

Building National Literature: The Case of Germany 1830-1870

The development of a national literature in Germany was a complex and multifaceted process that unfolded over the course of the 19th century. This article examines the key factors that contributed to the emergence of a distinctly German literature during the period 1830-1870, including the rise of nationalism, the influence of Romanticism, and the development of a literary canon.



Building a National Literature: The Case of Germany, 1830–1870 by Peter Uwe Hohendahl

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The Rise of Nationalism

The rise of nationalism in Germany in the 19th century was a major factor in the development of a national literature. German nationalism was fueled by a number of factors, including the Napoleonic Wars, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution. These events led to a growing sense of German identity and a desire for a unified German state.

Nationalism found expression in literature in a number of ways. German writers began to celebrate German history and culture, and to promote the idea of a united Germany. They also began to write in a more distinctly German style, using German language and imagery.

The Influence of Romanticism

Romanticism was a literary movement that emerged in Germany in the late 18th century. Romanticism emphasized the importance of emotion, imagination, and individuality. Romantic writers often drew inspiration from nature, folklore, and the Middle Ages.

Romanticism had a profound influence on German literature. German Romantic writers such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, and Heinrich Heine celebrated the beauty of German nature and the richness of German history and culture. They also wrote in a more personal and expressive style, which reflected the Romantic emphasis on individuality.

The Development of a Literary Canon

The development of a literary canon is a process by which a society selects and values certain works of literature. A literary canon is important because it helps to define what is considered to be "great" or "important" literature, and it can influence the way that people read and think about literature.

In Germany, the literary canon began to develop in the 19th century. German critics and scholars began to identify and promote certain works of German literature as being particularly worthy of study and admiration. These works included the works of Goethe, Schiller, and Heine, as well as the works of other writers such as Lessing, Herder, and Novalis.

The development of a literary canon helped to solidify the status of German literature as a national literature. It also helped to create a sense of common identity among German readers, who could now share a common body of literary knowledge and experience.

The development of a national literature in Germany in the 19th century was a complex and multifaceted process. It was influenced by a number of factors, including the rise of nationalism, the influence of Romanticism, and the development of a literary canon. These factors helped to create a distinctly German literature that reflected the unique history and culture of the German people.



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