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# Poetry Into Song

Performance and Analysis of Lieder

Deborah Stein  
Robert Spillman

*POETRY INTO SONG*

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Performance and Analysis of *Lieder*

DEBORAH STEIN  
ROBERT SPILLMAN

Foreword by Elly Ameling  
with Max Deen Larsen

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# *To Laurel and George*

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# Foreword

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The irresistible beauty of the *Lied* has long cast its spell on listeners around the world. Those distinctive harmonies with which Franz Schubert and Hugo Wolf express intimate ideals and desires speak to people everywhere. No music pierces the heart's mysteries more deeply and no music is more deeply alive with verbal magic . . . a serious challenge indeed for performers and audiences who have little German. For it is the poetry of the Age of Goethe that has made the *Lied* possible, exquisite poetry that cannot be translated into other languages, but only into music.

The book you have in hand is about artistic transformation. It will guide you, and follow you, on your inner journeys as a performer, seeking to turn poems into songs. Here you enter a world where two plus two rarely equals four, a world teeming with latent voices waiting to be called into life, a world of vibrant tonal colors, a world where the very sounds of words must be meaning itself. More than a compendium of analytical concepts, this is a book that enables you to shape individual interpretations through personal encounter with a lively train of provocative questions and creative experiments. Providing abundant exercises for pianist and singer alike, *Poetry into Song* is an invitation to experience metamorphosis.

Elly Ameling  
with  
Dr. Max Deen Larsen  
Franz Schubert-Institut  
Baden bei Wien

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## INTRODUCTION

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# *Preliminary Clarifications*

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Three different subjects are studied in this volume: poetry, musical performance, and music analysis. While our ultimate goal is to combine the three into a manifold understanding of German art song performance, we begin by separating the subjects from one another and examining each as a separate topic. This approach models how we believe performers need to study a *Lied* in performance preparation: they must study first the poetry, then the performance problems, and then each aspect of the musical structure in turn. By the end of the process, a recombination of the three topics will occur through polished performance, when singer and pianist convey their understanding of the poetry and the music in the magical act of musical expression.

In Part I, “The Language of Poetry,” two chapters offer ways to think about poetry. Chapter One, “Introduction to German Romanticism,” provides the historical context of German Romantic poetry and defines recurring themes, images, and metaphors. Chapter Two, “Devices and Delights in Poetry,” presents the norms and practices of poetic texts, including use of rhetorical devices, poetic meter, and special forms of word usage. Chapter Two also explains the concept of “persona,” or whose voice is speaking, as persona occurs in both German Romantic poetry and in the musical setting.<sup>1</sup> These opening chapters will give readers the resources necessary for examining and understanding all of the verse set by the great *Lied* composers; moreover, they will provide the foundation for all discussions of poetry and related issues of text in this book.

The three chapters that comprise Part II, “The Language of the Performer,” address the various issues of technical concern to the singer and pianist. Most of the issues here are familiar to anyone who performs; in Chapter Three, “Texture,” and Chapter Four, “Temporality,” we review how musicians think about these basic elements and suggest how they influence both singer and pianist in preparing a *Lied* for performance. In Chapter Five, “Elements of Interpretation,” we discuss how decisions about use of timbre and dynamics and concerns about ensemble coordination all help shape and articulate the performer’s conception of a musical setting. These chapters are not intended to give the performer answers to questions of interpretation; rather, they suggest a process for thinking about decision making. As we discuss these more technical issues of *Lied* performance in Part II, we hope that examination of actual repertory within these chapters

will encourage a deepened sensitivity to both the music and the means of conveying poetic ideas through musical expression.

Having set the framework for understanding the *Lied* genre in terms of poetry and general performance concerns, Part III, “The Language of Music,” then presents chapters that systematically review the various ways to analyze individual works in preparation for performance. Much of Chapters Six through Nine covers familiar territory. Chapter Six, “Harmony and Tonality,” and Chapter Seven, “Melody and Motive,” combine a variety of analytical approaches that first define norms of harmonic, tonal, melodic, and motivic usage and then show how composers used deviations in these areas to convey the richness and complexity of the poetry they set. Chapter Eight, “Rhythm and Meter,” reviews temporal norms of musical syntax within the beat, the bar, and the phrase, and then shows how composers used rhythmic and metric deviations to convey poetic tensions. Chapter Nine, “Form in the German *Lied*,” combines basic formal designs with discussion of more sophisticated formal issues such as poetic and musical repetition and reinterpretation, and the disparities between poetic form and musical form. In order to make the important material in these chapters the most accessible, we offer three additional resources: first, the notes for each chapter cite numerous references for additional study or review; second, Appendix II provides a glossary of all important terms that are defined throughout the book; and third, Appendix III provides an extensive bibliography.

These analytical chapters will assist performers in two complementary ways: on the one hand, the review of musical *norms* sets a foundation for conceptualizing each aspect of a given *Lied*, and on the other hand, the discussion of musical innovation demonstrates how the desire to set poetic texts in the most expressive and imaginative way expands these common-practice norms through *deviations* in every musical dimension: harmony, tonality, melody, rhythm, meter, and form. In addition, our study highlights the unusual performance challenges created by these various musical deviations and discusses how understanding musical innovation helps musicians perform these works with new perceptiveness and, hence, greater confidence.

Finally, Chapter Ten, “Different Settings of a Single Text,” brings together the analytical approaches of earlier chapters in studying different settings of the same text. This chapter both models analytical approaches to several different songs and suggests ways to conceptualize the individual styles of the four great *Lied* composers: Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Wolf. In addition, a comparison is made between settings of two other, often-neglected groups of important *Lied* composers: Clara Schumann (exemplifying women composers) and Gustav Mahler (representing composers better known for their orchestral work). While students may be tempted to go directly to this chapter for insight into various composers’ styles, we urge that readers wait until all the technical concepts and terms in earlier chapters have been presented and absorbed. Without the basic framework from these

earlier chapters, the stylistic features suggested at the end of the book will be, at best, hollow and superficial.

### Terminology

This book incorporates a number of different types of language and employs technical terms particular to divergent topics: poetry in German and English, concerns and techniques of musical performance, and systems and approaches to music analysis. In order to assist the reader in distinguishing among these languages and to highlight some of the more important terms that recur, we have adopted the following notational devices: all foreign terms (German and Italian) are italicized and titles of poems and songs are enclosed in quotation marks. The numerous technical terms employed are given a special notation: when an important term is introduced, it will be stated in small capitals. All terms so indicated will be redefined for quick reference in Appendix II, and the resourceful reader will adopt these terms immediately and use them in the most careful and thoughtful way.

As an additional aid to the sections on music analysis, major chords and major-mode keys will be notated with uppercase Roman numerals (for example, C major as I) and minor chords and minor-mode keys will be notated in lowercase Roman numerals (for example, c minor as i).

### Examples and Exercises

This book uses the poetry and/or music of the glorious *Lied* repertory for three purposes: (1) to demonstrate general points being made; (2) to dramatize different forms of an analytic technique; and (3) to test the reader's comprehension of a given topic. The first two involve either study of the musical score or careful scrutiny of various "figures" in the text. The text must be read with musical scores in hand, and the reader can refer to the Repertory List in Appendix IV to be fully prepared for a concentrated reading of each chapter. Readers also must take the time necessary to study all figures, which offer poetic verse, musical excerpts, or diagrams to exemplify particular points. These figures are not gratuitous examples to be skimmed over, but rather are major components of the exposition.

In order to enhance the usefulness of these explanatory sections either within the classroom setting or as part of an outside reading assignment, we suggest the following procedure. Any discussion of a poem should be prefaced by a dramatic recitation of the verse, preferably in both the original German and the suggested English translation. Literal translations of all poems cited in the text can be found in Appendix I; the suggested sources for other translations should be used only as an alternative.<sup>2</sup> Because most of us are unaccustomed to reading poetry aloud, these readings may at first

feel self-conscious and uncomfortable; however, with time and practice such discomfort should abate, and readers will begin to understand more clearly one of the most important features of German Romantic poetry: the special musicality that results from the use of poetic meters and the languages of sound (for example, alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia). Such dramatic readings also will simulate how composers approached the poetry they set; most knew poets and heard poetic readings, and many recited poems aloud over and over before composing the musical setting.<sup>3</sup>

When examining a *Lied*, a similar process is encouraged. After the text is read aloud, the piece should be performed. These “performances” are not intended as polished recitals; rather, they are working “readings” that set up a framework for deeper study. Any performance difficulties should be noted not as errors, but as technical challenges to all; any performance confusion or ambiguity likewise will signal issues of interpretive choice that require further discussion and thought. By adopting such a relaxed approach to these performance readings, both performers and listeners will be more able to think about choices rather than remain defensive of hastily drawn or rigidly held interpretations. As a result, a richer, more imaginative understanding of the piece will evolve.

Once the first performance has been heard and the ensuing discussion in the text is understood, then a second “reading” will dramatize the points just considered and show if the initial performance has been altered in any way. The entire process of performing, listening, analyzing, and performing again should yield a new understanding of the reciprocal interaction between performance and analysis: an astute performance can give the listener/analyst a persuasive understanding of a work of art and, in a similar way, an imaginative analysis can give the musician new insights into performance. By constantly challenging one another in this way, the performer and analyst (who may of course be one and the same person!) can develop a deeper understanding of the music, while at the same time remaining open to future reconsiderations.

In addition to using *Lieder* to exemplify various points made throughout the book, we also use the repertory as the basis of a series of exercises at the end of each chapter. These exercises test the reader’s understanding of the topics just covered and request diverse answers to a variety of analytical questions. All exercises should be approached with the same procedure adopted for chapter examples: first, the text should be recited, then the piece performed or at least heard on tape or compact disc; only then should the analytical questions be answered. Some answers will involve giving measure numbers or other brief responses; others will require making more detailed charts, diagrams, or musical sketches of various sorts. In all cases, the reader is encouraged to consider the piece in question as repertory being prepared for performance, and to think that answering the questions

in these exercises is analogous to preparing in one way to play or sing that piece.

## Repertory

Even though this text incorporates some of the most beautiful music ever written by some of the world's most cherished composers, our selection of repertory was constrained by several factors. First, we wanted our study to be immediately relevant and valuable, and thus chose some of the most beloved songs of the greatest masters. Second, we needed to use songs that were readily accessible to performers, that could be sightread relatively easily and could be performed several times over without undue strain on either singer or pianist. Third, in order to keep the repertory limited to a reasonable size, most songs had to have multiple functions within the book.

A fourth consideration that guided our selection of repertory was an overall concern about the size and cost of the study. In order to limit the size of the text itself and to reduce the amount of additional scores needed, we tried to use songs found within the reliable Dover score series for *Lieder*. Thus readers must have either the Dover volumes listed below or appropriate versions of the songs noted in Appendix IV. The necessary Dover scores are: (1) Schubert, *59 Favorite Songs*; (2) *Schubert's Songs to Texts by Goethe*; (3) Schubert's *Complete Song Cycles*; (4) Schumann, *Selected Songs for Solo Voice and Piano* (5) Wolf, *Spanish and Italian Songbooks*; and (6) Strauss, *Fifty-seven Songs for Voice and Piano*. Unfortunately, no one volume of the Dover series for Brahms was sufficient, hence all songs by Brahms, and any other repertory not listed here are included in Appendix V, where scores have been taken from the most reliable editions available.

We end these introductory remarks with some cautions. Our careful choice of repertory (including consideration of the source of score) and text translation has attempted to prevent the unwitting reader from being misled by uninformed editors, translators, and performers. Any reader who has other scores or translations is warned about the vagaries of text translations, particularly those on record jackets or those inserted directly into the score, and about improperly edited scores that add slurs and other performance indications not notated by the composer.<sup>1</sup> We also warn those who wish to listen to tapes or compact discs rather than live performances to beware the limitations of interpretative judgments when listening to fixed performances, even performances by great *Lied* interpreters. We want the study of this text to be based as much as possible upon *live* performance. Feeling one's way through a song is far more informative than listening to a polished performance, and young musicians need to remain as open as possible to nuances of interpretation and differences in interpretive choices.

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Part I

*The Language of Poetry*

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# *Introduction to German Romanticism*

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Und meine Seele spannte  
Weit ihre Flügel aus,  
Flog durch die stillen Lande,  
Als flöge sie nach Haus.

And my soul spread  
Wide its wings,  
Flew through the silent land,  
As if it were flying home.<sup>1</sup>

These lines, from a poem by Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff, typify the poetry written in the period called German Romanticism, poetry full of rich nature images and vivid poetic sensibilities. In this chapter, we summarize the characteristics of the poetry of this period by identifying the predominant themes and images and by demonstrating those features that gave these poems their unique quality.

We begin by making the same disclaimer found in every other introduction to German Romanticism, that the jumble of ideas and passions called German Romanticism is too complex to be easily described and that any attempt to categorize or explain this historical period risks oversimplification and even misinformation. We nevertheless include a chapter on this difficult topic because it is so important that performers of this quintessentially Romantic genre understand something of the spirit and historical context in which these creative works were shaped. For many students, this may be the beginning of a lifelong study of the German Romantic mind and soul, and we hope to convey an approach to learning about this complex subject that will continue to serve performers for years to come.

While it might seem easiest to define “romanticism” generally as a contrast to “classicism,” such labels tend to oversimplify the issues and mask the richness of the two historical periods and the creative forces at work within them. For example, Goethe, a poet most commonly associated with German Romanticism, was actually deeply rooted in “classical” themes and attitudes and only at times adopted some, but not all, so-called “Romantic” ideas. The same also could be said of Beethoven, whose music incorporates both classical and romantic elements. We thus use such “isms” with utmost care, calling the aesthetic movement in nineteenth-century Germany “German Romanticism,” but using that designation in the most complex sense of an ever-changing and often contradictory artistic movement.<sup>2</sup>

## Historical Context of German Romanticism

German Romanticism arose on the heels of the French Revolution (1789–1799) and within the reaction against the period called the ENLIGHTENMENT,<sup>3</sup> a reaction that began in the transitional movement called STURM UND DRANG (“Storm and Stress,” 1770s), a movement characterized by increased intensity and emotionalism.<sup>4</sup> The Romantic period proper spans approximately thirty years, from 1796 to c. 1830, but the impact of the movement continued throughout the nineteenth century. The various twists and turns of Romantic philosophical and literary development, along with the activity of some of its major figures, can be divided into three phases. *Early Romanticism* was focused in Berlin and Jena from 1796 to 1804; it included the writers Novalis (pseudonym for Fredrich von Hardenberg, 1772–1801), August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845), Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853), and Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder (1773–1798); it also included the philosophers Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) and F. W. J. Schelling (1775–1854). *Middle Romanticism* was centered primarily around Heidelberg, Dresden, and Vienna from 1804 to 1815; it included the writers Achim von Arnim (1781–1831), Clemens Brentano (1778–1842), Adalbert von Chamisso (1781–1838), Joseph von Eichendorff (1778–1857), Jakob Grimm (1785–1863), Wilhelm Grimm (1786–1859), and E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822); it also included the painters Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840) and Philipp Otto Runge (1777–1810) and the composers Ludwig von Beethoven (1770–1827) and Franz Schubert (1797–1828). *Late Romanticism*, then, was centered in Dresden and Munich from 1815 to c. 1830; it included the composers Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826) and Robert Schumann (1810–1856). The movement thus began regionally and swept throughout Germany, the ranks of writers and artists swelling to ever-wider circles of intense artistic interaction and collaboration.<sup>5</sup>

Within the historical development of German Romanticism, the position of the literary giant Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749–1832) is fittingly complex. Whereas Goethe began within the classical tradition and was a major figure, along with Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), in the *Sturm und Drang* movement of the 1770s, his work held tremendous significance for the Romantics: his hero Werther of *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*, 1774) came to represent the “new hero” of the times, and his themes in *Faust: Ein Fragment* (*Faust: A Fragment*, 1790), *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister’s Years of Travel*, 1795–1796), and much of his poetry reflected many essential elements of the Romantic movement.<sup>6</sup>

The championing of Goethe by the Romantics is ironic, however. He continued to promote the classical themes of orderliness and reason, and he became an outspoken critic of many aspects of Romanticism, repudiating such romantic themes as unbridled subjectivism, yearning for the infinite,

and preoccupation with death and otherworldliness.<sup>7</sup> Despite the ambivalent relationship of Goethe and the Romantics, however, his poetry and novels continued to include many elements deemed Romantic, and his poetry was set by most *Lied* composers of the nineteenth century.

### German Romantic Themes and Imagery

We begin our summary of German Romantic elements by introducing two fundamental features of the Romantic soul: (1) the insatiable quest to go beyond what is known and (2) the embrace of the contradictory or DICHOTOMOUS, the mingling of two seemingly incompatible, opposing elements into a singular entity.<sup>8</sup>

The desire to extend beyond what is known was a major shift from the self-imposed limitations of the Enlightenment. Romantics wanted to eliminate boundaries, to extend beyond limits, and to enjoy the infinite. This resulted in the desire to escape mundane daily existence through intoxication and through embrace of chaos, through exploration of the mystical and investigation of the abnormal. The poet took us to imaginary lands, often unfamiliar, vague, or murky, and this quest beyond what was known occurred in many guises: in the mysticism of religious belief, in the darkness of the night, and in the amorphous world of dreams.

The celebration of the contradictory also was a reaction against what was considered an oppressive rationality and orderliness during the Enlightenment. Romantics wanted to define their world through opposition and PARADOX: to intensify reality with the imaginary, to emphasize the spiritual through contrast with the material.<sup>9</sup> As German scholar Siegbert S. Praver states: "The most characteristic art of German Romanticism transports reader, viewer and listener to a frontier between the visible and the invisible, the tangible and the intangible. Something transcendent shines through everyday reality . . ."<sup>10</sup>

This merging of contradictory elements created confusion, bewilderment, and ambiguities of time, place, and persona;<sup>11</sup> instinct collided with reason, and the tortured present mingled with the happy past. The resulting lack of clarity and the multiplicity of meanings all created a rich and meaningful chaos that was cherished by the Romantics, and led, in turn, to a basic axiom of German Romanticism: Romantic irony. By definition, IRONY is "a method of expression in which the intended meaning of words used is the direct opposite of their usual sense,"<sup>12</sup> and the central irony of the Romantic period was that the poet sought the infinite, which by definition was unobtainable. This irony is expressed through different combinations of contradictory elements, for example: Romantic yearning (*romantische Sehnsucht*) for unattainable love; weeping for joy because love is full of pain; or the moon's light creating shadows on the landscape.<sup>13</sup>

The essential elements of German Romanticism can be expressed in four main themes, each theme being captured by a typical Romantic metaphor. The theme of Heightened Individuality is dramatized by the figure of The Wanderer; The Evocative World of Nature is typified by the Lonely Forest; The Seductiveness of Mystery is represented by The Night; and Spiritual Salvation is projected by Yearning for Peaceful Death. All of these themes and metaphors emphasize the characteristic German Romantic need to explore the unknown and the dichotomous.

### *Heightened Individuality*

German Romanticism was, first and foremost, a period of intense emotionalism, introspection, and self-absorption. Poets celebrated the individual and savored every human emotion from ecstatic joy to devastating despair. The German Romantic movement continued the *Sturm und Drang* concentration on the inner life of characters and the vacillations, inner conflicts, and ambiguous passions that ruled them. Goethe's *Werther* (*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*) was championed not because of his actions, which were few, but because of the depth and intensity of his emotions; Novalis's Heinrich (*Heinrich von Ofterdingen*) was a Romantic figure caught in his inner world, dreaming and brooding in emotional immobility.

German Romantic literature is full of poems whose very titles highlight feelings and psychological states, for example, Matthäus von Collin's *Wehmut* ("Melancholy"); Eichendorff's *Heimweh* ("Homesickness"); Ludwig Christoph Heinrich Hölty's *Seligkeit* ("Bliss"); and Wilhelm Müller's *Eifersucht und Stolz* ("Jealousy and Pride" from *Die schöne Müllerin*). In addition, the Romantic celebrated sensuousness, savoring the sounds and the aromas of nature and allowing the senses to become intoxicated and the imagination to become imbued with sensory delight:

Hörst du nicht die Quellen  
gehen  
Zwischen Stein und Blumen weit  
Nach den stillen Waldeseen,  
Wo die Marmorbilder stehen,  
In der schönen Einsamkeit?  
Von den Bergen sacht  
hernieder,  
Weckend die uralten Lieder,  
Steigt die wunderbare Nacht,  
Und die Gründe glänzen wieder,  
Wie du's oft im Traum  
gedacht.

Hear you not the brook's  
running  
Amongst stones and flowers afar  
Toward silent forest lakes,  
Where marble statues stand,  
In fair solitude?  
From the mountains gently  
downward,  
Awakening the ancient songs,  
There rises the wondrous night,  
And the valleys gleam again,  
As you often imagined in  
dreams.<sup>14</sup>

Exploration of the complexities of the human psyche also included investigation into the elusive world of the subconscious and dreams (both wish-fulfillment fantasies and nightmares); emotional extremes were sought through intoxication (using wine or drugs, or within the powers of love and nature) and through study of the bizarre and the grotesque.<sup>15</sup> The *Doppelgänger*, a spectral double that so haunted the Romantic, was a particularly vivid figure that confronted the poet with another side of the self and thereby placed the poet within the dichotomy of the soul.<sup>16</sup>

The most powerful Romantic image that conveyed the poet's preoccupation with the themes of the individual and the world of emotion was the figure of the Wanderer, the solitary figure whose travels through the world reflected a similar spiritual journey within. This Romantic protagonist mused and brooded, communed with nature and spoke to God, and experienced Romantic yearning with exquisite sensibility. Indeed, the wanderer symbolized the ironic, Romantic quest for the unattainable, usually for a lost love, that yearning that so trapped the poet within the pain of unfulfillment.

The wanderer image embodied two other elements of German Romanticism: the interest in the common people and the belief that the plight of everyday existence, with the omnipresent difficulties of love, was best expressed by the artist. The wanderer's many guises often were a camouflage for the alienated artist, who wandered about in order to escape unhappiness and to find resolution of inner turmoil. This image incorporated the Romantic paradox of needing human comfort of both family and a beloved, which is transient and unpredictable, and, at the same time, seeking release from the foibles of human interaction through solitude in nature or through the release of death. Müller's protagonist in *Die Winterreise* was such a figure, as were Goethe's poets in the two "Wanderers Nachtlied" lyrics.<sup>17</sup> Eichendorff's wanderers sought release through religious fulfillment, and Heine's wanderers reflected and agonized within the safer world of nature. The opening stanza of Friedrich Schlegel's "Der Wanderer" ("The Wanderer") captures both the wanderer's longing for relief from everyday strife and the sense of homelessness that results:

Wie deutlich des Mondes Licht	How clearly the moon's light
Zu mir spricht,	Speaks to me,
Mich beseelend zu der Reise:	Inspiring me on my journey:
"Folge treu dem alten Gleise,	"Follow faithfully the old track,
Wähle keine Heimat nicht.	Choose no home anywhere,
Ew'ge Plage	Lest eternal torment
Bringen sonst die schweren Tage.	Otherwise bring bad times.
Fort zu andern	On to others
Sollst du wechseln, sollst du	You will turn, you will
wandern	move on
Leicht entfliehend jeder Klage."	Lightly escaping all grief." <sup>18</sup>

In addition to The Wanderer figure, Romantic poetry also used a myriad of colorful common folk to depict the poet's struggles, for example, Eichendorff's "Der Musikant" ("The Musician"); Goethe's "Der Sänger" ("The Minstrel"); Johann Mayrhofer's "Der Alpenjäger" ("The Alpine Hunter"); Eduard Mörike's "Das verlassene Mägdlein" ("The Forsaken Maiden"); and Müller's "Der Leiermann" ("The Organ Grinder").

### *The Evocative World of Nature*

Just as the luxurious inner world of the human psyche gave the Romantic poet a wealth of themes and images, so the numinous world of nature, with its diverse elements and conflicting forces, provided the poet with an abundance of material. The natural world contained a wide array of natural objects, creatures, and sounds that provided the poet with both an atmosphere in which to feel and sense vividly and a landscape in which to wander and struggle. The opening stanza of Goethe's "An den Mond" ("To the Moon") exemplifies the poet's state within nature:

Füllest wieder Busch und Tal	You fill again wood and vale
Still mit Nebelglanz,	Silently with gleam of mist,
Löset endlich auch einmal	You set free at last
Meine Seele ganz;	My soul entirely; <sup>19</sup>

In addition to providing the poet with a new dramatic stage, nature's world also embodied the Romantic struggle between dichotomous or ambivalent forces: on the one hand, nature healed with nurturing warmth and soothing breezes; on the other hand, nature destroyed with debilitating cold and menacing storms. The sensitive poet was vulnerable to nature and thus was acutely aware of nature's mysteries and variabilities, including how nature changed with the seasons and the time of day.<sup>20</sup> Further, much poetry centers around moments of change within the day, for example, where the anticipation of night at dusk or the release from night at dawn prompted the poet's sensitivity in heightened form.<sup>21</sup>

In a similar way, nature's richness prompted the poet's sense of the numinous or imminent. The poet's was a small voice within an immense, at times overpowering, natural presence that provoked both awe and dread and that included both the supernatural and the means for transcendence. Eichendorff, whose lyrics combined love of nature with a deep religious devotion, used nature poems to dramatize the conflict between the diabolical sphere that existed below ground, the divine realm high above, and the poet caught between the two, struggling within nature's murmuring landscape.<sup>22</sup>

Pianist and author Charles Rosen combines the world of nature with the notions of time and memory in several ways: "What [Schumann's poets] retain . . . from the tradition of landscape poetry . . . is the complex sense of time in which past, present, and future coexist and interpenetrate each other. Memory and premonition are as immediate and powerful as direct perception—which serves, indeed, for the most part simply to recall and to predict."<sup>23</sup> The elements of dichotomy and ambiguity also come into play: "The ingenious confusion of momentary, seasonal, and millennial time gives one the illusion of grasping the processes of nature from microscopic to macroscopic level, . . . The portrayal of change, the representation of a reality that is fluid, ever in motion, is generally acknowledged as typical of Romantic style . . . the fluidity of style is a manifestation of a more profound change in the way the world was perceived. Instability became a source of inspiration as well as anxiety."<sup>24</sup> Rosen believes that truths about time and nature are understood over time: "it is less the truth of nature than the way of arriving at the truth that interests the artist. The portrayal of the hidden processes of thought, however, is achieved by the images of nature themselves and by the vivacity of the representation. In music, too, composers were often unsatisfied by the static representation of a sentiment by simple musical analogy, but sought to portray the processes of feeling and even [in] the actual functioning of memory."<sup>25</sup> Rosen also maintains that "memory is the central theme of early nineteenth-century lyric poetry"<sup>26</sup> and that "the most signal triumphs of the Romantic portrayal of memory are not those which recall past happiness, but remembrances of those moments when future happiness still seemed possible, when hopes were not yet frustrated. . . . Romantic memories are often those of absence, of that which never was."<sup>27</sup>

The power of nature and the poet's tenuous position within nature led to the vivid image of "Waldeinsamkeit" ("The Loneliness of the Forest"). Within the solitary, lonely forest, the poet experienced the dichotomies within nature and within the psyche; the forest is a place for introspection and a unique communion between internal and external worlds. The opening lines of Mayrhofer's "Nachtstück" ("Nocturne") portray the poet alone in the forest:

Wenn über Berge sich der Nebel  
breitet,  
Und Luna mit Gewölken kampf,  
So nimmt der Alte seine Harfe,  
und schreitet,  
Und singt waldeinwärts  
und gedämpft:  
Du heilige Nacht!  
Bald ist's vollbracht.

When over the mountains the mist  
spreads  
And Luna with the clouds  
struggles,  
So the old man takes his harp  
and strides,  
And sings into the forest  
and quietly:  
O holy night!  
Soon shall it end.<sup>28</sup>

Other nature images recur in German Romantic poetry, including numerous images of flowers and birds.<sup>29</sup> Water images abound: brooks and streams represent nature's comforting side and stormy seas depict nature's menace.<sup>30</sup> Water also represents the origin of life and the resting place of death, as beautifully stated in von Collin's "Leiden der Trennung" ("Sorrows of Separation"), a poem replete with water imagery:

<p>Vom Meere trennt sich die Welle,          Und seufzet durch          Blumen im Thal,          Und fühlet, gewiegt              in der Quelle,          Gebannt in dem Brunnen,              nur Qual!          Es sehnt sich die Welle              In lispelnder Quelle,</p> <p>Im murmelnden Bache,          Im Brunnengemache,          Zum Meer, zum Meer          Von dem sie kam,          Von dem sie Leben nahm,          Von dem, des Irrens matt              und müde,          Sie süße Ruh' verhofft und Friede.</p>	<p>From the sea separates the wave,          And sighs its way through the          Flowers in the valley,          And feels [whether] cradled              in the spring,          [Or] confined in the well,              only torment!          Longs the wave              [Whether] in the              whispering spring,          In the murmuring stream,          In the well-chamber,          [To be] back to the sea          From whence it came,          From which it took its life,          From which, tired of              wandering,          It hopes for sweet rest and peace.<sup>31</sup></p>
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### *The Seductiveness of Mystery*

A direct consequence of the reaction against the Enlightenment's orderliness was a savoring of chaos, obscurity, and ambiguity that comprise the theme we call "The Seductiveness of Mystery." The enticement of the mysterious came from every corner of the Romantic's experience, from the mysteries of the inner psychological domain (the unconscious and dreams), to those within nature's vastness, to the mystical side of religious devotion. The poet's inner world was scrutinized through analysis of dreams, study of madness, and interest in hypnosis. The mysterious in nature was captured in dark forests, murmuring brooks, and moonlit landscapes full of diffused light and hushed night rustlings. The mysteries within religious conviction were expressed as both awe and dread, as senses of yearning and premonition. In the contradiction so characteristic of German Romanticism, the poet's spiritual side both revered and feared what remained unknown and unknowable.

The heightened reactions to the mysteries of the psyche, the world of nature, and the spiritual were most vivid at night, when darkness provided an escape from daily life and intensified the unknown, when the poet was solitary and felt more in tune with the mysterious.<sup>32</sup> Two literary examples show the extremes of night's power for the Romantic. The excerpt from Novalis's *Hymnen an die Nacht* (*Hymns to the Night*) shows a rapturous intensity:

Aside I turn to the holy, ineffable, mysterious Night. Far below lies the world, sunken in a profound pit: waste and solitary is its place. Through the strings of the heart wafts deep sadness. I seek, as drops of dew, to subside and to blend with ashes. Distances of memory, desires of youth, dreams of childhood, the brief joys and futile hopes of the whole of long life, come in gray raiment like evening mists after the sun's setting.<sup>33</sup>

The first stanza of Heine's "Die Lotosblume" ("The Lotus Flower") depicts a more muted response:

Die Lotosblume ängstigt	The lotus-flower fears
Sich vor der Sonne Pracht,	Itself before the sun's glory
Und mit gesenktem Haupte	And with bowed head,
Erwartet sie träumend die Nacht.	Awaits, dreaming, the night. <sup>34</sup>

### *Spiritual Salvation*

The theme of religious fervor and devotion, especially within Catholicism, permeates much German Romantic poetry. Religious faith was intimately linked to the German Romantic longing for death (as spiritual salvation) and was expressed most vividly within the context of nature. When combined with nature's benevolence, the notion of spiritual salvation through death offered a release from both external earthly concerns and the poet's innermost torments. In characteristic form, contrasting religious views coexisted comfortably in this period: for example, Novalis, in *Hymnen an die Nacht*, expresses intense ecstatic faith in relationship to both love and death, while in contrast, Eichendorff's novels and lyrics express the poet's more gentle faith within a simpler longing for peace through nature.

As already suggested, the Romantic's religious devotion often was expressed in the context of the love for the mysterious, as religious faith included mystical and supernatural elements, and the concept of a divine presence included an "other world" beyond that known on earth. This then accompanied another important aspect of German Romanticism: the

preoccupation with the mysteries of death. In contrast to Goethe's classical portrait of death as evil in "Erlkönig," the Romantics adopted the medieval image of death as a gentle release from life's complexities and a serene return to nature's peaceful domain. For example, in the second stanza of Matthias Claudius's "Der Tod und das Mädchen" ("Death and the Maiden"), death speaks soothingly to the maiden:

Gib deine Hand, du  
 schön und zart Gebild!  
 Bin Freund und komme nicht  
 zu strafen.

Give me your hand, you  
 fair and gentle thing!  
 I am a friend and do not  
 come to punish.<sup>35</sup>

The Romantic poet's preoccupation with the spiritual domain of death leads to our fourth characteristic German Romantic image, that of yearning for death. While this yearning often was experienced within the context of traditional religious belief, many German Romantics replaced the customary religious deity with that of nature; nature's infinite mysteriousness also provided solace and inspired worship. The opening stanza of a poem that exemplifies this recurring yearning image was set in one of Schubert's best-loved *Lieder*: Johann Georg Jacobi's "Litanei" ("Litany"):

Ruhn in Frieden alle Seelen,  
 Die vollbracht ein banges  
 Quälen,  
 Die vollendet süßen Traum,  
 Lebenssatt,  
 geboren kaum,  
 Aus der Welt hinüberschieden:  
 Alle Seelen ruhn in Frieden!

Rest in peace, all souls,  
 Who, completed an anxious  
 torment,  
 And ended sweet dreams,  
 Those weary of life, those  
 scarcely born,  
 From this world are departed:  
 All souls, rest in peace!<sup>36</sup>

The image of yearning for peaceful death recurs throughout the poetry of this period, often in combination with the equally important and recurrent images of lost wanderer, lonely forest, and mysterious night. These typical German Romantic images bring with them the complex issues and emotions so emblematic of the period: the wanderer's preoccupation with the inner world of feelings, dreams, and visions typifies the theme of heightened individuality; the lonely forest within a rich natural world of nurturing and menacing forces connotes the evocative world of nature; the dark world of night, wherein the wanderer feels the most poignantly and the natural landscape shimmers the most vividly, evokes the seductiveness of mystery; and, finally, the image of yearning for peaceful death depicts the Romantic's conviction that release from all earthly torment, including the inescapable

pain of lost love, can be attained through spiritual salvation. In all cases, the Romantic both searches beyond what is knowable and, at the same time, savors the dichotomous elements within what is known.

While this brief survey has identified characteristic German Romantic themes within separate categories, these themes and images easily commingle within elaborate poetic expressions. For example, the wanderer image often incorporates elements of all the themes mentioned above: a folk hero wandering about in nature's landscape represents the sensitive artist who is alienated from family and homeland and mourning lost love. This poet roams nature's mysterious world during the darkness of night and identifies with the loneliness of the forest as he yearns for release from life's insufferable torment. While nature soothes the poet, the Romantic also seeks spiritual salvation through peaceful death, a release from earthly torment that beckons from the shadows of the moonlight.

### **Cultural Influences within German Romanticism**

In addition to these recurring German Romantic themes, other elements enriched the poet's Romantic expressivity. In order to convey their ideas and emotions in particularly colorful images, the Romantics turned to the imagery and heritage of several different periods and cultures, including revival of Antiquity and the Middle Ages, assimilation of foreign cultures, and celebration of the present through nationalism and the development of folk culture.

#### *Revival of Interest in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*

Along with their longing to escape life's difficulties through death, the Romantics desired to escape the concerns of the present through immersion within a more resonant past. Just as revival of antiquity had been featured in the classical period, where Goethe and Schiller admired ancient Greek and Roman characteristics that bolstered classical tenets, so the Romantics adapted Greek and Roman history (mythological stories and heroes) and culture (architectural structures and Mediterranean ambiance) to dramatize and depict Romantic themes and characteristics. The adventures of such heroes as Orpheus, Ganymede, and Prometheus were described anew,<sup>37</sup> and the spirit of the time was captured in Romantic reveries such as the first stanza of Mörike's "An eine Äolsharfe" ("To an Aeolian Harp"):

Angelehnt an die Efeuwand  
Dieser alten Terrasse,  
Du, einer luftgebornen

Reclining against the ivy wall  
Of this ancient terrace,  
You of a zephyr-born

Geheimnisvolles Saitenspiel,	Mysterious string music,
Fang an,	Begin,
Fange wieder an	Begin anew
Deine melodische Klage!	Your melodious plaint! <sup>38</sup>

Allusions to Greek and Roman life and myths gave new dimension to such Romantic concerns as poetic torment and despair arising from the foibles of romantic love;<sup>39</sup> images of antiquity such as Greek ruins and ancient musical instruments illustrated nineteenth-century interest in ancient history and the assimilation of antiquity within evolving Romantic ideals and mythologies. The German Romantic image of the Golden Age, for example, refers to the ideal time of happiness in antiquity for which the Romantic poet yearned.<sup>40</sup>

Romantics also loved images from the Middle Ages, recalling and reshaping stories such as that of Hans Sachs in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*, and of Tannhäuser, Wagner's sojourner in the Mountain of Venus. Images of crumbling walls and sleeping knights conjured up these ancient days and, as shown in the first stanza of Eichendorff's "Auf einer Burg" ("In a Castle"), shed a filtered light on the present day:

Eingeschlafen auf der Lauer	Asleep at his lookout
Oben ist der alter Ritter;	Up there is the old knight;
Drüber gehen Regenschauer,	Overhead go rain squalls,
Und der Wald rauscht durch	And the forest rustles through
das Gitter.	the lattice. <sup>41</sup>

### *Translations of English and Oriental Literature*

German Romantics also sought new poetic subjects and images by translating English and Oriental literature from different historical periods. Like the use of elements of antiquity and the Middle Ages, these new materials were a rich poetic resource; they provided new contexts for Romantic depictions and offered a particular poetic "distance" through a certain foreignness. The English repertory included adaptations or translations of pseudo-Gaelic folklore attributed to the fictitious third-century bard, Ossian, Shakespeare's dramas (translated especially by A. W. Schlegel), and more contemporary poets such as Sir Walter Scott and Robert Burns.<sup>42</sup>

A similar investigation into more exotic cultures culled images and scenarios from such remote places as Persia and China, which also evoked a foreignness and distance that intensified poetic mystery. Goethe's study of Persian literature resulted in the *West-östlicher Divan* (*East-West Book of Love Poetry*) of 1819, an homage to the Persian poet Hafiz written when Goethe

was 70 years old. Later poets such as Friedrich Rückert, Professor of Oriental Language at Munich, and August Graf von Platen also incorporated similar oriental references in their poems, Rückert using Persian forms as well as subjects. The following excerpt from Goethe's *Divan*, "Erschaffen und Beleben" ("Creation and Animation"), illustrates the link sought between the world of Hafiz and Goethe's own:

So, Hafis, mag dein holder Sang,	So Hafiz, may your dear song,
Dein heiliges Exempel	Your blessed example
Uns führen, bei der Gläser Klang,	Conduct us at the glasses' clink
Zu unsres Schöpfers Tempel.	To our Creator's temple. <sup>43</sup>

### *Incorporation of Nationalism and Folk Culture*

Finally, German Romantic poetry cultivated the new, post-revolutionary nationalism and the interest in folk culture that began in the *Sturm und Drang* period. The new nationalism provided expression of such common Romantic themes as love of nature and yearning for home, as exemplified in the final stanza of Eichendorff's "Heimweh" ("Homecoming"):

Der Morgen, das ist meine Freude!	But dawn, that's my delight!
Da steig ich in stiller Stund	Then I climb in a peaceful hour
Auf den höchsten Berg in die	The highest mountain far
Weite,	away,
Grüß dich, Deutschland, aus	I greet you, Germany, from my
Herzensgrund!	heart's depth! <sup>44</sup>

Further, as intimated earlier, the development of Germany's folk culture led in general to the emergence of "the common folk" and in particular to the evolution of a new "folk hero." A wealth of lyrics depicted everyday life of commoners, and poetic portraits of common folk resulted in some of the most famous poetic cycles set by *Lied* composers, for example, Wilhelm Müller's *Die schöne Müllerin* and Adalbert von Chamisso's *Frauenliebe und -leben*.<sup>45</sup> Some of these poetic portraits of everyday people created new folk heroes. While in earlier literature, heroic figures had been kings and conquerors, the new Romantic hero was from the bourgeoisie, for example, students in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* and Mörike's *Maler Nolten* (1832) and a young musician in Eichendorff's *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts* (*Diary of a Good-for-Nothing*, 1826).

The new interest in folk culture also resulted in important collections of folk material, including the *Stimmen der Völker* (*Voices of the Peoples*,

1778–1779) of Johann Gottfried Herder, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (*The Boy's Magic Horn*, 1805–1808) of Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim, and *Alte hoch- und niederdeutsche Volkslieder* (*Old High and Low German Songs*, 1844–1845) of Ludwig Uhland.<sup>46</sup> In addition, folk literature such as the Grimm fairy tales was added to the mythologies from antiquity and the Middle Ages to develop a new Romantic cultural identity. A good example of this is the myth of the “LORELEI” as portrayed by both Heine and Eichendorff.<sup>47</sup>

This review of German Romantic elements and influences captures the multifarious nature of the German Romantic and the rich world in which the poet thrived. Whether gazing at nature's vastness or at a medieval castle, the Romantic poet remained caught in the ironic relationship between the self and the world. Trapped in wanting the unattainable, the poet sought refuge in contradictory arenas: within nature's mystery which both awed and threatened the poet's soul or within a past that remained elusive but yet resonant. These images poured from the Romantic poets and were transformed by the *Lied* composers who set their verse. The *Lieder* that resulted make up a wondrous artistic genre that embodied layers of meaning within a dramatic, previously unknown expressivity, a repertory of miniature masterpieces that has endured to this day.

### Exercises

Using the poems below, identify all the German Romantic images and themes you can find, showing how some images and themes work together. As an example, we analyze the first stanza of Joseph von Spaun's “Der Jüngling und der Tod” (“The Young Man and Death”) as follows:

*Der Jüngling:*

Die Sonne sinkt

Ach könnt ich mit ihr scheiden

Mit ihrem letzten Strahl entfliehn!

Ach diese namenlosen

Qualen meiden

Und weit in schönre Welten ziehn!

*The Young Man:*

The sun sinks,

Ah, that I might with it depart,

With its last ray might flee!

Ah, these nameless

torments escape

And afar to finer worlds travel!<sup>48</sup>

1. First we summarize the poem: the poet speaks through the young man in terms of *nature* by mentioning the sunset; in response to the setting sun, he expresses a *longing*, first for *release from nameless torments*, then toward *death's “finer world.”*
2. We then list and interpret the individual images.
  - a. The image of “nameless torments” bespeaks the various difficulties of *love*.

- b. The image of death as “finer world” has *religious* connotations.
  - c. The images of departure connect *nature* (“last ray”) to *poet’s/young man’s inner world* (“escape”).
3. We conclude the analysis by redefining the verse in terms of thematic combination: the poem combines (1) wanderer expressing *Sehnsucht* in (2) the context of nature, and (3) the appeal for death occurring with the (4) approach of night.

1. “Auf ein altes Bild” (Mörike)	“Inspired by an Old Picture” <sup>49</sup>
In grüner Landschaft Sommerflor, Bei kühlem Wasser, Schilf und Rohr, Schau, wie das Knäblein sündelos Frei spielet auf der Jungfrau Schoß! Und dort in Walde wonnesam, Ach, grünet schon des Kreuzes Stamm!	In a green landscape’s summer flora, By cool water, reeds and rushes, See how the little Boy, innocent, Freely plays on the Virgin’s lap! And there, in the wood, blissfully, Ah, grows already the cross’s trunk!
2. “Er ist’s” (Mörike)	“(Spring) It Is” <sup>50</sup>
Veilchen träumen schon, Wollen balde kommen. Horch, von fern ein leiser Harfenton! Frühling, ja du bist! Dich hab ich vernommen!	Violets are dreaming, Want soon to be here. Hark, from afar a soft harptone! Spring, yes it is you! You have I heard!
3. “Iphigenia” (Mayrhofer)	“Iphigenia” <sup>51</sup>
Blüht denn hier an Tauris Strande Keine Blum’ aus Hellas Lande, Weht kein milder Segenshauch Aus den lieblichen Gefilden, Wo Geschwister mit mir spielten?— Ach, mein Leben ist ein Rauch!	Blooms then here on the Tauris shore No flower from my Greek homeland, Blows no gentle breeze From the blessed fields, Where my siblings played with me?— Ah, my life is but smoke!

4. "Meeres Stille" (Goethe)

Tiefe Stille herrscht im Wasser,  
 Ohne Regung ruht das Meer,  
 Und bekümmert sieht der Schiffer  
 Glatte Fläche rings umher.  
 Keine Luft von keiner Seite!  
 Todesstille fürchterlich!  
 In der ungeheuern Weite  
 Reget keine Welle sich.

"Sea Calm"<sup>52</sup>

Deep calm rules the water,  
 Without motion rests the sea,  
 And troubled sees the sailor  
 Smooth levelness all around.  
 No wind from any quarter!  
 Deadly calm dreadful!  
 In the vast expanse  
 Stirs no wave.

5. "Nachtzauber" (Eichendorff)

Hörst du nicht die Quellen gehen  
 Zwischen Stein und Blumen weit  
 Nach den stillen Waldeseen,  
 Wo die Marmorbilder stehen,  
 In der schönen Einsamkeit?  
 Von den Bergen sacht hernieder,  
  
 Weckend die uralten Lieder,  
 Steigt die wunderbare Nacht,  
 Und die Gründe glänzen wieder,  
 Wie du's oft im Traum gedacht.

"Night Magic"<sup>53</sup>

Hear you not the brook's running  
 Amongst stones and flowers afar  
 Toward silent forest lakes,  
 Where marble statues stand  
 In fair solitude?  
 From the mountains gently  
     downward,  
 Awakening the ancient songs,  
 There rises the wondrous night,  
 And the valleys gleam again,  
 As you often in dreams imagined.

6. "Schöne Fremde" (Eichendorff)

Es rauschen die Wipfel und  
     schauern,  
 Als machten zu dieser Stund  
 Um die halbversunkenen Mauern  
 Die alten Götter die Rund.  
 Hier hinter den Myrtenbäumen  
 In heimlich dämmernder Pracht,  
 Was sprichst du wirr wie in  
     Träumen  
 Zu mir, phantastische Nacht?

"Beautiful Foreign Land"<sup>54</sup>

They murmur, the tree-tops, and  
     shiver,  
 As though to make at this hour  
 Around half-sunken walls  
 The gods of old, the rounds.  
 Here, beyond the myrtles,  
 In secretly darkening splendor,  
 What whisper you, confused  
     as in dreams  
 To me, fantastic night?

7. "Verklärung" (Alexander Pope,  
 trans. Herder)

Lebensfunke, vom Himmel  
     entglüht,  
 Der sich loszuwinden müht,

"Transfiguration"<sup>55</sup>

Spark of life from heaven  
     kindled,  
 That to wrench itself away toils,

Zitternd, kühn, vor Sehnen  
leidend,  
Gern und doch mit Schmerzen  
scheidend!

Trembling, brave, longing  
enduring,  
Gladly and yet in agony  
departing!

8. "Zwielicht" (Eichendorff)

"Twilight"<sup>56</sup>

Dämmerung will die Flügel spreiten,  
Schaurig rühren sich die Bäume,  
Wolken ziehn wie schwere  
Träume—  
Was will dieses Graun bedeuten?

Dusk will its wings spread,  
Awesomely stir the trees,  
Clouds come like heavy  
dreams—  
What does this dread mean?

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## *Devices and Delights in Poetry*

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The essence of song, especially of the Romantic *Lied*, is an equality of music and text, a synthesis of a new art form out of two disparate media. Those who fail to understand the meaning of the poem fail, as well, to understand the meaning of the music that sets it. Indeed, performers who have not thoroughly studied the poetry cannot sing or play the *Lied* with the focus, the imagination, and the vitality that is essential for both the musicians and their audience.

The necessity of studying the poetry in *Lied* performance preparation is not optional; rather, it is a major part of the basic work of both singer and accompanist. We thus begin with a word of encouragement to those who feel intimidated about studying poetry, who feel ill equipped, inexperienced, or even wholly ignorant. Earlier in this century, the study of poetry, and of literature in general, was considered a vital part of a standard secondary education. More recently, however, the spread of specialization and the advancement of technology have preempted the time once dedicated to the study of language and the other arts. Many college music students who are interested in the Art Song, therefore, have never had the opportunity to study language as an art, be it in poetry or in prose.

This chapter offers such individuals a primer of common poetic usage written expressly for the study of German Romantic poetry.<sup>1</sup> Readers are encouraged to use the terminology and concepts offered here as much and as often as possible.<sup>2</sup> With time and practice, study of poetry will become a natural part of performance preparation.

Our introduction to poetry will be restricted to one century and one language: eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German Romantic poetry. The conventions of poetic form and content during the nineteenth century are fairly consistent, giving what could be considered a common practice of poetry parallel to the common practice of music during the same period. As we describe these poetic norms, one must keep in mind that much great nineteenth-century poetry was written in languages other than German, and that despite our restrictions to the German masters of the Romantic period, many of the terms and concepts offered here apply to all poetry, regardless of nationality and historical context.<sup>3</sup>

We separate our discussions of poetry into two fundamental components: poetic content and poetic form. Under the general topic of poetic content, we examine various rhetorical devices such as imagery, metaphor,

simile, symbol, irony, pun, and personification, as well as the more general concerns of poetic progression, *Stimmung* (to be defined presently), persona, and mode of address. Within the area of poetic form, we explain meter and scansion, rhyme schemes (including assonance and alliteration), stanzaic division, and line integrity (enjambment and caesura).

In addition to the general concerns of word usage and word/line ordering, we also will examine how words were chosen for the very properties of language that suggest musical setting of verse: words that exploit *sound* and *color*. Choosing certain words because their bright or dark sounds convey particular senses or emotions is one of the poet's most dramatic resources, and recognizing these sonorous and coloristic words is of great concern for both composers setting the poetry and singers enunciating the text. By being sensitive to the color of language and the sounds of spoken—and sung—words, performers will better enunciate the words within both the vocal line and the musical phrase and will, as well, understand the poem's special use of language that is translated into music.

Despite our initial separation of content and form, the two ultimately merge in the art form we call poetry. A poem is both a complex set of diverse parts and an elegant artistic whole that surpasses the sum of the individual elements. Putting a poem back together after analysis is like coordinating a musical performance; both the actual poem and the actual musical composition coalesce into an artistic experience that grows deeper and richer the more we come to understand it.

## Poetic Content

The meaning of a poem derives from word choice and combination, and from the use of several poetic devices that give words unusual richness and resonance. While many of the terms and concepts here may be somewhat familiar, we urge the reader to consider the *precise* meaning of such commonly used (and misused) terms as “imagery” and “metaphor.” When these terms are used glibly, they lose their capacity to illuminate the nuances of poetic meaning, something we are trying to show here with great care. In general, the use of such rhetorical devices as image, metaphor, symbol, etc. forms the core of the great poems of masters such as Goethe, Heine, and Eichendorff. By examining how these great poets used language, we will understand what Eichendorff said when he spoke in nature images, why Heine treated his subjects with irony, and how Goethe depicted the emotions within his protagonists.

### *Poetic Representation*

According to Webster, the word “rhetoric” connotes “the art of using words effectively . . . to influence or persuade . . . including the use of figures

of speech.”<sup>4</sup> A “figure of speech” is defined in turn as “an expression using words in an unusual or nonliteral sense to give beauty or vividness of style; [including use of] metaphor, personification, simile. . . .” Poetry is, among other things, the art of speaking rhetorically, of expressing thoughts and feelings in terms that are unusual—delicate, sweet, provocative, intense. Toward that end, poets enhance their expressions first and foremost with the most common rhetorical devices: the image and the symbol. Generally speaking, an IMAGE is a *representation* of something that renders an idea more vivid and that places the idea within a rich and expressive context. In addition, a poem’s imagery also connotes a choice of setting and detail of description that further dramatizes the poetic meaning; for example, a hopeful young lover’s world is a warm spring day full of nature’s beauty and song, all the nurturing elements contributing to a feeling of optimism and happiness. The more complex the imagery, the more vivid the depiction; a shepherd looking from the mountaintop to the valley is different from the shepherd bowed over his staff gazing down to the valley.<sup>5</sup>

Certain images assume heightened form when a comparison is made to a vivid scene or object. For example, the poet may describe the beloved with a METAPHOR: “My love *is* a flower” or a SIMILE: “My love *is like* a red, red rose.” In each case, the lover’s description through the world of nature enhances the poetic conception and conveys much about the poet’s feelings without their having to be stated explicitly.

Another term associated with poetry that is often considered synonymous with “image” is SYMBOL. And while both terms refer essentially to the same thing, a symbolic representation often is more abstract. For example, while the songs of birds generally connote an image of lively nature sounds, the nightingale’s song is an actual symbol of the lament for lost love.

Two final devices for concentrated and imaginative poetic depiction are pun and personification. A PUN is the use of a word that has two different meanings, and where the use of such a double meaning heightens the individual meanings in turn. A famous Rückert poem, “Ich atmet’ einen linden Duft,” uses a pun to evoke the doubleness of sense memory.<sup>6</sup> Figure 2.1 shows the translation.

FIGURE 2.1 Pun in Rückert, “Ich atmet’ einen linden Duft.”

Ich atmet’ einen linden Duft.	I breathed a gentle fragrance.
Im Zimmer stand	In the room stood
Ein Zweig der Linde,	A sprig of lime,
Ein Angebinde	A gift
Von lieber Hand.	Of a dear hand.
Wie lieblich war der Lindenduft!	How lovely was the fragrance!
Wie lieblich ist der Lindenduft!	How lovely is the fragrance!
Das Lindenreis	That lime sprig,

Brachst du gelinde:  
 Ich atme leis  
 Im Duft der Linde  
 Der Liebe linden Duft.

You broke tenderly;  
 I breathe softly  
 In the fragrance of lime  
 Love's gentle fragrance.

The pun exploits the double meaning for the word “linde,” which as an adjective (lower case l) means gentle and as a noun (upper case L) means lime or lime tree. This is, of course, not the citrus fruit tree, but a deciduous “Linden” tree of Northern climates. This captures the twofold nature of sense memory, as a *lime scent* evokes a memory of a *gentle* love associated with the fragrance of lime. The use of “linde” as adverb contributes to the poem's exploitation of multiple meanings; in stanza 2, line 3, “gelinde” can be translated as “tenderly” when the poet describes the lover's symbolic breaking of the lime sprig.

This elegant poem demonstrates how double meanings in poetry enhance poetic imagery. Rückert's pun also underscores the complicated temporal changes in sense memory; the scent of lime of the *present* recalls the scent from the *past* (stanza 1, line 1), and prompts the poet's memory of the *past* (the remainder of stanza 1). Stanza 2 then occurs within the present recollection of the *past*, the memory in stanza 1 prompting a return to the present. This is emphasized by the change in tense in the repeated line from the last line of stanza 1 to the beginning of stanza 2: “Wie lieblich *war* der Lindenduft!” becomes “Wie lieblich *ist* der Lindenduft!”

The device of PERSONIFICATION intensifies an image by endowing something with human qualities. For example, a typical German Romantic personification is a brook or other body of water whose existence is given human characteristics. In Wilhelm Müller's famous poetic cycles set by Schubert, the protagonists speak to the brooks as if they were companions. In *Die schöne Müllerin*, for example, the young miller's entire journey occurs with the accompaniment of his friend and teacher, the brook (Figure 2.2). This

FIGURE 2.2 Personification of the brook in *Die Schöne Müllerin*.

Song 1: “Vom Wasser haben wir's gelernt” (“From the water have we learned it”)

Song 2: “Ist das denn meine Straße? O Bächlein, sprich, wohin?”  
 (“Is this, then, my path? O brooklet, say, whereto?”)

Song 4: “War es also gemeint, mein rauschender Freund?” (“Was it thus meant, my babbling friend?”)

Song 6: “O Bächlein meiner Liebe, wie bist du heut' so stumm!”  
 (“O brooklet of my love, how are you today so silent!”)

FIGURE 2.3 Personification in *Winterreise*.

Der du so lustig rauschtest,	You who so merrily bubbled
Du heller, wilder Fluß,	You bright, boisterous stream,
Wie still bist du geworden,	How silent have you become;
Gibst keinen Scheidegruß.	(You) give no farewell.

personification enables the youth to muse aloud, his rhetorical questions to the brook, adding a rich dimension to both his ongoing journey and his evolving development as a person. Müller returns to this device in *Winterreise*, where, for example, in Song 7 the poet speaks directly to the stream in “Auf dem Flusse” (“On the Stream,” Figure 2.3).

Because of this use of rhetoric, the poetic queries to personified nature elements can be interpreted in several ways. On a more literal level, the questions can be considered “rhetorical,” that is, not requiring an answer. In this way, the poet may ask a brook or the moon knowing that the questions really cannot be answered and the personification is just a means of speaking aloud what is thought or felt. When the inquiries are considered on a more metaphorical level, however, personified elements can function as a part of the poet’s own being, the “dialogue” between poet and brook representing an internal dialogue between two parts of the poet’s inner self. In this way, the imagery of wanderer and personified image in, for example, *Winterreise*, represent a journey within the poet himself, each address to a personified object along the journey (tears, snow, brook, etc.) reflecting a new facet of the poet’s inner development.

This potential for dual interpretation is crucial to understanding poetic images and symbols. The literal presentation of descriptive images and personifications also functions metaphorically: how love nourishes or anguish hurts or conflict festers. Each level of expression (literal and metaphorical) enhances the experience of the other: the quest for love is only as vivid as the depiction of the lonely shepherd and the image of the lonely shepherd is only as powerful as the devastating loss it represents.

Our list of poetic devices also includes the more complex usage of IRONY, the expression of one thing to convey something else, often something having an opposite meaning. The power of ironic expression lies in the fact that what is being said is in the form of a dichotomy or duality. Ironic presentations are more complex, richer expressions, and often occur in sarcastic, sardonic, or humorous contexts. In ironic poems, for example, the poet may somehow be at odds with what is being expressed or may use some form of dishonesty. Two poems of Heine, a poet celebrated for his use of irony, demonstrate how this enhances poetic meaning. Figure 2.4 shows the fourth poem of Schumann’s *Dichterliebe*, “Wenn ich in deine Augen seh.’”

FIGURE 2.4 Irony: Heine, “Wenn ich in deine Augen seh’,” *Dichterliebe*.

Wenn ich in deine Augen seh’,	When I gaze into your eyes,
So schwindet all’ mein Leid und	So flees all my hurt and
Weh;	pain;
Doch wenn ich küsse deinen	But when I kiss your
Mund,	mouth,
So werd’ ich ganz und gar gesund.	Then I become wholly healed.
Wenn ich mich lehn’ an deine	When I recline upon your
Brust,	breast,
Kommt’s über mich wie	It steals over me as
Himmelslust;	heavenly bliss;
Doch wenn du sprichst: ich liebe	But when you say: I love
dich!	you!
So muß ich weinen bitterlich.	Then must I weep bitterly. <sup>7</sup>

While initially this lyric suggests the soothing, healing qualities of love, the final line casts the entire expression into an ironic light: Why cannot the poet enjoy the peacefulness of love? What causes the bitter tears? The irony of the poet’s bitterness makes us rethink the joy even as the poem presents the images of love’s sweet gentleness.

A similar sentiment is presented in a later poem from *Dichterliebe*, “Ich hab’ im Traum geweinet;” see Figure 2.5. Again a portrait of love’s power is jarred by an ironic response. While the poem’s first two stanzas suggest tears as a reasonable response to lost love, first from the lover’s death, then from the lover’s rejection, the final stanza ends ironically

FIGURE 2.5 Irony in Heine, “Ich hab’ im Traum geweinet,” *Dichterliebe*.

Ich hab’ im Traum geweinet,	I have wept in my dream,
Mir träumt’, du lägest im Grab.	I dreamt you lay in your grave.
Ich wachte auf, und die Träne	I awoke, and the tear
Floß noch von der Wange herab.	Flowed still down my cheek.
Ich hab’ im Traum geweinet,	I wept in my dream,
Mir träumt’, du verließest mich.	I dreamt you were leaving me.
Ich wachte auf, und ich weinte	I awoke, and I wept
Noch lange bitterlich.	Yet long, bitterly.
Ich hab’ im Traum geweinet,	I wept in my dream,
Mir träumte, du wär’st mir noch	I dreamt you loved me
gut.	still.
Ich wachte auf, und noch immer	I awoke, and still
Strömt meine Tränenflut.	Stream my flood of tears. <sup>8</sup>