



Romanticism, Origins, and the History of Heredity (New Studies in the Age of Goethe)

Christine Lehleiter

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At the turn of the eighteenth century, selfhood was understood as a “tabula rasa” to be imprinted in the course of an individual’s life. By the middle of the nineteenth-century, however, the individual had become defined as determined by heredity already from birth. Examining novels by Goethe, Jean Paul, and E.T.A. Hoffmann, studies on plant hybridization, treatises on animal breeding, and anatomical collections, *Romanticism, Origins, and the History of Heredity* delineates how romantic authors imagined the ramifications of emerging notions of heredity for the conceptualization of selfhood. Focusing on three fields of inquiry—inbreeding and incest, cross-breeding and bastardization, evolution and autopoiesis—Christine Lehleiter proposes that the notion of selfhood for which Romanticism has become known was not threatened by considerations of determinism and evolution, but was in fact already a result of these very considerations. *Romanticism, Origins and the History of Heredity* will be of interest for literary scholars, historians of science, and all readers fascinated by the long *durée* of subjectivity and evolutionary thought.

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