

Paul Johann Ludwig Heyse Biography

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Contents

Paul Johann Ludwig Heyse Biography.....	1
Contents.....	2
Biography.....	3

Biography

The German author Paul Johann Ludwig Heyse (1830-1914) is best known for his novellas. Marked by careful construction, nobility and dignity of content, and economy of form, these works reveal his relation to the classical tradition.

Paul Heyse was born in Berlin on March 15, 1830. The son of a professor, he pursued studies leading to a doctorate in philology. During an extended visit to Italy in 1852, he determined to abandon formal scholarship for a career in literature. In 1854 he was summoned to Munich by Maximilian II, king of Bavaria, who granted him a lifetime stipend. His subsequent career as a leader of the Munich Poets' Circle was marked by professional and popular success.

Heyse's half dozen novels avoid the political and sociological and tend to emphasize ethical views and goals. *Kinder der Welt* (1873) attests to his advocacy of "nature" and individual "freedom" as criteria in opposition to religious dogmatism. *Im Paradiese* (1875) is anti-Philistine in its ethical orientation. The element of classical balance and restraint and his opposition to the tenets and tactics of naturalism emerge in the novel *Merlin* (1892).

In his 120 novellas Heyse's imaginative and formalistic gifts are most fully realized. Here, too, his emphasis upon freedom, individuality, and instinct comes to the fore, although instinct is not presented as incompatible with spirituality or a sense of duty. Even the humblest or most unfortunate characters are endowed with dignity and nobility, which can provide a redemptive force if the individual remains "true to himself." *L'Arrabbiata* (1852) is perhaps his most famous novella.

As coeditor, Heyse published two extensive collections of 19th-century novellas: *Deutscher Novellenschatz* (24 vols., from 1871) and *Neuer deutscher Novellenschatz* (24 vols., 1884-1888). In his introduction to the former work he describes his "falcon theory" of the novella, advocating the utmost simplicity and clarity of content and form and urging the necessity for an inward conflict culminating in an abrupt turning point or change, which should be represented by a concrete symbol (as the falcon in a Boccaccio story).

Heyse's 60 carefully constructed dramas and many lyrics lack force, but his translations from the Italian poets are admired. In 1910 Paul Heyse received the Nobel Prize for literature. He died in Munich on April 2, 1914.