame I feel it, I acknowledge
It is with secret loathness that I serve thee,
My great protectress, thee, to whom my life
'T were fitting I in gratitude devoted;
But I have ever hop'd, and still I hope,
That thou, Diana, wilt not quite forsake
The banisht daughter of the first of kings. (*Historic Survey* 3:249)

If one wanted to quibble with Taylor's translation, it would have to be with the way he renders the dactylic-anapaestic verse that appears repeatedly in the drama (Acts I and IV). One cannot deny that some of it sounds rigid and forced. Much better is the recently published translation of the Fates' song by Käthe Freiligrath-Kroecker.

Taylor sent his translation to Goethe in Weimar; but he never learned whether the poet received it, and this might be the reason for a certain recurrent animosity in his judgement of Goethe. One can find an explanation for Goethe's behaviour in a remark to Johann Eckermann, in which he laments that he could not reply to many an excellent man because he disliked using polite, superficial expressions and did not always know how to say something particular and proper to everybody (Eckermann 1:216).²³ That Goethe knew individual parts of Taylor's translation early on we learn from his letters to Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi in August 1793 (Jacobi 179). Based on his statement in the *Tages- und Jahreshefte* one can assume that he owned a copy of it: "A translation of the *Iphigenia* appeared in England; Unger reprinted it, but I retained neither the original nor the copy" (Goethe 27:22 and 378 [note]). In reality, however, as the court counsellor, Dr. Ruland, kindly informed me, one finds in Goethe's library the original edition, Unger's reprint, and also Taylor's *Historic Survey of German Poetry*, which includes the complete *Iphigenia* in the third volume.

²³ [Goethe stated to Eckermann that: "If I was not able to say something special and fitting. . . . I would rather not write at all. Superficial expressions I considered unworthy, and so it has come about that I have not been able to answer many an excellent man, to whom I had liked to have written" (Eckermann, trans. Moon 157). DC]

At Goethe's request Carlyle sent this work to Weimar, as we learn from a yet unpublished letter from him to his friend Macvey Napier (*Edinburgh Review* 150 [1879]: 62-63).

About this time Taylor's activity as a critic also begins, which is even more important, as his knowledge and talent directed him toward literary criticism, a field in which he engaged most successfully, familiarising English readers with German literature. The long running and highly regarded *Monthly Review* claimed his services first. Dr. Griffiths was the publisher and editor, for whom Oliver Goldsmith had already written. The contributors to the *Review* were mostly dissenters, with a decisively liberal tendency in their politics. Taylor's first contribution appeared in April 1793, dealing with the *Disquisitions Metaphysical and Literary* of his friend Sayers.²⁴ Three years later John Aikin, the brother of Mrs. Barbauld and an outstanding member of the Unitarian community, launched the *Monthly Magazine*, and Taylor was naturally invited to be a contributor here as well. Over a period of thirty years (1793, or 1796, to 1824) he contributed about 1,300 articles to the two periodicals. He also wrote for the *Annual Review* and the *Critical Review*, as well as for the short-lived *Athenaeum*. Altogether the number of his articles and critiques is about 1,750, surely a respectable achievement (Robberds 1:126). The content of his articles is of the most multifarious kind, though his favourite subject was the beautiful literature of England, as well as that of the Continent, particularly Germany's of course. It is very important here to note the numerous translations of German poems which he interwove into his criticism as stylistic samples, but which sometimes also appeared independently. Most of them were later included in his *Historic Survey of German Poetry*. Incidentally, he developed a remarkable versatility. Going over volumes 14 through 17 of the *Monthly Review*, his first contributions, we find him "equally conversant with the doctrines and history of Platonism, the antiquities of the Celtic languages, the mysterious proceedings of the secret tribunals, the statistics and trade of India, and the principles of colonial policy" (Robberds 1:136).²⁵ It is not surprising that he deals here with public affairs, and one can observe that he earned his spurs as a critic with a series of political articles. These articles were directed

²⁴ [Herzfeld follows Robberds into error here. Taylor's first review was actually of Sayers's *Poems* (1792), which appeared in the March 1792 *Monthly Review* (second series 7:331-32). See Chandler, "Foundation of 'philosophical criticism'" 363-64. DC]

²⁵ [Herzfeld does not quote Robberds here, but translates this statement more or less word for word. Here and elsewhere he tends to defer to Robberds's judgement on which of Taylor's reviews are most noteworthy. DC]

against the writings of John Robison and Abbé Augustin Barruel, who both accused the freemasons and other secret societies of pursuing revolutionary, anti-government objectives. Countering these obscurantists, Taylor enthusiastically and skilfully made the case for the freedom of reason, and he was able to unmask their accusations as malicious and invalid in the *Monthly Review* (see, further, Vollmer 419-20, who cites the remarks in German periodicals).

Taylor's method of reviewing is distinct from that previously known in England. Before him critics restricted themselves to giving their opinion of a work, with a brief explanation and citation of characteristic passages; frequently, however, their reviews reveal little care and thoroughness. Coleridge's demand to critics in his *Watchman* was essentially realized by Taylor (see Brandl, *Coleridge* 151).²⁶ He frequently enlarged his reviews into essays, in which he presents his own succinct and original opinions about the topic under scrutiny. As Hazlitt observed in his *Spirit of the Age*, Taylor ought therefore to be credited with an innovation that the founders of the *Edinburgh Review* later claimed for themselves (308).²⁷

This is also the right place to make an observation about Taylor's literary style. His model, as with most of his contemporaries, was the great Samuel Johnson, and consequently we find in his writing that elegant and dignified, if sometimes a little affected and ponderous, mode of expression, which was also typical of the dictator (*Diktator*) of the English language. But Taylor's language is more resonant, and richer in imagery than Johnson's, as he draws from the rich store of his wide reading. Further, Taylor, who was probably somewhat influenced by his German reading, characteristically introduced newly coined words, which must have been as

²⁶ [Herzfeld refers to a passage in Coleridge's "Introductory Essay" to *The Watchman*, where Coleridge distinguishes his intended efforts in the reviewing line from those published in

. . . the existing Reviews . . . in the first place, I shall never review more than one work in each number; and none but works of apparent merit, whether such as teach true principles with energy, or recommend false principles by the decorations of genius. . . . Secondly, although the existing Reviews are conducted with considerable ability, yet they appear to me valuable from their wide diffusion of general knowledge, rather than as the fair appreciators of literary merit. (15)

Herzfeld was, I suspect, mainly influenced by Brandl's rather creative gloss on this statement:

. . . he [Coleridge] reviewed the traditional modes of criticism as practised by the chief journals—*Gentleman's Magazine*, *Monthly Review*, *British Critic*, &c.—and fearlessly declared his disapproval of them. Notices, without selection and study, now carelessly praising, now rudely blaming, seemed to him to have no merit beyond making a work known. Solid criticism and literary power they possessed not. (Eastlake translation 145-46) DC]

²⁷ [For Hazlitt's comment see my "Editor's Introduction." DC]

incomprehensible to the average reader as his often baroque ideas.²⁸ The editors of the periodicals objected in vain about them, and friends asked him unavailingly to abandon the habit. Southey wrote to him on 14 February 1803: “You have ruined your style by Germanisms, Latinisms and Greekisms, you are sick of a surfeit of knowledge, your learning breaks out like scabs and blotches upon a beautiful face” (Robberds 1:452). Another passage states: “Wordsworth, who admires and reverences the intellectual power and the knowledge which you everywhere and always display, and who wishes to see you here [in the Lake District] as much as I do, frets over your barbarisms of language, which I labour to excuse, because there is no cure for them” (Robberds 2:88). Taylor, nevertheless, did not give up his stylistic bad habits; he either could not or would not do otherwise. Sir James Mackintosh, his friend and admirer, nicely characterises his style in a letter: “I can still trace William Taylor by his Armenian dress, gliding through the crowds, in Annual Reviews, Monthly Magazines, Athenaeums, rousing the stupid public by paradox, or correcting it by useful or seasonable truth. It is true that he does not speak the Armenian, or any other language but the Taylorian; but I am so fond of his vigour and originality, that for his sake I have studied and learned his language. As the Hebrew is studied for one book, so is the Taylorian by me for one author” (Robberds 1:62). Mackintosh hints here at a weakness found all too often in Taylor’s work, namely his predilection for paradoxical thoughts and remarks. In conversation he loved to attract attention with claims that must surprise and amaze those around him. Very telling is Harriet Martineau’s report: “When William Taylor began with ‘I firmly believe,’ we knew that something particularly incredible was coming.” Then one possibly heard from him “defences of suicide, avowals that snuff alone had rescued him from it: information given as certain, that ‘God save the King’ was sung by Jeremiah in the temple of Solomon,” and similar jokes (Martineau 1:300). Such things could be let pass as long as they enlivened sociable conversation; it is more alarming when Taylor makes such claims as these in his writings, as for example in one of his earlier contributions to the *Monthly Review*, where he claims in a review of a Tacitus translation that the myth of the Phoenix is an allegory, invented by Egyptian priests,

²⁸ Examples include ambidexterity, attroopment, conversationist, indecypherableness, interestability, iridescency, omnifariousness, to rebarbarize.

to explain the appearance of comets!²⁹ Sometimes one gets the impression that he was more interested in demonstrating his own ingenuity than in researching the truth. How much damage he did to himself through this can be seen in one example which also sheds clear light on the development of his religious opinions. In 1809 he agreed to review the critical commentary on the New Testament by the free thinking theologian Heinrich Paulus for the *Critical Review*. On other occasions he had already made statements that were less than orthodox, and that in that period certainly caused offence.³⁰ In his discussion of Paulus's work we find the following observation: "We are not exclusively devoted to the dogmas of any sect. We respect, we venerate the TRUE CHRISTIAN; but Trinitarians, Arians, and Socinians, are alike indifferent to us. We love none of their individious distinctions, their sectarian and unbrotherly names. They have too long distracted the world with their vain and senseless logomachies. . . ." (*Critical Review*, 3rd series 16 [1809]: 450). This is language which does not offend anyone who is reasonable and thinks a little, but at that time people in England were not ready for such unconventional views. Especially among Unitarians there was a storm of outrage that a member of their community (as Taylor was still considered) dared to comment publicly in this manner. One of the most active among the clergy, Thomas Belsham, who had just published "an improved version of the New Testament" which certainly did not comply with the orthodox position, severely attacked him in the main organ of the Unitarians, the *Monthly Repository* (4 [1809]:418).³¹ Taylor then took a step he had soon to regret as he put himself in the wrong vis-à-vis his adversaries. In 1810 he published a pamphlet entitled *A Letter Concerning the Two First Chapters of Luke, Addressed to an Editor of the Improved Version*. Belsham had claimed that the first two chapters of the

²⁹ [*Monthly Review*, second series 12 (1793): 204. It was doubtless Robberds who drew Herzfeld's attention to this passage. Robberds had quoted it positively as revealing "one of those characteristic traits, which so often imparted a stimulating vivacity both to his [Taylor's] conversation and his writings" (1:130). It was not, in fact, an original idea of Taylor's, and seems to have first appeared in the 1722 edition of William Whiston's *New Theory of the Earth*, where it is attributed to "a Learned Friend" of the author (196). DC]

³⁰ Compare, for example, his review of Johann Gottfried Eichhorn's introduction to the Old Testament: *Monthly Review*, second series 23 (1797): 481-97. [For a modern discussion of Taylor's Biblical criticism see Christensen. DC]

³¹ [Belsham writes: "Of the ill use which may be made of this narrative of the miraculous conception of Christ [in Matthew and Luke], we have a remarkable instance in the last Supplement to the *Critical Review* [. . . The reviewer] explains away all the miraculous part of the narrative, and insinuates that Jesus was the illegitimate son of Joseph of Arimathea by Mary, born in adultery, at which gross and capital offence of his espoused wife, Joseph, her husband, and the reputed father of Jesus, was bribed to connive. Such abominable representations can only be made by the enemies of Christianity, with a design to expose it to contempt and derision." DC]

Gospel of Luke were fake; Taylor tried here to prove the opposite, and even went as far as declaring Zacharias to be the author, who, he argues, passed himself off as the father of John the Baptist and the father of Christ. Nobody would deny recognition to, and praise, for the brave fighter who opposes petty orthodoxy and dull literalism; but in reality this was a different case and one would be greatly wrong to compare this feud to the “Wolfenbüttel Fragmentenstreit.” If Belsham was no Johann Melchior Goeze, then Taylor was certainly no Lessing.³² Unfortunately he misused his intellect and learning here again: his entire proof rested on sophistic, spurious reason, not worth explaining here. There could be no doubt about the outcome: no voice was raised in Taylor’s favour. Many people, as his biographer says, not without a hint of irony, threw the *Letter* unread on to the fire, to which they would have liked to condemn the author, too, if they could (Robberds 1:311). It is certainly the case that the publication of the *Letter* estranged many sympathies from Taylor.

Something else happened. Since Taylor had dedicated himself to the vocation of an author, he necessarily had to neglect his business as a merchant. Eventually it did not take much for him to persuade his father to give up their business, no longer very profitable anyway as a result of the war, and to invest their money otherwise.³³ This led to considerable losses. The family experienced a serious blow in 1811, forcing them to leave their stately home, which had been the centre of merry sociability for so long, and to move into a small house. A large number of friends now disassociated themselves from them, taking Taylor’s heretical views as a welcome

³² [Herzfeld refers to the dispute over the “Wolfenbüttel Fragments,” which took place in Germany in the mid 1770s. Between 1774 and 1778 Lessing, then librarian at Wolfenbüttel, published seven extracts from the unpublished papers of the Deist, Hermann Samuel Reimarus. Although Lessing included an anti-Deistic commentary of his own, he was fiercely attacked by conservative theologians, especially Johann Melchior Goeze (1717-1786), with whom he entered into a pamphlet war. The issues raised in the dispute were given dramatic expression in *Nathan the Wise*. DC]

³³ [The chronology Herzfeld evokes here is rather bizarre. Robberds placed the withdrawal from business much earlier:

. . . the troubles of the French Revolution threatened to disturb the commercial relations of the Continent. The consequent decline of the Norwich trade furnished a powerful argument of which he [Taylor] availed himself to persuade his father to concur with him in withdrawing their capital from operations that appeared likely to become both irksome and hazardous. . . . The course which he recommended was pursued. In the year 1791 they dissolved their partnership with Mr. Casenave. Their joint property appeared adequate to afford them the comforts and even the elegances of private life, and they retired from the cares of business to possess and secure to themselves these enjoyments. (1:85-86)

Robberds probably dates this withdrawal from trade slightly too early, as I have argued elsewhere (Chandler, “Foundation of ‘philosophical criticism’” 362, 370-71). Nevertheless, the Taylors’ retirement from business was complete by the mid-1790s. It was some rather risky investments pursued by Taylor *père* that provoked the financial crisis of a decade and a half later. DC]

pretext; a smaller number, however, preserved their loyalty, including Sayers and Southey. One can understand that Taylor's life went downhill from this point. He still wrote variously, but much of the work that falls into the second half of his life lacks the freshness and originality that had been his own, and consequently it did not have the impact of his earlier writing. A great contributing factor might have been that he could not always take the necessary time, and therefore worked less carefully than previously, now that he pursued writing as a career rather than as a diversion. In his letters from this period he complains about physical ailments and listlessness with regard to intellectual activity.

We followed Taylor's translations up to the publication of *Iphigenia*, and have seen him there at the peak of his achievement. What followed cannot be compared in importance to his earlier performances. First, one has to mention the translation of some of Wieland's *Göttergespräche* as *Dialogues of the Gods* (1795). The preface points out how Wieland occupies a rational middle position between reactionary and revolutionary parties.³⁴ The small volume contains in order dialogues 9, 13, 10 and 11, which all deal with the French Revolution.³⁵ When Taylor, a generation later, dealt with Wieland in his *Historic Survey*, these dialogues appeared no longer in keeping with the times and he substituted for them five others (1, 3, 5, 6, 8). His translation as a whole is good and faithful. Small mistakes can be found though: characteristic epithets are translated with inaccuracy, or not at all. Of greater interest to us are Taylor's two imitations of the *Dialogues of the Gods*, which appeared in the second (1796) and fifth (1798) volumes of the *Monthly Magazine*. The participants in the first dialogue are Jupiter, Apollo and Numa, later Lelio Socini,³⁶ who, one might assume, speaks for the author. The tendency is apparently the promotion of the

³⁴ [The passage is worth quoting: "The notions of this age are moving, in religion, from superstition toward infidelity; in morals, from puritanism toward libertinism; and in politics, from despotism toward democracy. On each walk, Wieland will be found to outstride the average progress of public opinion; but to stop short of those *ne-plus-ultra*-men, who would substitute atheism to faith, agamy to matrimony, and anarchy to government." DC]

³⁵ [Herzfeld is a little confusing here. The numbers he cites were first employed in the edition of Wieland's *Sämmtliche Werke* which commenced publication in 1794, and it could, therefore, be inferred from his account that Taylor translated from this edition. But this was impossible, for the volume containing the *Göttergespräche* (25) did not appear until 1796. Taylor clearly states in his preface to *Dialogues of the Gods* that "THE following dialogues were originally published in the *Teutsche Merkur* [in 1790], a German periodical publication, whence they are now translated into English" (n. pag.). Given the topical nature of the *Göttergespräche* it is probable that Taylor translated them directly after he had completed his translations from Goethe and Lessing. DC]

³⁶ [Lelio Socinus is the Latin name of Lelio Francesco Maria Sozzini (1525-1562), the Italian humanist and Reformer who, with his nephew, Fausto Paolo Sozzini (1539-1604), developed the school of antitrinitarian Christian thought which later became known as Socinianism. DC]

Unitarian creed, which is, however, rather generously conceived. Socini defends Christianity against the old gods and expresses opinions that sound odd enough in the mouth of the reformer. For example, he does not want to remove the pictures of saints from churches because they remind the people of self-sacrifice and self-denial, virtues which are good for the state in turbulent times. One already notes here a favourite idea of Taylor's about the damaging consequences of the Reformation, on which he later elaborated (see *Monthly Magazine* 26 (1808): 205-08; *Historic Survey* 1:187). It seems as though he had already made an inner break with Protestantism and praised the Catholic Church, from which he was certainly distanced, in opposition to the reigning conditions in his homeland. The second dialogue is an exchange between Charles I of England and Louis XVI. The former is the main speaker; he delivers a long speech to his companion in fate about the politics the latter ought to have followed to preserve his position. He, too, does not express himself as one would expect from the historical character: he employs the tone of a constitutional king, rather than that of a monarch aspiring to absolute power. Perhaps Wieland was in this case not so much the model as François Fénelon, whose *Dialogues des morts* present critical stories from which a moral can be derived (Rentsch 32). Whatever the case, it is certain that these imitations cannot be at all compared to their originals; nowhere does one note the graceful style, the mischievous humour, the fine satire that are so typical of the German poet.³⁷

Taylor's Wieland translation, it seems, did not attract anything like the praise bestowed on his earlier achievements. This is the more surprising if one considers that exactly at this time other works of the "German Lucian" were translated, which appears to indicate his special popularity. In a collection entitled *Varieties of Literature* (London 1795) another translation of four *Göttergespräche* appeared.³⁸ This little noted work also features a series of Wieland's essays and some shorter prose works by Schiller and Carl Friedrich Bahrdt, as well as stories by August Gottlieb Meissner and others. The following year *Select Fairy Tales, from the German of Wieland* was published, and was much praised in the *British Critic* (9

³⁷ [The editor may as well express a difference of opinion here. The dialogue between Charles I and Louis XVI is unsatisfactory, judged in terms of its artistry, as the French king is rendered a mere foil to the strictures of his "companion in fate." But the earlier dialogue, featuring Socini, is one of Taylor's finest pieces of writing, and it seems to me that it possesses all the grace, humour and satire of its models. DC]

³⁸ [*Varieties of Literature* was a compilation of material translated and edited by William Tooke (1744-1820). It is listed in the bibliography under Tooke. DC]

[1797]: 559), but it is now lost, like many books of this kind.³⁹ One needs to add here *The Sympathy of Souls* (1795), translated by a German named F. A. Winzer,⁴⁰ and an anonymous translation of *Peregrinus Proteus* in 1796. J. B. Elrington's shorter edition of the latter work came out in 1804. Generally recognised as the greatest achievement among these Wieland translations is William Sotheby's translation of *Oberon* (1798). An explanation for Taylor's failure can be found in the fact that translations from German in the last decade of the eighteenth century were abundant as never before.⁴¹ Good translations were unfortunately overpowered by the wealth of average and rather bad translations, and remained unnoticed. The *Monthly Magazine* of 1799 reveals how the world-dominating position of German literature was perceived in England at this time. It states:

The rage for German literature is not confined to England alone, it being equally, if not more prevalent, in France, where the translations of WIELAND'S, KOTZEBUE'S, LAFONTAINE'S, and SCHILLER'S works are read with uncommon avidity. Even the works of the abstruse Professor KANT, have found a translator, and are more generally studied than in our country. The Dutch possess an excellent metric translation of the celebrated Messiah of KLOPSTOCK, the German Milton, and a Latin and Dutch version of KANT'S Metaphysical Works, but seem to be averse to the naturalizing of the productions of the comic and dramatic muse of the Germans. Even Spain, which till of late beheld the progress of science in England, France, and Germany, with apathy, has within these two years past given a favourable reception to the productions of the German muse. WIELAND'S *Don Silvio de Rosalva*, SCHILLER'S *Don Carlos*, and GROSSE'S *Genius*, which in this country is known by the name of *The Horrid Mysteries*, having been translated of late into the Spanish language. In Russia all German Classics, Reviews, and Magazines, are read in the original, and to be met with in the libraries of almost all opulent literary gentlemen. At court no other language is spoken than German and English. (8:991)

³⁹ [*Select Fairy Tales* is no longer "lost"; copies can be found in the British Library and the library of University College London, as well as in several American collections. DC]

⁴⁰ [Bayard Quincy Morgan points out that this was a second edition of a work first published in 1787 (521). DC]

⁴¹ Taylor's translation of the dialogue between Brutus and Charlotte Corday appeared as late as 1820 in the *Monthly Magazine* 49:211-13. [Taylor mistakenly attributed this dialogue to Wieland. It was published anonymously in 1793, and has been attributed to Johann Ferdinand Gaum (1738-1814). See bibliography under Gaum. DC]

With regard to England itself, it will suffice to point out some significant publications among the flood of translations between 1790 and 1800. They follow in chronological order: 1792 Schiller's *The Robbers*; 1794 Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*; 1795 Schiller's *Cabal and Love*; 1796 Schiller's *Fiesco*; 1798 Schiller's *Don Carlos*, Goethe's *Stella* and *Clavigo*; 1799 Goethe's *Götz of Berlichingen*; 1800 Herder's *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*. Alongside these there was an influx of German stories about ghosts, robbers and knights, and Kotzebue was enormously successful on the London stage (see Bahlsen). This flood drained away as quickly as it had appeared. In the first decade of the nineteenth century almost no German influence makes itself felt; only with the publication of Madame de Staël's well-known book of 1813 was there a revived interest in German literature. Under these circumstances it is understandable that Taylor lost interest in continuing his work as a translator. But he continued to deal critically with literary publications. He discussed almost all the works listed above in the columns of the *Monthly Review*, and dealt at great length with Wieland's collected works, as this author, with his intellect, appears to have been most congenial to him. Taylor deserves special praise for his thorough reviews as these familiarised the British with works that had only recently been published in Germany. These include Herder's *Fragments* and *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität*, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Friedrich Leopold Stolberg's *Reise in Deutschland, der Schweiz, Italien und Sicilien*, Friedrich von Matthisson's *Briefe*, and other works.

Compared to Taylor's achievements as a critic in these years, his other occupations are of little significance. We saw earlier how he came in touch with Robert Southey in 1798, and how this meeting gave rise to a life-long correspondence that allows an informative insight into the works of the two friends. Taylor, of course, soon concerned himself with deepening Southey's already developed knowledge of German literature (Robberds 1:280).⁴² The "English Eclogues" that Southey composed at this time were at least inspired by Voss's example, whose idyll, "Der Teufel im Bann" ("The Devil in Ban"), Taylor had just translated for the *Monthly Magazine* (7:139-40). Taylor wrote to him on 26 September 1798: "I wonder some one of our poets does not undertake what the French and Germans so long supported in great popularity—an Almanack of the Muses—an annual Anthology of minor

⁴² Southey particularly wanted to read Klopstock, and Johann Jacob Bodmer's *Noachide*; Taylor supplied him with these works.

poems—too unimportant to subsist apart, and too neat to be sacrificed with the ephemeral victims of oblivion. Schiller is the editor of one, and Voss of another such poetical calendar in Germany; their names operate as a pledge that no sheer trash shall be admitted” (Robberds 1:228). Southey was soon prepared to give his attention to the idea of an “Almanack of the Muses”; he himself had about “half a hundred” shorter poems that he did not want to see lost, and he did not lack for collaborators (Robberds 1:239). With some delay the first volume of the *Annual Anthology* was published in Bristol, in autumn 1799, by Southey’s faithful friend and publisher, Joseph Cottle. Apart from Southey the contributors were Charles Lloyd, Lamb, Coleridge, Humphry Davy (the famous chemist), Grosvenor Bedford, Amelia Opie and the brothers Amos and Joseph Cottle. Taylor contributed the following poems, some signed “Ryalto” (an anagram of his name), some “R.O.”: 1. the previously mentioned “Ode to Lake Keswick”; 2. “To the Burnie Bee”; 3. “Dirge to him who shall deserve it” (later applied to the German poet, Karl Theodor Körner, in *Historic Survey* 3:428-29); 4. “Ode to the Rainbow”; 5. “Lines written in the 16th and parodied in the 18th century”; 6. “The Seas.” Of all these poems one wants to grant poetic merit only to the first: the emotion that the landscape evokes in the soul is happily and gracefully represented. The other pieces are, by contrast, merely exercises in art by an educated dilettante; dozens of such poems were produced in the eighteenth century. Taylor simply had more learning than artistic personality, more artificiality than original creativity. Of more worth and literary significance is his contribution to the second volume of the *Anthology* (1800): “The Show, an English Eclogue.” Here the influence of Voss’s *Idylls* can be established once again; Goethe’s “Hermann und Dorothea” perhaps also came into play. A peddler offers a rustic brother and sister pictures for sale that depict scenes from the French Revolution: Paris, Versailles, the Bastille and so on. All those involved—and we may assume that they represent the views of the poet—have a strong aversion to the conditions in France. The brother states at the end:

Happy who dwells in the village afar from the mischief of faction,
Hears of the war but on club-nights over his pipe at the alehouse,
Safe in his thatch’d snug home grows old with the elms of his planting,
Rears by his honest toil a healthy and innocent offspring,
And in his own church-yard deposits the bones of his old age. (2:208)

These rather mediocre hexameters (for which see Schipper 2:439-48) also serve as a sample of Taylor's verse. He had already shown a preference for hexameters: the German model hence influenced not only the content but also the form. He had made his first attempt in this direction a few years earlier: in the first volume of the *Monthly Magazine* (1796) there is a contribution by him entitled "English Hexameters Exemplified" (404-05; reprinted in *Historic Survey* 2:235-36). It is a passage from the Ossianic poem "Carthon": Taylor calls it a "transversion," that is, for the most part he only rearranged Macpherson's words to form hexameters. The opening lines are as follows:

Thou, who roll'st in the firmament, round as the shield of my Fathers,
Whence is thy girdle of glory, O Sun! and thy light everlasting?
Forth thou comest in thy awful beauty; the stars at thy rising
Haste to their azure pavillions; the moon sinks pale in the waters;
But thou movest alone; who dareth to wander beside thee?

(Robberds 1:159)

While not perfect, these verses are better than the previously cited ones, and they are of interest as they gave rise to a dispute with Karl August Böttiger, the editor of the *Deutsche Merkur*, who criticised these hexameters, but not in strong terms, in the October 1796 number. He stated his reservations about using the meter in English "since from its superabundance of monosyllabic words, it resembles a heap of sand or pebbles without lime or cement" (121; translation in Robberds 1:162-63). He remarks at the end, however: "there is no doubt that the British can become as accomplished forgers of hexameters as critical philosophers" (129). A reply by Taylor appears in the May 1797 issue of the *Monthly Magazine* (3:337-39). He admits that English is less suited than German for hexameters "on account of its extreme disconnection," but he makes some rather dubious suggestions for reform. For example, he wants to reintroduce the old way of writing the genitive ending (-is), so that a verse by Pope would read "by young Telemachus *is* blooming years." This is useless, since the genitive "s" often carries weight as a syllable anyhow.⁴³ Secondly, he desires the use

⁴³ [One contemporary who would have supported Taylor (and who was perhaps influenced by him) was Walter Savage Landor. In his poem "Gunlaug and Helga," published in *Simonidea* (1806), he has the line "O! could I loose our blissis [i.e. bliss's] bar!" To this Landor added the note: "I am forced to adopt here the oldest and best manner of spelling. In future I shall employ it without force. It is

of multi-syllabic comparatives (not just “lovelier,” “happier,” “politer,” but also “hiddener,” “beauteouser,” “hateder”!).⁴⁴ He states: “These long-toed words . . . increase the facility of interweaving the feet of an hexameter most amazingly” (338). We know that Taylor’s experiments with hexameters influenced Southey, who used hexameters for his “Mohammed” fragment, written with Coleridge, and also later in his *Vision of Judgment* (1821). In Southey’s introduction to the latter he admits that Taylor’s example led him to choose this meter. Taylor, by the way, repeatedly came back to the topic of hexameters, as in his correspondence with Southey (Robberds 1:305 and elsewhere), where he sets up two more rules for verse meter, which are hard to tolerate. He demands that the line should not break down into two even halves and suggests that the most suitable place for the caesura is after the fifth half foot. Further comments by Taylor can be found in his review of Herbert Croft’s *Letter, from Germany, to the Princess Royal of England* in the *Monthly Review* (second series 27:494-98), and in an article on Klopstock’s *Messiah* in the tenth volume of the *Monthly Magazine* (317-20, 423-26, 501-05). In the latter he gives a sample of his versification in a translation of a passage from the third book of Klopstock’s *Messiah* (318; reprinted in *Historic Survey* 1:273, where other passages are also translated). He had more success with the meter in this case. The concluding verse feet are disrupted, though, when an adjective with a weaker stress is placed in a heightened position before the related noun with a logically higher stress: such is the case with “bright orb,” “deep seats,” “hoarse harps,” but also “against God,” and “hell’s vaults.” Sensitive poets (for example Longfellow in “Evangeline”) have strictly avoided such verse feet in this exposed place.

In spring 1802 Taylor took advantage of the quiet period that followed the Peace of Amiens and travelled to Paris. There he associated with men like Thomas Paine and Thomas Holcroft, whose achievements have only been truly recognised in our times: the former was both famous and infamous as a champion of political and religious freedom; the latter less known through public work than through his activities as an author and translator of German and French texts. From Paris Taylor went to visit Lafayette on his country estate at Lagrange, where he met the novelist

impossible, that one s following another should *make* a separate syllable, though it might be the *sign* of one” (Landor 16: 369). DC]

⁴⁴ [Herzfeld rather distorts the tone of Taylor’s remarks. Taylor merely notes that if “to hexametrize should become an amusement of our poets,” then “it may, perhaps, be found expedient to tolerate” such words as Herzfeld quotes (338). DC]

Frances Burney. He now judged the conditions in France as coolly as he had been passionate about them twelve years earlier, and this mood is reflected in his idyll, mentioned above.⁴⁵ The journey must have stirred his never dormant political interests; soon after his return he agreed to edit a weekly newspaper advocating the Whig cause in the county of Norfolk. The advance notice of the *Iris* (or *Norwich and Norfolk Weekly Advertiser*, as the publication was entitled) on 5 February 1803 features an all too typical example of Taylorian prose that cannot be omitted here: “*Iris*, according to the allegories of ancient mythology, sprung from Curiosity, or Thaumias and was the messenger of Juno, the goddess of empires: on swift wings she brought and bore every variety of intelligence in pleasing words. Her errands were motley and conspicuous as the colors of her rainbow: she sometimes instructed the slumbering monarch, sometimes brought perfume to the toilet of her protectress, and sometimes indicated for the deceased the path to Hades. Her robes were blue and white; the rival of Mercury, the teaser of Chronos, she is every way fitted for our patroness” (Robberds 2:423-24).⁴⁶ With regard to the content of the paper it was remarked that “Poetry...is cheap stuffing; during a lack of materials we shall willingly mingle in our inkstand the waters of Helicon” (425). This intention was then executed: Taylor let some of his earlier poems, as well as those of his circle of friends (Southey contributed several poems), be printed in the columns of the *Iris*. The most important among the newly published works is perhaps “*Hudibras Modernized*,” a satire on the petty polemics of religious sects. The number for 2 April 1803 contains an obituary for Klopstock, the deceased poet of the *Messiah*. His odes are praised in particular, and one about his recovery (1754) is included in translation. The criticism of the *Messiah* is rather more severe, with the conclusion: “One reads his poem, like a sermon, as a Christian duty.” One is certainly right to be surprised at finding this kind of article in a provincial English paper. This example suggests that Taylor was not able to judge correctly the education and taste of the audience for whom he was working. Already his style was unpalatable to this class of readers. Southey was justified in writing to him: “How are plain Norfolk farmers—and such will read the ‘*Iris*’—to understand words which they never heard before, and which are so foreign as not to be even in Johnson’s farrago of a dictionary?” (Robberds 1:453). Southey

⁴⁵ [This seems to be a mistake, as the “idyll” in question, “The Show,” was published in 1800. DC]

⁴⁶ [To understand Taylor’s wit in this passage it is necessary to know that the existing Norwich papers were the *Norwich Mercury* (traditionally in the Tory interest), and the *Norfolk Chronicle* (traditionally in the Whig interest). DC]

follows this with the beautiful and appropriate words: “Ours is a noble language, a beautiful language. I can tolerate a Germanism for family sake; but he who uses a Latin or a French phrase where a pure old English word does as well, ought to be hung, drawn and quartered for high treason against his mother-tongue.” The man who gave the English nation such splendid prose works as the *Life of Nelson* was allowed to speak thus. Concerning Taylor’s newspaper enterprise, the end was never in doubt: the last number of the *Iris* appeared as early as 29 January 1804. Taylor was consequently freed from an obligation which would have been a burden in the long run.

Taylor’s friends often pressed him to attempt a bigger, more comprehensive task, like the writing of a historical work, which would command his undivided attention. Southey, for example, suggested a history of the Hanseatic towns and offered to collect the relevant literature for him (Robberds 2:371). But Taylor’s inclination did not lead him there; he preferred to disperse his energy among innumerable reviews, shorter treatises, notes, and other pieces of that nature; at best he thought about publishing his articles, scattered in periodicals, as a collection. At the same time he was always ready to offer help in the literary affairs of others, as in the case of his fellow townsman, Henry Bolingbroke, whose *Voyage to the Demerary* was published in 1807, with an introduction by Taylor. This introduction is remarkable because it attempts to defend slavery in the colonies even in the heyday of the abolitionist movement.⁴⁷ As on previous occasions, Taylor naturally elicited outraged replies from English philanthropists (see, for example, Southey’s comments in Robberds 2:267, and his letter to John May in Southey, *Selections* 2:130). These well-meaning but short-sighted people overlooked the fact that Taylor called slavery a necessary temporary phase in economic development, which to remove suddenly would create the greatest difficulties; later events proved him right.

Taylor’s more significant publications in these years are *Tales of Yore* (1810) and *English Synonyms Discriminated* (1813). The former is but a collection and edition of narratives from different sources. Naturally he drew once again on a number of German originals: for example, an episode from Wieland’s *Danischmed* appears as “The Religion of Psammis,” and we also find “Koxkox and Kikequetzel,”⁴⁸ Johann Baptist von Alxinger’s *Bliomberis*, and some short novellas by August

⁴⁷ Carlyle defended similar ideas in his “Ilias (Americana) in Nuce.”

⁴⁸ [Taylor noted that “Koxkox is an imitation of Sterne executed by Wieland” (*Tales of Yore* 3:iv). DC]

Gottlieb Meissner. On the other hand, Taylor relied extensively on Count Tressan's *Bibliothèque universelle des romans*; it was the origin of "Trystan and Essylde," "Floris and Blancaflor," "Sir Libeo,"⁴⁹ "Cleomades," and others. Sources for other pieces are Florian, Lesage and Petit de la Croix; they were joined by Nordic pieces: "The Sword Tyrfing" (an often treated material at the time) and "Earl Grymur." The collection made its way, as many others did, without attracting much notice, especially since it appeared anonymously. Taylor's friends, who knew of his authorship, agreed that a man of his talents should have delivered something better and more original.

Their wishes were at least partly satisfied with his next publication. In 1813 Taylor published an account of English synonyms, entitled *English Synonyms Discriminated*. The book was simply a collection of individual articles which had appeared one after another in the *Athenaeum* and, after that foundered, in the *Monthly Magazine*. The introduction contains a valuable overview of previous publications in the field of synonyms. Taylor bestows the highest praise on the book of Abbé Girard (1718). In 1766 it had been edited in England by a Dr. Trusler, whose work Taylor used in part. Even though *English Synonyms Discriminated* is not free of arbitrariness, and has some risky etymologies, it is nonetheless a remarkable achievement; Taylor's astuteness and fine feeling for language are still useful today.⁵⁰ On this occasion Southey's earlier prophecy unfortunately came true: "You will be a mine to any literary poacher who has just sense enough to know what is good and put it together" (Robberds 2:70; see also 292, 371 and Southey 4:458). In 1824 a comprehensive work on synonyms appeared; it was by George Crabb, who had been Taylor's fellow student in Palgrave.⁵¹ He shamelessly copied Taylor's book without matching Taylor in other regards. The *Quarterly Review* for 1827 states the fact and reprimands Crabb (35:418-19; and see Robberds 2:432-35).

Taylor's book about synonyms had been, in many parts, a recapitulation of earlier work, but soon after he had the opportunity for a new, independent achievement. In August 1817 his friend Sayers died, and Taylor, who acted as his

⁴⁹ [Taylor describes "Sir Libeo" as "abridged from an anonymous German version of *Li beau disconnu*" (*Tales of Yore* 2:iv). DC]

⁵⁰ A German translation by Johann Wilhelm Zimmermann was published in 1851 in Leipzig. [For a detailed account and evaluation of Taylor's *English Synonyms Discriminated* in its original context see Noyes. DC]

⁵¹ [The 1824 edition of Crabb's *English Synonymes Explained* was the third. The work had first appeared in 1816. DC]

executor, was chosen for obvious reasons to publish his writings and compose his obituary. The latter task was neither easy nor rewarding. Influenced by the intellectual environment in Norwich, Sayers's religious and political views had inverted over time: he had become a conservative follower of the state church and consequently found himself in conflict with Taylor. While their friendly relationship did not end, it nonetheless was less warm than before.⁵² These circumstances demanded much tact and piety when it came to writing about the life of the deceased; but Taylor found an excellent solution to this problem, composing an image of Sayers's nature and work that paid as much homage to his heart as to his reason. The obituary was printed as an introduction to the *Collective Works of the Late Dr. Sayers* (Norwich, 1823). It reveals that Sayers also had direct literary connections with Germany. His *Dramatic Sketches of the Ancient Northern Mythology* (1790) were, soon after their publication, translated by Valerius Wilhelm Neubeck (1793), which initiated a correspondence between the two men.⁵³ Sayers expressed his gratitude by sending Neubeck poems by William Mason, Mark Akenside, and Edward Jerningham, whose didactic nature possibly pleased Neubeck's taste the most. Sayers also persuaded Taylor to review Neubeck's *Die Gesundbrunnen* (1795)—and indeed very favourably—for the *Monthly Review* (20 [1796]: 549-50). If we now want to characterise Sayers as a poet, we have to attribute to him formal elegance, learning, taste and a certain measure of imagination, but he did not have an essentially poetic temperament. This can be seen in Taylor's description of his pedantic method of composing poems, how long he polished and shaped them, and how he embellished them with decorations taken from the works of the great poets.⁵⁴ Sayers was a child of a transitional age; initially he was strongly influenced by the classical movement, but soon thereafter he could not escape the new trend, which was meant to conjure up a new blossoming of English literature. In the collection of his poetry we find an edition of Euripides' *Cyclops*,

⁵² Sayers went as far as demanding the return of his early letters from Taylor, as he was ashamed of the views expressed in them.

⁵³ Individual pieces appeared earlier in the *Schlesische Monatsschrift* for 1792 and the *Deutschen Merkur* for 1793. See also the third volume of *Bragur. Ein Literarisches Magazin der Deutschen und Nordischen Vorzeit*.

⁵⁴ [Herzfeld paraphrases rather unfairly here. Taylor actually wrote: "His [Sayers's] first care was to round the fable, and every where to forsee his drift; the dialogue was then rapidly composed, and always the shortest cut taken to the purpose in view; the critical situations were afterwards raised into effect, and heightened into brilliance, by consulting analogous efforts of celebrated writers, with the intention of translating beauties of detail; and finally the lyrical ornaments, in which he mainly excelled, were inserted at every opportunity" (*Collective Works*: 1:xxxix-xl). This process was not necessarily a long one: the original *Dramatic Sketches* were written in six months or so. DC]

translations of pieces by Catullus, Aristophanes, Anacreon and others; also a poem, "To Chaucer," a "Specimen of Guy of Warwick," and a fragment of a version of the English folk tale about Jack the Giant-Killer. The latter two are written in a burlesque style, making good use of Homeric turns of phrase. The second volume of Sayers's works contains *Disquisitions Metaphysical and Literary* (originally published 1793), including essays about the term "the beautiful," about luxury, about the three unities, and other topics. Of more interest to us is the accompanying *Disquisitions Antiquarian and Historical* (originally published 1805), which includes an "Account of St. George of England, with a translation of a Gothic Fragment respecting him." This is similar to the Old High German *Georgsleich*, and is translated from the Latin version in Peter Frederik Suhm's *Symbolae ad literaturam Teutonicam*. The *Disquisitions Antiquarian and Historical* also includes the short treatise, "Of Saxon Literature," which testifies to Sayers's interest in older poetry and incorporates his translations of Caedmon's song of praise and a chapter from the *Saxon Chronicle*. The work on which Sayers's significance as a writer rests, however, is the above mentioned *Dramatic Sketches of the Ancient Northern Mythology*. Classical and Romantic influences appear alongside each other here: one manifests itself in the form, especially in the unrhymed choruses constructed after the ancient model, and the other in the content, as far as the material was taken from Germanic prehistoric times.⁵⁵ The Ossianic poetry was also of influence. Altogether there are four pieces: *Oswald*, *A Monodrama*, and three tragedies, *Moina*, *Starno*, and *The Descent of Frea*.⁵⁶ One finds a source only for the last, namely in the well-known narrative of the younger Edda about Nanna's journey (here substituted by Frea) to Hel to free the dead Baldur. The whole presents itself as a continuation of Johannes Ewald's (1742-81) Danish drama, *The Death of Balder*, but of course with a very different and more polished style. All these dramas are constructed in simple and transparent ways; the individual moments of plot, only now and then interrupted by the chorus, follow one after another. They were probably never intended to be staged, and are not particularly dramatic on the page either. A summary of the first original piece gives

⁵⁵ Taylor did not want to fall behind his friend and composed a "Wortigerne," *Monthly Magazine* 10 (1800): 643-60, and "Harold and Tosti," *Monthly Magazine* 29 (1810): 209-12, 318-21, 417-20. He had little regard for either of these (Robberds 1:260).

⁵⁶ ["Oswald" was not included in the original *Dramatic Sketches of the Ancient Northern Mythology*. It first appeared in Sayers's *Poems* of 1792 (essentially a second edition of *Dramatic Sketches* with various additions). It is worth remarking that Sayers was the first British poet to write monodramas: see Culler. DC]

an idea of Sayers's poetic talents. The Celtic Moina becomes the wife of the Saxon Harold by virtue of the rights of conquest. Her lover, Carril, enters Harold's castle in disguise to persuade her to flee, telling her of an equivocal prophecy about Harold's death on the battlefield, which would end her misfortune. In the meantime, Harold's body is brought back to the castle; Moina is buried with him according to the old heathen rite; Carril throws himself off a cliff in despair. Aside from the lovers, it is only the chorus that plays a part, offering warnings and observations. For the introduction of the choruses, Sayers was not so much influenced by Klopstock as by William Mason and Richard Glover, learning from the *Elfrida* and *Caractacus* of the former, and the antique elements in the *Medea* of the latter. Goethe's influence on Sayers's compositions is confined to his monodrama, "Pandora."⁵⁷ "Pandora" is merely a dialogue that strictly follows the tradition of the ancient legend and does not include any new ideas. Besides, we know that Sayers was not very interested in German literature in the long run, as it did not suit his conservative attitude.

After this we return once again to Taylor's activities as a contributor to critical journals, which—though less intensive than in previous years—nonetheless continued and bore considerable fruit. Time and again editors turned to him; he who had become a first-ranked authority by virtue of his wide reading and his eminent knowledge of German, and who also had access to resources that remained closed to almost all his fellow countrymen. Of German books, which he discussed, one could name now: various volumes of Klopstock's and Wieland's *Gesammelte Werke*, Franz Oberthür's *Michael Ignaz Schmidt's Lebens-Geschichte*, Karl August Böttiger's *Sabina*, Johann Gottfried Eichhorn's *Allgemeine Geschichte der Cultur und Litteratur des neuern Europa*, Goethe's *Faust*, Johann Gottfried Seume's *Miltiades*, Friedrich Ludwig Zacharias Werner's *Martin Luther*, Christian Fürchtegott Gellert's *Leben der schwedischen Gräfin von G*—, Maximilian Samson Friedrich Schöll's *Histoire abrégée de la littérature Grecque*, Friedrich Bouterwek's *Geschichte der spanischen Literatur*, Karl Wilhelm Friedrich von Schlegel's *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur*, August Wilhelm von Schlegel's *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, and several others. These critiques, of which parts appeared verbatim in the *Historic Survey*, will be treated later: here I wish to show

⁵⁷ [On "Pandora," first published in 1792, Taylor remarked: "[it] may be confronted with advantage against the Pygmalion of Rousseau, or even the Proserpina of Goethe, which last had served in some degree as a model" (*Collective Works* 1:lx). DC]

with examples, which, however, do not belong to the domain of the belles-lettres, how Taylor was still able to disseminate new, intelligent and productive ideas among his audience. As early as 1804 he made the suggestion in the *Critical Review* that ships could be powered with steam (third series 2:140-41).⁵⁸ At the same period he pointed to the necessity of founding English colonies in Africa, the only part of the world where the English language and English trade had not then taken root (*Annual Review* 4:35-37). As late as 1824, in one of his last contributions to the *Monthly Review* (third series 103:244-45), he introduced the idea of cutting through the isthmus of Panama, and projected a grand, or one could almost say fantastic, image of the resulting advantages. As one can see, Taylor, with these ideas, was far ahead of his own time; certainly it is to be regretted that a man of such originality and talent did not find the opportunity to operate in an authoritative, public position.

We have already established in the cases of Sayers and Southey that Taylor endeavoured to excite his friends' interest in German letters. His efforts in this direction in Norwich had gratifying results and equally deserve recognition. He gladly participated in meetings of young people, where foreign papers and books were read and discussed. As early as 1795 a periodical called *The Cabinet* appeared in Norwich, largely political in content, and published by the young liberals of the town, who were under the influence of Taylor and Sayers. However, there is only one essay of little import in it addressing German literature: "Desultory Observations on *The Robbers*."⁵⁹ More important are some publications from the 1820s: first a translation of Wieland's *Grazien* as *The Graces. A Classical Allegory, Interspersed with Poetry and Illustrated by Explanatory Notes*, published in London in 1823. This is described as "Translated from the German by S.T."—probably Sarah Taylor, later Sarah Austin, who grew up in Norwich and became well known as a translator of German works.⁶⁰ Taylor certainly inspired the work of Charles Richard Coke, the translator of *Crates and Hipparchia* (1823). Again it is Taylor's favourite poet, Wieland, who is translated and Coke quotes from Taylor's criticism of Wieland's works in volumes 77 and 84 of

⁵⁸ [This is a good example of Taylor's inventiveness. Discussing the problem of river transportation in India he states: "Surely the steam-engine moving a water-wheel, might advantageously be substituted to the oar. And as the French have lately contrived to boil soup by reflecting the sun's rays from various mirrors on the bottom of the boiler, it is probable that a steam-engine could in that climate usually be kept at work all day without the expense of fuel, by means of the heat reflected from a moveable hollow hemisphere or cylinder of mirrors." The world's first commercial steamboat, the *North River Steamboat*, began operating out of New York in 1807. DC]

⁵⁹ [*The Cabinet* 1 (1794), 84-91, 153-64. The essay is by Thomas Starling Norgate (1772-1859). DC]

⁶⁰ [Sarah Taylor (1793-1867) was no relation of William Taylor. DC]

the *Monthly Review*. Above all it is the list of subscribers that supplies evidence of a connection with Taylor: Taylor himself appears, the Martineaus, Hudson Gurney, Mrs. Opie, Robberds, and others; in short, many persons from Taylor's circle of friends. In the *Historic Survey* Taylor mentions in two places the name of Robert Harvey from Catton near Norwich, who, besides translating a work by Kotzebue, is also supposed to have translated Lessing's *Minna* (under the title, *Love and Honour*): but I have been unable to find out details about him (1:356, 3:135). Undoubtedly the most important of Taylor's students at this period, though, was George Borrow (1803-81). He originated from the county of Norfolk and came to Norwich as a young man, where he associated much with Taylor; he already had a surprising knowledge of languages, being fluent in no fewer than twelve (Robberds 2:496).⁶¹ Consequently he learnt German from Taylor extraordinarily fast. As early as 1825 his translation of Friedrich Maximilian von Klingers's *Faust* was published; a translation of Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* was planned, but did not materialise.⁶² There is no room here to discuss Borrow's chequered life, but a chapter of his autobiographical novel, *Lavengro*, deserves more attention (Borrow 6:242-53). There he describes a conversation with Taylor; however, according to his whimsical manner, without mentioning his name, though given the context there cannot be the smallest doubt to whom the "elder individual" refers. Taylor is described as a zealous smoker, a habit he had acquired in Germany. It is typical of his manner that he should trace the philosophical talents of the Germans to smoking; that he should speak a little deprecatorily about Goethe's *Werther*, but nonetheless, under certain circumstances, not want to condemn suicide; that he should want to have nothing to do with clericalism and the Bible, yet highly admire the figure of Christ; and that he should emphasise his own tolerance, which, while he adhered with determination to his convictions, nonetheless teaches him to respect the opinions of others, and so on. The conversation ends in a very marked way with advice which Taylor imparts to his young friend: "that it will be as well to go on improving yourself in German!" (253).⁶³

Taylor drops a remark in the course of this conversation that, if it is authentic, gives a deep insight into his mind. He answers Borrow's question, if he is happy, with

⁶¹ In 1835 he published in St. Petersburg, under the title *Targum*, metrical translations from 30 different languages and dialects.

⁶² [For the little that is known of Borrow's *Wilhelm Tell* see Ridler 142. DC]

⁶³ [For a full discussion of Borrow's description of Taylor, and the opinions he attributes to him, see Chandler, "Lavengro's Portrayal." DC]

“no,” and adds that he must regard his life, as a whole, as a failed one. It is at least doubtful if he would have pronounced himself so unreservedly to a young man, yet the complaint would not have been entirely without reason. It is true that Taylor did not achieve the main goal of his endeavours, to domesticate the German language and literature in England. Added to this mental ill-humour came the maladies and troubles associated with old age, which occurred earlier with him than is ordinarily the case. He gradually came to feel isolated in his hometown, after his parents, whom he stood by in good and bad times with admirable child-like piety, had died, and he had lost many friends through death or distance. A move to London would have been natural, and he actually considered it seriously at one point. He intended to apply for a position in the British Museum, but his heretical views stood in his way, and another person was given the preference. It is certainly regrettable that he was never given the opportunity, after his talents had developed in private, to strengthen his character in a public arena; in England’s mighty metropolis, in lively exchange with the world of writers, he would have laid aside many a peculiarity that caused offence; also his influence would have been much wider and deeper. But it was his fate to become stunted in a corner of the provinces. We learn further about a journey, which would have taken him to Germany, freshening up his attainments; Heidelberg was chosen as the place of residence, but this plan also came to nothing.⁶⁴ The feeling of indolence, which now overcame him more and more often, is to be blamed. As early as 1810 he complained of an “artificial hypochondriasis, which apologises to me for a fitful, indolent sort of application” (Robberds 2:294), and remarks of this kind can be found repeatedly (for example in a letter of 12 March 1821: Robberds 2:496). Time and again his friends urged him to write a book, which through its more than ephemeral significance would deliver his name to posterity. The foremost was Southey, who wrote as early as 23 February 1803: “I cannot be satisfied that William Taylor should be a newspaper editor [referring to the *Iris*] . . . Few men have his talents, fewer still his learning, and perhaps no other his leisure joined to these advantages. From him, an opus magnum might—ought to be expected” (Robberds 1:445). This magnum opus, the first history of German literature in the English language, finally came out in three

⁶⁴ [Robberds mentions this plan as developed after the death of Taylor’s father in 1819: “The ties by which William Taylor was attached to his home having been thus severed, some of his friends urged him strongly, and his own inclination seemed to second the proposal, to revisit Germany, and make himself acquainted with its more modern literature. . . . For a season the project was seriously entertained; the time was named for his departure, and Heidelberg selected as the place of his sojourning” (2:489-90). DC]

volumes in 1828-30 with the title *Historic Survey of German Poetry*—though prose works, too, are considered in many cases—the whole interspersed with various translations. According to Taylor’s own explanation, the impulse for this work came from Aurelio de Giorgi-Bertòla’s book, *Idea della bella letteratura Alemanna* (1784). Herewith a long-cherished plan was realised: the first time Taylor spoke of it was in a letter to Southey of 1 June 1810 (Robberds 2:294).

Taylor, in the composition of this work, was at a disadvantage in various respects. As just noted, he now worked with declining strength. He was content to compile the work from earlier published essays, changing individual expressions, striking out short passages, and adding some, but only a few, others. In this manner a uniform work could not be produced, of course. Some examples of these alterations, which are characteristic of changes in his religious opinions, may follow here. In a 1797 critique of Wieland he said in his mention of the story of “Araspes and Panthea” that “the lover of Xenophon’s writings will wander with reminiscence and with delight” (*Monthly Review*, second series 22:507). He now alters the phrase to “with patient reminiscence” (*Historic Survey* 2:318). He adds a subtle comparison between Wieland and Byron as narrators, wherein similarities as well as differences are sharply emphasised (2:398-400).⁶⁵ In conclusion Taylor praises them chiefly because they are free of prejudice, and they took on the fight against tyranny, superstition and

⁶⁵ [The passage is worth quoting as a specimen of Taylor’s literary criticism: “The tales of Lord Byron have more originality of topic [than Wieland’s], more energy of narration, and deeper tragic interest: the author’s intense feeling infuses every where a high pathetic force, and the more torturing the emotion, the more transitive is the sympathy excited. Byron’s tales are less various indeed than those of Wieland, as the hero is usually Childe Harold with an altered garb: Alp, Hugo, Lara, Selim, the Corsair and the Giaour are but fresh self-reflections too complacently repeated by this moral Narcissus: still the scenery of the drama is full of original delineations, vivid sketches from a hitherto uncopied reality. His style is condensed, stirring, picturesque, and assails the fancy with all the impressiveness of that nature from which its imagery is derived; but it is lyrical, abrupt, hurrying from one strong situation to another, always provoking the palpitations of the heart, and not always at leisure to communicate the whole story undertaken, which, as in the Giaour, is often told only by implication. Wieland on the contrary narrates with garrulous circumstantiality; he is chiefly attentive to ideas of the eye, and paints every part of his subject with indiscriminate industry; like the painter Vandermyn, he is not content to exhibit the beautiful tearful visage of the dying Sophonisba, he finishes as exquisitely the folded embroidery of her shawl, and the myrrhine vases on her toilet. Wieland dreads omission, Byron superfluity; Wieland amuses, Byron impassions; Wieland is more ideal, Byron more natural; Wieland pursues the beautiful, Byron the stimulant; Wieland delights to portray the Graces, Byron to animate the Furies.

To both writers belongs the high praise of impartiality: they inculcate a manly liberty of thought, which fearlessly questions the established claims to veneration of the inmates both of heaven and earth; they wage war against superstition, against asceticism, against tyranny; they have extended the range of intellect, enlarged the bounds of toleration, and scattered the seeds of freedom; they have powerfully assisted in winning for liberal opinions an enduring ascendancy in the literature of their respective countries.” I assume the painter referred to is either Heroman van der Mijn (c.1684-1741) or his son Frans (1719-83), both of whom worked in London. DC]

asceticism, and scattered in the literature of their homelands the seeds of liberal ideas. In a 1798 review of Wieland's *Göttergespräche* there appears the sentence: "The dialogue between Proserpine, Luna, and Diana, (in which they endeavour to explain the mythological doctrine that describes each of the three as Hecate,) although superlatively ingenious, must in every country, of which the established religion is trinitarian, pass for very profane" (*Monthly Review*, second series 26:490). This sentence is missing in the respective passage in the *Historic Survey*; apparently Taylor no longer wanted to take into consideration the sensibility of his audience. In the *Monthly Magazine* for 1805 he asserted that the *Wolfenbüttler Fragmente* was "in Germany the radical book of the infidels" (20:43). In the *Historic Survey* the last word is replaced with the less critical expression, "anti-supernaturalists" (1:365). As late as 1823 he called Goethe "the Shakspeare of Germany" (*Monthly Magazine* 55:408); a few years later he is degraded to being the Euripides of the German stage (*Historic Survey* 3:378).⁶⁶ Examples like these could be multiplied.

Even though Taylor exerted all his strength to bring his account up to date, he succeeded only in part. A new generation had now sprung up, with new views and higher pretensions, and whose spokesperson, now confronting him, was no less a man than Thomas Carlyle. In the *Edinburgh Review* for 1831 Carlyle published a critique of the *Historic Survey* (republished in his *Miscellaneous Essays*), which was completely devastating and permanently damaged Taylor's literary reputation. One cannot hide the fact that the *Historic Survey* has large and regrettable flaws and gaps; nevertheless, these are not always correctly identified, and Robberds has shown that many of Carlyle's criticisms are unsubstantiated. For example Taylor is accused of demonstrating "culpable ignorance" when he reportedly said that Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit* is "a fictitious narrative, and no genuine Biography" (Carlyle 165), though in truth Taylor calls it "a household epepeia, which . . . mingles history and invention" and, earlier, "not an autobiography, but rather a biographical novel" (*Historic Survey* 3:376). Also one cannot hold it against Taylor when, given the level of his knowledge at that time, he honestly admitted not to know how to separate *Wahrheit* from *Dichtung*.⁶⁷ It is equally wrong when the reproach is raised that *Stella*

⁶⁶ [Taylor writes: "On the whole. . .Göthe bears more resemblance to him [Euripides] than to any other antient dramatist, by natural delineation, frequent pathos, ready sententiousness, and freedom of doctrine." DC]

⁶⁷ [Taylor says: "as I know not how to separate the fiction from the fact, I prefer not to attempt founding upon it [*Dichtung und Wahrheit*] a regular biography" (*Historic Survey* 3:376). DC]

ends “to Mr Taylor’s satisfaction” with bigamy (165); this is the case in the first edition, the only one Taylor appears to have known. Besides, he praises the piece only as a work of art; he makes no comment on its morality.⁶⁸ Another example of Carlyle’s behaviour as a critic is that he claims to have detected thirteen errors on six pages in the third volume. From this he concludes, with strict arithmetic, that as there are thirteen errors on six pages, there will be 3152 mistakes on the 1455 pages of the entire work, or, subtracting the numerous translations, circa 1500 (165). Carlyle’s proceeding appears especially malicious, as ten years later he included this review, without any alterations, in his *Miscellaneous Essays*, though a feeling of respect for the dead ought to have demanded, if not the entire suppression of the essay, at least many local mitigations.

As remarked above, one can rightly find faults with Taylor’s work; but one does not have to make unjust demands, as Carlyle does, when dealing with a first attempt, even though one may not overlook mistakes that could have been avoided by the author. Given that this was a first attempt, it certainly was not possible in England at that time to present a history of the German intellect in a history of German literature, as Carlyle demands.⁶⁹ The blossoming, the classic epoch, had then just been concluded, and it was almost impossible to imagine the right standpoint for its evaluation and representation even in Germany, not to mention abroad. What one could have expected from Taylor was a fairly complete, chronological representation, and a detailed characterisation of the main figures; one has to admit that these expectations are not satisfied throughout. Flawed to a high degree is the

⁶⁸ Carlyle is not very precise with his information in general. According to him Luther is treated in two lines: in reality it is two pages (1:167-68). “Hans Sachs and his Master-singers escape notice” (163): cf. by contrast 1:143, 156, 168. “The Poetry of the Reformation is not alluded to”: but it is discussed (albeit incompletely) at 1:169-70. “Ludwig Tieck is not once mentioned; neither is Novalis”: their names are found at 3:445 etc.

⁶⁹ [Carlyle states:

. . . the History of a nation’s Poetry is the essence of its History, political, economic, scientific, religious. With all these the complete Historian of a national Poetry will be familiar; the national physiognomy, in its finest traits, and through its successive stages of growth, will be clear to him: he will discern the grand spiritual Tendency of each period, what was the highest Aim and Enthusiasm of mankind in each, and how one epoch naturally evolved itself from the other. (158)

Herzfeld does not mention the surely relevant fact that in October 1829 Carlyle had accepted a proposal from a London publisher to write a history of German literature himself. An agreement was finalized in January 1830, and Carlyle did considerable work on the project in the following months, but in July the publishing arrangements collapsed and the work was aborted (Shine xxvii-xxviii). It is likely that Carlyle regarded Taylor with some bitterness as a more successful rival, and the *Historic Survey* as a work which had removed the market for his own, comparable study. DC]

representation of the old period, where gross misunderstandings alternate with the extravagant ideas so favoured by Taylor. Hence we learn that Ovid was the most ancient Germanic poet, as he talks in his letters from exile of writing poetry in the language of the “Geten,” who are of course identified with the Goths. The songs of the older *Edda* were collected by order of Charlemagne; they contain among other things poems of Odin, who—and not only by Taylor—is regarded as hero and poet, and, because of the west-Saxon genealogies, is placed in the time of the emperor Julian. Entirely insufficient is, further, the analysis of *Beowulf*, whose author is named as Wiglaf, the follower of the hero. In this case Taylor could have informed himself better using Sharon Turner’s *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (published 1799-1805), or at least J. J. Conybeare’s *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (1826), which unfortunately he did not lay hands on until too late (*Historic Survey* 3:448). One could ask in general if works like *Beowulf* and the *Edda* belong in a special history of German literature. In any case one would rather admit them than various sections that Taylor added to disseminate certain favourite theories, as for example a treatise on the age of the *Zendavesta*, or on the question of the authorship of the Homeric poems.

Significantly better and more pleasing are the sections that Taylor devotes to the newer literature, which constitutes the main part of the *Historic Survey*. This he saw unfold to its highest blossoming, followed its development to a certain point with interest and understanding, and is thus often capable of developing a well-rounded and satisfying picture of persons and circumstances. While there are a few gaps and errors, one has to keep in mind that Taylor, as he was writing his work, had not been to Germany for nearly forty years; that he found it difficult to find literary aids in his home; and that a preference for certain authors and a dislike of others naturally influenced him. Taylor himself names Friedrich Bouterwek as his “instructor and guide,” whose *Geschichte der Poesie und Beredsamkeit* concludes with the beginning of this century. Therefore he was led to mistakenly regard the Augustan Age as ended by the Napoleonic wars; the representatives of the Romantic School, when compared to the classic poets, appear to him like comets next to fixed stars, and he thus feels justified in discussing them briefly, especially since he could not quite survey the full development of this literary movement. He can be blamed, however, for including a lot of paltry and unnecessary detail, which, even if it were true, in no way contributes to the characterisation of the authors concerned. What suffered most from this was the representation of Lessing’s life and literary character. The matter is not improved by

the inclusion of Taylor's entire translation of *Nathan the Wise* (as well as his *Iphigenia*) in the *Historic Survey*, and, further, of Johann Georg Pfranger's continuation of Lessing's play (*Der Mönch vom Libanon*), which had been ascribed to Lessing for some time. That Taylor's work thus suffered from a lack of unity and clarity is obvious without further explanation.

Despite these problematic sides of Taylor's work one must not overlook its good and valuable aspects. Carlyle rightfully praised the passages that deal with Klopstock as very successful, giving the reason that it is especially the sublime, mighty and superhuman that appeal to Taylor's imagination. One is equally justified in calling to mind the Detmold apprenticeship, where Taylor first received a deep and lasting impression of German poesy through the *Messiah*. Next to Klopstock it is Wieland and Herder for whom Taylor manifests a special preference and understanding. Two select samples may illustrate this. He writes of Wieland: "Wieland's novels are of a form nearly peculiar. Wholly negligent, apparently, of living manners and opinions, he has laid the scene of all his fables in remote ages and countries, and is scrupulously attentive to the costume not only of the objects but of the very ideas introduced: yet he artfully indicates a perpetual analogy between the ways of acting and thinking in different times and places; he steadily keeps in view the general laws of human hallucination; and he is ever solicitous to inculcate the truism, that under other masks and names men are still repeating the same comedy. An enthusiast, tamed into a worldling by the delusions of a mistress and the lessons of a philosopher, is the favourite subject of his intellectual sculpture. For *pathetic*, and even for *highly comic* passages, one may long seek in vain: but for beautiful description, and delicately interesting situations, one is never at a loss: he does not aim at exciting passion, but at analyzing character: he seldom attains to dramatic vivacity: he produces a calm and placid, not a boisterous and turbulent delight,—the intoxication of the sharoot, not of the wine-flask" (2:493). The section about Herder, a splendid specimen of Taylor's style, contains the following: "Herder may be characterized as the Plato of the Christian world. His blooming and ardent diction, and his graceful imagination, uniformly cling in devout ecstasy about those passages of the sacred writings which are adapted to command our loftiest feelings. Yet he employs them rather like the mythological allusions and parabolic instructions of an eloquent moralist, than as lessons of experience or dogmata or revelation. He almost professes to conceal, beneath the enthusiasm of a Wesley, the scepticism of a Hume.

He binds his brow, indeed, with the clusters of Engedi, strews along his path the roses of Sharon and culls the sweetest lilies of the valley of Tirzah: but he employs them rather as the gifts of human than of angelic hands, rather as the luxuries of taste than of faith. With him, Magdalena, Salome and the young Maria, more resemble the clad Graces pursuing Apollo in the dance, and scattering perfumes in his way; or the Gopia listening with mingled love and devotion to the hymnings of Krishna, while Cama strains his cany bow, and mixes for the nuptial feast his cup of five-fold joy;—than those simple, innocent, pure, and holy, but somewhat awful forms, in which we are accustomed to embody the saints of our church. His erudition, classical and oriental, gives a weight—and his almost voluptuously poetical imagery imparts a fascination—to his points of view, which disarm Philosophy of her spear and Superstition of her shield. He seems inclined to institute a paganized Christianity;⁷⁰ and to make the feared gods of the vulgar into the beloved divinities of the cultivated” (3:40).

Carlyle again judges too severely when, in discussing the chapters dealing with Schiller and Goethe, he states that the reader should regard them as “unwritten, or written in a state of somnambulism” (176). Schiller at least is treated in a fashion that allows the reader to get an approximate idea of his greatness and significance as a poet. Unfortunately one cannot make the same claim for Taylor’s account of Goethe: we have already pointed to the supposed reasons that stood in the way of his just criticism of Goethe. But if one may not consider the personal disagreement too significant, the simple fact that Taylor did not understand the great poet and could not understand him is a sufficient explanation. And cannot the same be said of many of Goethe’s fellow country-people? And what about Carlyle, the highest of the so-called heralds of the Goethean spirit? Only recently did Leon Kellner, in his lecture at the 43rd convention of philologists, destroy the legend of the intellectual fellowship of the two, and show, based on their correspondence, how this enthusiastic admirer of Goethe did not have a full understanding of his being and doings.⁷¹

As with the underestimation of Goethe, so one can name extenuating circumstances for the overestimation of Kotzebue, of which Carlyle accuses Taylor.

⁷⁰ Taylor is obviously mistaken here.

⁷¹ [Leon Kellner (1859-1928), a distinguished scholar of English literature, taught at the University of Vienna; he was a friend of Herzfeld and is specially thanked in the preface to the present work. He gave his lecture on Goethe and Carlyle in Cologne in 1895 and it was published the following year: see Meyer 568, entry 6549. (I am most grateful to Christopher Stray of the University of Wales, Swansea, for locating this reference for me.) Kellner seems to have been unusually critical of Carlyle at a time when Carlyle was virtually worshipped in Germany: on this see Zenzinger 337-38. DC]

Kotzebue's dramas were almost the only German plays that were, for some time, acted on the London stage. They certainly affected Taylor as powerfully as they did his contemporaries, and the impression was so long lasting that he called Kotzebue even three decades later the greatest dramatic genius since Shakespeare (*Historic Survey* 3:102)! In a previously cited essay Leopold Bahlsen has succinctly detailed the merits that are unique to Kotzebue's frequently disparaged plays—his knowledge of theatrical effect, his fruitful imagination, his not to be despised accomplishments as a writer of comedies—from which it follows that his temporary popularity was not so unmerited as is commonly claimed. For the question of how long his influence in England lasted, there is an instructive, and so far unnoticed, piece of evidence. Thackeray, in his *Pendennis*, which as is well known contains much autobiographical material, describes his hero's delight as he attends a performance of *The Stranger* (an adaptation of *Menschenhass und Reue*). This performance must have taken place at the end of the 1820s, just at the time Taylor was writing his history of German literature.⁷²

Another word can be said about the numerous translations that are scattered throughout the *Historic Survey*; but here we can only be brief as even a stern judge like Carlyle has to admit that “compared to the average of English translations these are of a nearly ideal superiority” (177). This refers primarily to Taylor's own attempts, but one also finds excellence in the performance of others, as for example the translation of Schiller's poem “Die Ideale” (3:214; first published in 1801 by an anonymous translator in the *Monthly Magazine* 12:221), or the “Ode an die Freiheit” by Stolberg (2:84), or Schiller's “Hero and Leander,” translated by James Bedford (3:201).

The reception of the *Historic Survey* was the most disadvantageous that can be imagined. After Carlyle's critique there appears to have been no further reviews, which also proves how high appreciation of the Scottish critic had risen by then.⁷³ That Goethe received through Carlyle's arrangements a copy of Taylor's work has already been remarked. He wrote about it on 20 August 1831 to Carl Friedrich Zelter: “I received a ‘Survey of German Poetry’ from England, written by W. Taylor, who

⁷² For the even longer-lasting effect of this play in France see Süpfle 321. Another play (*Die Versöhnung oder Bruderkwitz*) was performed with applause in Paris as late as 1883 (ibid. 323).

⁷³ [Herzfeld is incorrect here. There was at least one other substantial review: J. A. Heraud's in *Fraser's Magazine* 4 (1831-32): 167-79. This is, in large part, a defense of Taylor against Carlyle's “very smart criticism” (167). DC]

studied 40 years ago in Göttingen, and who lets loose the teachings, opinions, and phrases that already vexed me 60 years ago. The ghostly voices of the Herren Sulzer, Bouterwek and Company frightens us now entirely as the resonances of the dead.” Here one must first of all correct an error: Taylor never studied in Göttingen, and the claim that he merely repeats the theories and opinions of Sulzer and Bouterwek is, with regard to his originality, also correct only to a certain extent. Goethe, by the way, is here influenced in his judgement by Carlyle, who had already informed him unfavourably about Taylor’s work (Norton 255).

The last years of Taylor’s life supply no pleasing picture. There was a steady decline of mental and physical strength, as there was soon afterwards with his friend, Southey. For both it is true to say, as Scott said of Swift: “The scene darkened before the curtain fell.” Taylor died on 5 March 1836 and was buried in the cemetery of the Octagon Chapel in Norwich, where he been baptised. He adhered to his liberal convictions until the very end, so shared in the triumph of the emancipation of the Catholics in 1829 (he was a friend of the Catholics’ spokesperson, Charles Butler [Robberds 2:551-54]), and the enactment of the great Reform Bill of 1832. He defined his religious position in a letter to Southey of 1812, stating that he confessed to the Pantheism of Philo, “who maintains that the whole is God, and that the whole is collectively intelligent” (Robberds 2:373). Those who attacked him on the ground of his beliefs he could have countered justifiably with the beautiful words of the theologian Samuel Parr, which he himself used in reference to his deceased early friend Philip Martineau: “that the wise and good cherish within their bosoms a religion more pure and perfect than any formulary of speculation they externally profess; that their agreement upon points of supreme and indisputable moment is greater perhaps than they may themselves suspect; and that upon subjects the evidence of which is doubtful and the importance of which is secondary, their difference is nominal rather than real” (Taylor, *Memoir* 15).

A short but beautiful eulogy was dedicated by Southey to the friend who had departed. After he received the news of Taylor’s death he wrote: “I was not aware of my old friend’s illness, or I should certainly have written to him, to express that unabated regard which I have felt for him eight and thirty years, and that hope, which I shall ever feel, that we may meet in a higher and happier state of existence. I have known very few who equalled him in talents—none who had a kinder heart; and there never lived a more dutiful son, or a sincerer friend” (Robberds 1:4).

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Editor Biography

David Chandler obtained his D.Phil at the University of Oxford with a thesis on Norwich as a literary and cultural centre in the late 1700s. He has published numerous essays on the literature and culture of the Romantic era, and is now an Associate Professor of English at Doshisha University, Kyoto.

Translator Biography

Astrid Wind obtained her D.Phil at the University of Oxford with a thesis on representations of Native Americans in Romantic period literature. She now teaches at the Colegio Mariscal Braun and the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (UMSA) in La Paz, Bolivia, where she is researching the ideas and politics of land ownership and indigenous identity in a Bolivian context.