M. HENRI HEINE

This manuscript item was found among Berlin's papers. In 1951 he added the following note: 'Written in 1928 by the author aged 19. Intended for "transition" to see if they were as bogus as they seemed to be.' The journal Transition, *which began life in Paris in 1927, styled itself without an initial capital on its cover. In summer 1928 a subtitle was added: 'an international quarterly for creative experiment'. The contents included poems in a style here parodied by Berlin. There is no evidence that he submitted his poem for publication. 'Monsieur un rien', Heine tells us in his memoirs, was one of the distortions of his name – 'since the French change everything in the world to suit themselves' – employed by his French contemporaries.*

The poem was published by Arie M. Dubnov in his book Isaiah Berlin: The Journey of A Jewish Liberal *(London, 2012: Palgrave Macmillan), 48, with extensive commentary (48–52).*

Heinrich Heine by Moritz Daniel Oppenheim, 1831, Hamburger Kunsthalle

M. Henri Heine
(Un rien, vous êtes Monsieur un rien!)

When the enemy wynds and the big lewis guns will have blasted
the last snigger off the face of the last spengling, declining, tarred
mannikin, then only aristotles will be left alive on the face of our
planet.

        Eons on eons climb sliming into pain
        I nature's natural with midriff salted hugely
        (Will the Plumber's plumber never down and rain?)
        my bowels tear in aquinatic strife
        (they strove, with none, midwived by jealous life)
White cressed with black; the prickly pear hangs dead
dead and dumb unpregnant acataractic, agony
pillars are deepstuck desertislanded in mine own Flux,
        my little crumb what struck thee then
        Space smacked me, sir, time cracked me then
So we lie in sliming flux, warm slime your
soft mother flux that's dead before and after
I groaning hotly groaning grating in sour untransfigurating
ferment to no end groaning
to change unskinned with Herakleit and rend and rend. . . . .