

SONG SETTINGS OF HEINRICH HEINE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SONG
SETTINGS FROM THE POETRY PERSPECTIVE

BY

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PREFACE

Today there is an almost obsessive concern with the question of what is the “most accurate” historical performance of a given piece of music. In many performances and ensembles this leads to an investigation into the types of instruments or techniques of singing used in a given period, the number of performers employed, and other ensemble and technical concerns. Related to this concern for historical performance, but perhaps not as often considered, is the issue of the relationship between the original poem and a musical setting. What is the correlation between lyric and music, and how is the content or construction of the poem related to its musical interpretation? Songs based on the texts of Heinrich Heine number in the hundreds, many of which are standard repertory in the recitals and studies of classical voice students around the world. This makes it all the more relevant to investigate the influences on the poet and the ideas behind the poems. Many scholars have written about musical settings, the historical background of the composers, and of Heine himself. But I believe there is more to be found within the poetry that can give us specific information about its meaning, which in turn will give performers even more information on which to base their interpretations. Some settings of Heine poetry by certain composers, such as Robert Schumann, are now some of the most prevalent songs in our repertoire – yet Heine avoided any public approval whatsoever of Schumann’s settings.¹ On the other hand, Heine’s

¹ “Of the many poets whose work he set to music, Rückert may have been Schumann’s favorite. But because of the popularity of Schumann’s *Liederkreis* Op.24 and *Dichterliebe* (A Poet’s Love) op. 48,

acquaintance Johann Vesque von Püttlingen set around 137 of his poems to music, to which Heine did respond positively, yet Vesque is largely unknown amongst singers today. Why is this? Are there musical traits in certain settings that somehow support the text's original meaning and, if so, what are they? Heine's true intention of a poem cannot be completely known for sure, in fact there may not even be just one. He was a master of expressing his ideas exquisitely within his language, enveloped in a veritable *mille feuille* of meaning:

'Heine', Nietzsche wrote, 'has given me the highest idea of what a lyric poet is. I have been searching in vain through all the thousands of years for an equally sweet and passionate music. He possessed that divine malice without which I can't imagine the perfect. – And how Heine handles the German language! It will be said one day that he and I have been by far the first artists of the German language—at an incalculable distance from everything that mere Germans have done with it.'²

If we look closely enough at the music, we can see characteristics that evoke certain emotions or affects. As musicians interested in an informed performance, we should have knowledge of the historical conditions and biographical context in which these characteristics emerge. However multi-faceted, the text's meaning is given to it by

the poetry of Heinrich Heine is probably most closely associated with him. When Schumann and Heine met in Munich in May 1828—their only meeting—Schumann had not set any of Heine's poetry and had yet to make music his career. In May 1840—the year in which Schumann wrote most of his lieder—he wrote to Heine in Paris (where Heine had moved), enclosing several settings of Heine's poetry. Schumann was hoping not only for a favorable reaction from Heine but to draw closer to him. But Heine never responded, and Schumann was offended. Although he continued to read Heine's new works, he was disgusted by Heine's *Romanzero*—probably by what he perceived as the excessively personal and often depreciative nature of the poetry in the collection", Jensen, p.44.

² Spann, p.91.

its author. This meaning can be lost, misunderstood, or deliberately changed by the musical setting of the composer. Heine's relation to various topics and how they manifest themselves in his works is highly significant to their interpretation. Examining the poet, his life, and time contributes to a better understanding of the musical settings. Heine's writings were an intricate response to his own turbulent life and the heated political environment of his day. Performers should consider the subject of his characteristic irony, which he so often employed in his various writings, and which is also of vital importance in his poetry as a result of this background. For example, as I will point out in chapter 3, to sing a setting of one of his especially beloved poems "Wenn ich in deine Augen seh" (*Lyrisches Intermezzo* IV) as a sweet and simple love song may not be giving the poem its full due. Singers should see the lyric as a pre-existing thing that contributes to the music, and its great potential of giving depth to the performance. With such consideration, we can then decide where some musical characteristics apply to these concepts, and reinforce those, or, where traits between the poem and the music do not meet, and make a different choice for our interpretation.

This is not at all to say that the more famous settings should be discounted in any way, but if we analyze the content and formal aspects of Heine's poetry, and compare the famous settings to some other obscure or even unknown ones, perhaps we could answer the question of what a "more accurate" musical setting might be. This, in turn, might affect the way we perform, or indeed which settings of Heine's poems we perform.

A seemingly infinite number of fans, scholars, and critics have written so

extensively on Heinrich Heine—his expansive writing output, his life, his politics, his biting wit, sarcasm and irony—that yet another doctoral thesis on the subject seems superfluous. Indeed, much has also been written about musical settings of his poetry and their meaning, based on surviving personal letters and other documentation. There are, for example, several references to letters written by Heine to friends, such as his long-time boyhood friend Christian Sethe, and associates in which he explains what this or that poem means:

“Heine’s letter to Christian of 4 September 1824 reveals that the first stanza of the poem [Heimkehr, LXXXVIII] was conceived as a parody of his friend Heinrich Straube.”³

There are also examples from his letters to Sethe about his thwarted loves Amalie or Therese⁴. Through some biographical understanding, it can be inferred, perhaps, where an emotional impetus for a poem may have come from. It is interesting to see if the musical setting translates and forms those emotions, or not. So the experience of a poet can be something we ask for in interpreting a poem, but its relation to an emotion present in the poetry is not direct, but rather the relation between a stone and a statue. Heine is able to create an emotion in his poetry, which may not be a direct translation of his own feelings—that is what we cannot know for sure—but the resulting emotion is certainly clear in the poetry. As interpreters of the song, our performances are compelling to the audience when we convey these emotions. It is also interesting to see where the music does not coincide with the emotional affect

³ Phelan, p. 63

⁴ Ibid.

of the poem. This leaves room for varied understandings and, consequently, an infinite number of possibilities with regard to interpretation.

The subject of meaning or purpose in Heine's poetry is wide open for conjecture. Love poetry is the thematic core of Heine's poetic work, and I chose poems that illustrate in an exemplary way certain central features for Heine's poetic language that is frequently misunderstood because it is perceived as merely romantic. In addition, these are poems that are popular and of which different musical versions exist, which allows a comparison of different musical settings whose diversity enables an illustration of the different relationships to the poems and the consequences of this in musical setting and for performance. The poems are not simply beautiful, but they are carefully constructed works of art, commentary, and experience. By interpreting them in the context of Heine's biography, relating them to his thoughts and his experience, I hope to gain a more profound understanding of the poems that can throw a new light on the music to which his words have given rise.

Scholarly musical writings on this topic are saturated with analyses of Heine poem settings from the composers' point of view, the emphasis being on the music. As a singer, I thought it interesting to focus instead first on the poetry itself and how the music serves it—or not. The cardinal rule in singing is to understand the text you are singing, in order to best convey the meaning of the piece. At the same time it is of course of vital importance to understand the music. Singers should not take a Heine song setting as just a beautiful collection of words, but should find the contexts behind the piece as well and use that information, as well as the

composers' music, to create a comprehensive interpretation in performance. The meaning in Heine's poetry may never be exhausted in a specific analysis - it remains open to interpretation. But ultimately one must decide for a point of view. And the purpose of this research is to find deeper meaning that is there, that perhaps too often goes overlooked.

My investigation is concerned with some of the more popular poems and their song settings, in order to see more clearly how Heine could have used elements of language such as rhythm, scansion, and rhyme scheme to create very specific effects. I will further analyze these poetic characteristics within numerous song settings, and compare the musical elements to determine whether there are any shared techniques that create the same effect among the various settings. In doing so, this will show how a deeper understanding of the poems can affect our interpretation and performance of their musical settings.

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Chapter 1

Die Heimkehr XX—“Still ist die Nacht, es ruhen die Gassen”

On the surface, this poem reads like a story about a lost love who left the city some time ago, and her lover is left behind, walking the street past her house, lamenting and suffering over the love that once was there. Suddenly, he sees a pale figure outside his lover’s house, wringing his hands and staring up into the sky—is this a ghost? Has the speaker died and sees himself in an out-of-body experience? Or is it just a sudden objective realization of his obsession? The loss of love is frequently held to be the theme of the poem. However, it is significant to take into consideration the drastic social and religious changes that characterize Heine’s biography from an early age on—instigated by frequent changes of schools by a mother who fretted incessantly over financial and social success—which led to subsequent recurrent fluctuation of his religious and political identity as an adult. These factors certainly contribute to the idea that the interpretation of this poem is very likely multi-faceted.

Heine’s mother, Peira (née van Geldern) was a pragmatist, a “proud, strong-willed, ambitious woman, who had rejected every suitor until she was actually 26”¹ and finally settled for Samson Heine, a merchant of textiles. Samson, however, had only limited financial success in his business, and only during Napoleon’s occupation, when the Jews were then completely free to pursue their enterprises of choice. What made matters worse for Peira is that this fact didn’t seem to bother

¹ Browne, p. 36.

him as much as it did her. She no doubt envied or at least longed for the success of her brother-in-law, Salomon, a self-made millionaire banker in Hamburg. Desperate to instill the need for a life of success in her son, she thus spent Harry's childhood finding ways to educate, stimulate, and otherwise catapult him into such material success, in order to have the life she never did, but wanted for herself and her family.

At the age of five he was taken from the kindergarten and transferred to a private Hebrew school...during those two years the boy was brought as never before—and almost as never again—into immediate and exclusive contact with Jews. His playmates were all of them Jews...who reacted toward their little Christian neighbors with that mingled fear and contempt which is perhaps the most pervasive element in the psychology of the Jew. Harry learned to worry about the dietary taboos and the Sabbath restraints, and learned also to devise means of evading them....The soul of little Harry Heine became definitely that of a Jew.²

Harry thrived when he was first learning concepts of society and peerage, at his first primary school, where Jewish faith and culture were grafted into his young psyche. When he was subsequently moved to a Franciscan school two years later, the roles of inequity were reversed: he became a Jew in a mainly discriminating Christian society. These two conflicting dichotomies, confusingly ingrained in him at almost the same time, remained for the rest of his life a source of great struggle for him.

Where his mother was worrisome about financial success and dogged in efforts to live as a respected member of society despite their Jewish disadvantage, Harry was by nature much more like his father, who had "the dearest heart

² Browne, pp. 11 - 12.

conceivable”); he “had an unbounded love of love, a vast longing to sink himself fathoms deep in joy.”³

The problem with sinking oneself into joy is that to sink one must remain in one place. He spent a large part of his childhood enduring bullying, changing schools, and moving house. Later in life, he frequently changed jobs because he couldn't hold one. In two months in Frankfurt he was a banking apprentice and then worked for a spice-dealer. Three years later, in 1818, Salomon Heine set up his nephew with his own cloth-merchants' business in Hamburg, which lasted only one year. He studied law in Bonn, philosophy in Berlin, traveled, converted religions, and eventually self-exiled.

In some ways Germany as the Fatherland was the parent who abandoned his son, who in turn then spent the rest of his life vehemently attacking the shortcomings of his weak, double-minded father and his failure of the duty to care for his son. Yet at the same time, the son still longed desperately for the love, affection, and attention from the Father, even from his exile, until his death.

Thus Heine never really fit in anywhere: born a Jew, converted to Christianity, then seemingly an atheist, having written about the death of the gods and then of God⁴, Heine wavered in his spiritual identity. He also vacillated politically as well, having been under the tutelage of the teleological philosopher Hegel, and then, observationally, of Savigny, the historian and a leader of modern German jurisprudence. Heine observed of himself that, “revolutionaries must be single-minded men”, of which he was not, “since he had the mind of a rationalist and

³ Browne, p. 26.

⁴ Heine, p. 103.

the soul of a romantic”,⁵ and never affiliated himself with one specific political party. But we can trace the pattern of rootlessness from Heine’s childhood, when many kernels planted germinated and sprouted into the ideas which he wrote about all his life: love, politics, human and social relation, and religion—all these things that deeply affected him as a child and young man, were thus ingrained, and naturally influenced the themes of his writings throughout his life.

Better known as “Der Doppelgänger”, this poem is thus ultimately a very good description of Heine himself, who was clearly in so many ways divided within. Heine wrote this poem, along with the rest of his *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, sometime in or around 1822, which was then published in 1823, around his tragedies *Almansor* and *Ratcliffe*,⁶ when he was living in Berlin. In 1822 the Prussian government had passed a law banning Jews from academic posts. Heine had had ambitions for a university professorship that, as a Jew, he could no longer obtain during this time, at least not in Prussia, and undoubtedly made it more difficult in other regions as well. This law came less than a decade after the emancipation and full citizenry of the Jews was accomplished (as well as serfdom liberation, school system, free trade, and other reforms) after Napoleon’s victory at Jena-Auerstedt. It is, therefore, easy to imagine that this particular “wringing of the hands” is not about a loss of romantic love, but a loss of self. In fact, the latter interpretation seems insouciantly superficial in light of the crushing blow to Heine’s career aspirations due to Prussia’s socio-political circumstances affecting Jews at the time. Interesting to note as well—only

⁵ Spann, p. 23.

⁶ Eggert, lix.

two years after writing this poem, Heine converted to Protestantism—an act that, unfortunately, and much to his dismay, never did anything to help his career.

Underneath the language indicating a past love (“Schatz”), there could be another meaning. The poem states, “Sie hat schon längst die Stadt verlassen”(She had long left the city), and is commonly assumed that the “Schatz” is a person. Indeed, though in common conversation it is used as a personal term of endearment, “Schatz” is directly translated as “treasure.” Therefore, we could guess endlessly about what exactly this “treasure” means for Heine. Perhaps it is as simple as an ex-lover. But, given the historical context in which the poem was written, it could it very well have been expressing something far deeper. Could it be a metaphor for something in Heine’s own life, possibly referring to his religion? Both “Religion” and “Identität” are, in German, feminine nouns, and though “Schatz” is a masculine noun, Heine refers to it as “Sie.” It would therefore be easy to conjecture that one or both of these personal elements are the “treasure.” Another notable question in terminology is, he specifically calls the figure a “Mensch”—this word has several meanings: not only “man” (“Mann”), but also a non-specific gendered “human” or “person.” Could this abstract figure then also be metaphorically a single representation of a *people*, not just one person? If so, it could again be easy to imagine that it represents the people with whom Heine was constantly trying his whole life to fit in.

In light of the context surrounding the time this was written, it is my belief that the poem is creating the same illusion as discussed by Eggert: “Heine’s genius for discovering and expressing parallels in nature and soul-life has never been

surpassed, if ever equaled.”⁷ While not everyone could relate to such a debilitating blow of discrimination—certainly not Heine’s peers, particularly those already in a professorship—nearly everyone can relate to the idea of the loss of one’s greatest love. This would thus elicit the emotions nearest to what Heine was feeling about the loss of his culture, his religion—his very identity—in his society. Of course, in retrospect, loss of love does not even scratch the surface of such loss due to racial persecution. Either way, Heine was successful in his use of metaphors, because this poem remains to this day one of his most famous, as well as one of the most famous songs of one of the most famous composers of all time, Franz Schubert.

The Poem

This poem has a very simple rhyme scheme, alternating equally in each strophe: ABAB, CDCD, EFEF. However, it has a very complex in its rhythm, comprised of a complicated mixture of iambs, trochees, dactyls, pyrrhics, and anacrusis (see here for detailed scansion explanations).⁸

Rhyme

Scheme:

1 A Still ist | die Nacht, | es ruh| en die | Gassen
 2 B In die| sem Hau | se wohn | te mein | Schatz;
 3 A Sie hat | schon längst | die Stadt | verlas | sen

Scansion:

dactyl, trochee, dactyl, trochee
 iamb, iamb, iamb, anapest
 anacrusis, trochee, trochee, trochee

⁷ Eggert, li.

⁸ Greene, Roland, ed. 2012. *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. 4th ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

4	B	$\bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} /$ Doch steht noch das Haus auf demsel ben Platz.	iamb, anapest, anapest, iamb
5	C	$\bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad}$ Da steht auch ein Mensch und starrt in die Höhe,	anacrusis, dactyl, trochee, dactyl, trochee
6	D	$\bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} \bar{\quad} /$ Und ringt die Hän de, vor Schmerz ensge walt;	iamb, iamb, anapest, anapest
7	C	$\bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad}$ Mir graust es, wenn ich sein Antlitz sehe, -	iamb, pyrrhic, trochee, trochee, trochee
8	D	$\bar{\quad} / \quad / \quad \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} \bar{\quad} /$ Der Mond zeigt mir meine eigne Gestalt.	iamb, trochee, trochee, trochee, iamb
9	E	$\bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad}$ Du Doppelt gänger! du blei cher Ge selle!	anacrusis, trochee, dactyl, dactyl, trochee
10	F	$\bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} /$ Was äffst du nach mein Lieb esleid,	iambic tetrameter
11	E	$\bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad}$ Das mich ge quält auf dieser Stelle,	anacrusis, trochee, trochee, trochee
12	F	$\bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} / \quad \bar{\quad} /$ So man che Nacht, in al ter Zeit?	iambic tetrameter

Only lines 3 and 11, and 10 and 12 respectively, contain the same rhythm; every other line is comprised entirely different rhythmic groupings. Is this a mere coincidence? Perhaps. However, could it have been intentional and thus contain some significance? Heine was a master of poetic construction, who very well may have intended to inlay the poem with this structure for a specific reason. When the corresponding rhythmically parallel lines are examined together:

3 Sie hat schon längst die Stadt verlassen
11 Das mich gequält auf dieser Stelle

She left the city long ago
That torments me in this place

the idea is clear, that she or it left the city long ago and that fact still torments him when he is in that place. That this rhythmic repetition comes early in the poem, and again late in the poem, signifies the torment enduring throughout time.

10 Was äffst du nach mein Liebesleid
12 So manche Nacht, in alter Zeit?

Why do you mock my love-sorrow
So many a night, in old times?

This coupling then also insinuates a length of time, in this case, of which the mocking has been happening, presently as well as in the past. Has the Doppelgänger always been there, mocking the speaker, even when the Schatz was still in the city? If the Schatz is Heine's hitherto religious identity, then the Doppelgänger is representative of a people intent on mocking him for some reason, due to some ideal or thought, perhaps discriminatory in nature?

Whether analyzing these two elements with reference to the lovers or Heine's loss of his religious identity, the situation is actually very straightforward. The basic rhyme scheme represents the pure fact that the "Schatz" left. The complex rhythmic structure represents the resulting extraordinarily difficult consequences of this exodus. For Heine personally, the simple rhyme scheme could mean something such as the matter-of-fact situation of his society at the time was Anti-Semitic. However, the resulting fluctuation in his religious affiliation and the resulting social and political consequences thereof were for him difficult and many.

The Music

It was Schubert who first gave this poem its now commonly assumed title, *Der Doppelgänger*, when he composed his setting in the last year of his life. The title has since been used by several other composers who set this poem. Sadly, many of these settings are either not in print, out of print, or otherwise unobtainable. I will

compare Schubert's famous setting, together with that of the lesser-known Johann Vesque von Püttlingen, an acquaintance of both Schubert and Heine.

Firstly, the similarities between the two settings coincide on the main structural and thematic points of the song. The word stress of both settings falls exactly as in the poem, with strong syllables set on longer and or possibly embellished notes, and weak syllables conversely on shorter or less important notes (i.e., the subdivided beats or off-beats in a measure). For example, in the first two phrases of Schubert's setting, the article "die" falls both times on the final sixteenth of the third beat. The tempo markings are virtually identical; Schubert gives "Sehr langsam" and Vesque, "Langsam." Both composers use precisely the original textual structure of the poem; nothing is repeated or restated. Harmonically, the two settings are both in minor keys, Schubert's originally in B minor and Vesque in F# minor, thus creating the effect of a "sad" or, at least, "unhappy" song. Likewise, the two composers set the height of the melodic line at the text "eigne Gestalt", as if to indicate that this is the most important point of the text. Indeed, as both settings maintain a consistently languid and eerie effect particularly in their low tessituras (extremely low in Schubert's case) and minor keys, the pitch range of this specific phrase is like an emotional outburst and creates a certainly dramatic effect. Although achieved in different harmonic paces, both songs also end with a Picardy third, this major chord ending perhaps indicating the last phrase "in alter Zeit" is a happy memory, or was at least a happy time.

The differences then between the two are relatively few, but noteworthy and, I believe, provide slightly different perspectives for interpretation. Schubert's

homophonic piano accompaniment provides a simple harmonic and rhythmically repetitive background, the effect of which is onerous, perhaps representing slow footsteps, heavy with emotion dragging the speaker down the street to the house. This static nature of the accompaniment, combined with the minor key, creates a mood of darkness, mystery and uncertainty.

The interesting changes to this chordal accompaniment occur in m. 13 and m. 23; the right hand nears the range of the treble clef, and melodically echoes the penultimate syllable of the preceding phrase. In m. 13 this occurs on the words “mein Schatz” and in m. 23 on “demselben Platz.” This melodic echo a bar after the words are sung creates the effect of recalling, that she or it *was* the treasure, and that this *was* the place she or it was in. While both settings are in simple meter, Schubert’s is in 3/4 and Vesque’s in 2/4. This makes a critical difference in the delivery of the text. From the basic scansion of the poem, we can see that its meter does not inherently lend itself straightforwardly to an obvious musical meter. There are different numbers of feet per phrase, word stresses do not line up evenly—both obstacles to an even rhythm.

Schubert’s very slow 3/4 meter, and static, chordal accompaniment does not help to keep a pulse. Because it is so slow, with almost no distinction of individual beats, the singer and audience may very well get lost without careful counting. Adding to this static, non-rhythmic underlay, Schubert then also alternates the rhythmic value of the first note of a phrase—“Still ist die Nacht” enters on beat 2; “es ruhen die Gassen” enters on the last sixteenth of beat 1; “in diesem Hause” on the second eighth of beat 1; and “wohnte mein Schatz” enters on beat 1. There seems to

be no particular reason for this alternation in entrances; the word stress is following the poem exactly. However, such a setting exemplifies Schubert's understanding of the intentionally unsteady feeling of Heine's uneven, mixed meter in the poem.

Where Schubert's accompaniment is chordal, Vesque's is almost pointillistic in character. It is mainly outlining perfect octaves in the key area of F# minor for the first nine measures, all in the bass clef, thus also maintaining a low tessitura. This harmonic simplicity and repetition achieves a relatively static nature as well, albeit from different means than Schubert. Each hand trades off-beats, a pattern which continues throughout the song until the end of the second strophe. These alternating stressed beats echo the rhythmic variation in Heine's poem, and creates the feeling of shuffling or limping along, perhaps as if the speaker has aged considerably since "the old days." These repetitive octave sequences build in texture until m. 31 at "eigne Gestalt." This is certainly reminiscent of Schubert's alternatively right-hand echoes in the first two strophes of his setting. Here also, the vocal line, which has risen slightly over roughly nine measures, suddenly has an outburst in m. 31 with, so far, the highest notes to sing. Interesting to note as well, at this point Vesque writes a melodic echo (of "eigne Gestalt") in the left hand. The echo is a musical illustration, adopted by both Vesque and Schubert, which supports the idea that the speaker (perhaps Heine) is looking at a representation or manifestation of himself from the outside. In some ways it could reflect the conflict of being torn between his Jewish religious and cultural identity from birth, and his need to fit into an anti-Semitic discriminatory society. From here to the end the accompaniment continues mainly homophonically, apart from some brief, slight

ornamentation in measures 38 and 40, on “Liebesleid” and “dieser Stelle”, respectively. The vocal line drops in pitch again until a sudden arpeggio to what is then the highest note for the singer on “Liebesleid” in m. 38. For all of Vesque’s attempts at clever word-painting to emphasize the text—from the off-beats echoing the vocal line, perhaps symbolizing someone following the speaker; in m. 23 the non-chordal G natural on “Schmerz-“; and in m. 31 the piano left-hand melody echoes the voice as if to say plainly, “I see my own likeness”—it is hard to ignore the similarities in this setting, written 23 years after Schubert’s. With his documented admiration of Schubert, it is undoubtedly an overall homage to the latter.

With all the aforementioned techniques and distinctions, it is evident that both composers tried to create a particularly insecure, dark, and somewhat precarious mood in their settings. This speaks to a certain kind of dark, inner conflict, one that is far more grave and burdensome in meaning than that of a romantic love lost, but rather a feeling of utter despair, displaced, and not belonging at all anywhere in one’s world, as Heine was.

Chapter 2

Lyrisches Intermezzo I—“Im wunderschönen Monat Mai”

For decades, if not centuries, studies examining the relation of Heine to his work have crossed disciplines of literature and music. A prominent topic of research is the question of whether his love poetry was sincere, or if it was ironic, only mocking the affects of love. Indeed the question of irony and its identification in musical settings of his work appears to be inexhaustible for Lieder-loving Heinephiles the world over. For performers, especially, the question of sincerity of the meaning of Heine’s poems is surely a critical one, as certain musical traits (key signature (major or minor), tempo (fast or slow), and style of melodic writing (lyrical or declamatory), create senses of certain feelings (happy or sad, serious or funny). Hence, the examination of such musical traits and the frequency with which similar ones are employed in a given poem will contribute to the general understanding and interpretation of the poem, and the performance of its song setting. It is significant if songs converge in feeling through their respective musical traits, exhibiting one similar feeling amongst different settings, because it is then clear which particular meaning of the poem comes through most consistently. These musical exhibitions may or may not convey the original ideas of the poet, and is perhaps why Heine very seldom bothered to acknowledge any composer’s musical settings of his poetry, understanding that his poem and a musical setting of the same, is not the same thing.

There exist several documented concerns and indeed outcries from the earliest publication and reception of *Buch der Lieder*. Anthony Phelan examines many of these in his comprehensive study.⁹ He cites several of Heine's contemporary critics in saying that the poetry therein was inauthentic, expressing their uncertainty if poetry was even biographical—as, apparently, previous romantic poetry had been assumed to have been and valued as the outpouring of genuine and actual feelings—indeed, that Heine was merely a “self-plagiarist” who simply impersonates his own style.¹⁰ Still other critics claimed that this self-impersonation was “miming the gestures of ‘Romantic emotionality’”,¹¹ with reference to *Die Heimkehr XX* (“Still ist die Nacht”), thus implying that Heine was not adhering to such gestures, making him not a true Romantic. Of course, retrospectively, we know this to be true. However, at the time, Heine was, although writing to appease his Muse, also desperate for acknowledgement and success in his writing.¹²

Phelan strives to provide the context in which to read Heine's poetry, which normally gives the foundation or reason for its existence, and subsequently, the basis of its meaning. Naturally we would think that by reading Heine's own introductions to each edition of *Buch der Lieder*, he would therein tell us why he wrote it, or what he was feeling, or to whom certain poems or indeed the book itself was dedicated, all of which provide contextual meaning. Indeed they do, but not in an obvious way. Heine cloaks the meaning behind the poems in his second edition

⁹ Phelan, Anthony. *Reading Heinrich Heine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

¹⁰ Phelan, p. 48.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² See Heine biographies of Lewis Browne, Ernst Pawel.

introduction through prose. Interesting is his explanation of leaving out the original dedications, to his uncle Salomon, and to the Varnhagens, due to lack of space. It is also interesting when Heine explains that the *Lyrisches Intermezzo* was taken from a collection entitled “Tragödien” as of 1823 and dedicated to his uncle Salomon. That he calls them “tragedies” implies an honest feeling behind the poems, when you read what they describe—falling in love, the thrill of being in love, the pains of one-sided and unrequited love. Knowing what we do about his attachment to his cousin Amalie,¹³ it is very easy to believe that these were autobiographical expressions, no matter how embellished or mimed of Romantic emotionality they were as well.

Heine writes in the preface to the second edition:

‘Erste Gedichte aber, die gedruckt sind, grell Schwarz gedruckt auf entsetzlich glattem Papier, diese haben ihren süßesten, jungfräulichen Reiz verloren und erregen bei dem Verfasser einen schauerlichen Mißmut.’¹⁴

or, in Phelan’s modified translation:

First poems, however, that have been printed, printed in harsh black on horribly smooth paper have lost their sweetest, most virginal charm, and arouse in the author a ghastly ill temper.¹⁵

Phelan expounds on this idea:

Print...robs his work of its attractive innocence and evokes instead a sense of irritation mixed with a sense of dread and perhaps of the uncanny (‘einen schauerlichen Mißmut’). Altenhofer reads this disturbance as a reflection of Heine’s uncertainty in the first part of *Buch der Lieder*, in which the poems seem to hesitate between authentic immediacy and the effects of their organization in a *pattern* of productivity based on the lyric cycle (his endnote 3). In the light of Adorno’s critique of lyric subjectivity in his Heine essay, however, it is possible to see this loss of ‘personal’ reference as a feature of the anonymous market for which Heine is now quite explicitly writing: it is after all a *second* edition. In his preface, then, there are signs

¹³ See chapter 3.

¹⁴ Heine, p. 7.

¹⁵ Phelan, p. 48.

that Heine is learning to reassess his own output strategically, as a function of his own historical position and context.¹⁶

This analysis points toward the idea that, over time and through subsequent publications, Heine deliberately alters the presentation of this collection of poems in order to cloud the question of their authenticity. After all, at first publication the *Lyrisches Intermezzo* had a more direct, personally expressive title (“Tragedies”). After it became a commercial success, in subsequent editions’ prefaces he described the *Intermezzo* more vaguely, as if hoping that an element of mystery surrounding the genesis of the poems’ inspiration would generate more interest in the question of their autobiographical nature, resulting in, quite simply, more sales.

However, Phelan also clarifies that perhaps the original meaning never really changes, but brings modification through the hardening of feelings, previously liquefied in the heat of immediacy: “The passage of time, Heine believes, both brings the cooler illumination of retrospection, but also provides a revised perspective for the assessment of ‘truth’.”¹⁷

While no one can precisely prove what Heine’s intention was behind these poems, we do have certain remembrances and correspondence from times at which he wrote certain poems that shed some light on their meaning. Heine recalls in his letters from previous years, in which can be seen the extreme sensual embellishment of description. In fact, it is so overtly poetic, one cannot help but question its sincerity.

‘Pretty Gertrude went wild with delight when I took my seat by her. She was a maiden glowing like a rose, and as she once threw herself on my neck, I thought she would glow and scent herself away in my arms. Pretty

¹⁶ Phelan, p. 48.

¹⁷ Phelan, p. 49.

Catherine when she spoke to me melted away in a ripple of gentleness, and her eyes were of such a clear, hearty blue as I have never seen in man or woman, and seldom in flowers; it was so pleasant to look on them and fancy all sorts of delightful things.¹⁸

There are endless questions and speculations that can be made about the true intention—that is, the sincerity or irony—behind his poetry. Being so overly sensitive, Heine protected himself from scrutiny by veiling his true ideas and thereby, his identity. Therein lies a significant feature of his genius. We know the subject of identity, his true self, is something Heine struggled with his whole life from childhood. It is no surprise then that his poetry should be convoluted or vague in its meaning, and not obviously personally revealing. Susan Youens sums it up very well, with regard to his love interests, in that:

...beyond the sphere of an erotic life about which we know remarkably little, he had other things on his mind besides Amalie and Therese: poetry, history, prose, politics, criticism, nationalism, the state of German Jewry, censorship, the matter of a bread-winning profession, and more. How to be a poet in his day with his unique gifts was always the paramount concern.¹⁹

As we well know with Heine's poetry, a 'sting in the tail' occurs at the ends of his poems, and these tend to clarify exactly the meaning and tone of the entire poem—although one will not reach this understanding until the very end. In the famous *Im wunderschönen Monat Mai*, it begins with an absolutely beautiful picture—the height of spring, blossoms blooming, birds singing, and continues describing this time as a time when the heart birthed a new love. However, at the very end, instead of writing of love's fulfillment, he writes of longing and desire. This

¹⁸ Stigand, Vol. 1, p. 28.

¹⁹ Youens, p. 119.

tells us that while new love is growing in his heart, he does not yet have the object his love; rather, he only has a distant longing for it. It is not a happy, content thought, but one of frustration, incompleteness, and sadness.

The Poem

The rhythmic structure of the poem is two strophes constructed exactly the same way:

1	- / - / - / - / <i>Im wunderschönen Monat Mai</i>	- iambic tetrameter
2	- / - / - / - <i>Als alle Knospen sprangen,</i>	- trochaic substitution with anacrusis
3	- / - / - / - <i>Da ist in meinem Herzen</i>	- trochaic substitution with anacrusis
4	- / - / - / - <i>Die Liebe aufgegangen.</i>	- trochaic substitution with anacrusis
5	- / - / - / - / <i>Im wunderschönen Monat Mai</i>	- iambic tetrameter
6	- / - / - / - <i>Als alle Vögel sangen,</i>	- trochaic substitution with anacrusis
7	- / - / - / - <i>Da hab ich ihr gestanden</i>	- trochaic substitution with anacrusis
8	- / - / - / - <i>Mein Sehnen und Verlangen.</i>	- trochaic substitution with anacrusis

“Iambic tetrameter” construction is also called “four-footed”—two syllables (one weak, one strong) together equal one “foot.” The result is much like “simple meter” in music: the division of beats is divisible by two, creating a sense of balance and evenness. The weak-strong rhythm could thus represent intent, for example, in movement, walking toward something or someone—the weak beat is the movement of one’s foot, the strong beat the setting of the foot upon the ground. This particular construction of the phrase “im wunderschönen Monat Mai” could thus give the

impression of certainty, as if the speaker remembers precisely that it was May, and no other month. With May being traditionally a beautiful time of year in Germany, indeed with blossoms blooming, sun shining, temperatures warming, and birds singing, one would indeed be inspired also to recall exactly the time a new love affair began. It could also indicate the certainty that this was definitely love, and not mere infatuation or passing crush. In any case, the even, steady rhythm provides stability in feeling, and therefore, probably in meaning.

The iambic tetrameter also allows the first phrase to end on a strong beat—in scansion this is called a “male” or “masculine” (“männliche”) ending. The following three lines of trochaic substitution both begin (with an anacrusis) and end with a weak beat—called a “female” or “feminine” (“weibliche”) ending. This segue in both strophes provides an even rhythm between lines 1-2, and 5-6, creating an even flow of the words: “In the wonderful month of May, as all the buds were blooming” and “In the wonderful month of May, as all the birds were singing.” Both are images of a perfection and beauty in Nature, occurring at just the right time and with just the right conditions to make it happen.

However, immediately after this line, from lines 2 and 6, the lines have only three feet in the phrase, as opposed to four. Alone, the term “three feet” is an awkward image, as most creatures in our sphere of knowledge have some quantity of an even number. Imagine a “three-legged race”, in which it is terribly awkward to walk with three limbs! That the meter is trochaic rather than iambic creates a sense of imbalance. In addition to this, lines 2, 3, 4, and 6, 7, and 8 all both end and begin with weak beats. To account for this rhythmic sequence, there must be a slight

pause between them. This intrusive, rhythmic hiccup between the lines creates an interruption in the rhythm, and consequently is seemingly representative of either a stumble or a limp in the movement's gait or train of thought, perhaps a pause for reflection. These rhythmic elements combined could perhaps point to an uncertainty that contradicts the balanced definitiveness in lines 1-2 and 5-6. Could this be the speaker (perhaps Heine himself) inwardly second-guessing his love?

Another possibility concerning the feminine endings of these phrases could be what these lines are describing—new love, longing, desire—perhaps they are considered (by 19th-century men) “weaker” or “feminine” ideals. In any event, the feminine phrase endings outnumber the masculine endings, which could be another line of thought—the feminine dominating the masculine, as if the speaker has no recourse under the power his lover has over him.

At first glance, the words tell us the speaker fell in love in the beautiful month of May—a very lovely thought. However when we look deeper into the structure, we see a physical imbalance in meter, and that must mean something more to the poem. The love was, for some reason, imbalanced and insecure.

Again, the interpretation of this poem is often and perhaps superficially about the awakening of love, but it would be interesting to open the interpretation to allow for the apparent precariousness of this love, based on the rhythmic scheme, and how—if at all—it is realized in any musical settings.

The Music

Robert Schumann – *Im wunderschönen Monat Mai*, Op. 48, No.1, written 1840

This setting is undoubtedly the most well-known and most performed setting of this Heine poem and for very good reason. As Dill quotes Schauffler, “*Dichterliebe* ‘reminds one that Schumann was the first composer to appreciate and reflect Heine’s bitter irony.’”²⁰ The only question is: is there irony in this particular poem, or is it actually straightforward in its meaning? The irony, if it exists, could be found in the poem’s irregular meter, as pointed out in the above discussion. If this is true, Schumann does not choose to emphasize the irony metrically in his musical setting; while there is a clear delineation of natural textual emphasis, each phrase is set to exactly the same amount of time—one complete measure, with a preceding pick-up, and succeeding quarter note (on “Mai”) or eighth note (on all other, feminine ending phrases).

Instead of using meter, Schumann may have intended to allude to the irony in the harmonic structure of his piece. It is well known that the song does not concretely identify its tonal center of A major until the sixth measure (incidentally, on the word “Mai”). The first five measures fluctuate between borrowed chord harmonic progressions—viii^{sus}/iii → III, until m. 5 when he brings it back to a more familiar progression of ii → V → I for the arrival at m. 6.

²⁰ Dill, p. 172.

spriessen”). However, given the text of the next poem speaking of flowers sprouting from tears, perhaps too predictable and therefore too flippant for such a text. And so Schumann continues in A major, continuing the mysterious presence of the major III in the first song.

Perhaps it is also noteworthy that, in the 18th and 19th centuries, A major was the key associated with love, hope, youthful cheerfulness, and satisfaction²¹.

Whether Schumann intentionally considered this trend of his predecessors cannot be known for sure. By 1840 this compositional technique had largely waned, especially with the increasing experimental harmonic and even chromatic writing, further developed just a decade or two after Schumann’s ‘Liederjahr’—in Lieder, by Wolf, in opera, by Wagner, then of course further in both media by Berg, Schoenberg, and so on. But already in 1840 with this song, Schumann does not adhere to a traditional harmonic structure, borrowing several chords and embellishment tones from neighboring ones, and creating an unsettled harmonic progression. In this stream of thought, it thus creates the insecurity that I think is obvious in the poem’s meter. On the other hand, the effect is also slightly ethereal, and thereby perhaps Schumann’s intent was to enhance the spiritual awe of the mystery of falling in love. But it is possible to create a sense of etherealness through musical gestures such as texture and range, without the discomfort of such harmonic instability.

That Schumann was a fan of Heine’s is of no doubt. He was intimately familiar with his poetry and set at composing songs based on the great master’s poetry with

²¹ <http://www.wmich.edu/mus-theo/courses/keys.html> (accessed May 27, 2013)

great enthusiasm and vigor, especially in his 'Liederjahr' of 1840, the best example of which is the quintessential *Dichterliebe*, written in only one week's time. It can never be known if Schumann considered Heine's rhythmic scheme important to his cycle or not. Speaking of a different poem ("*Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen*"), Youens explains,

The onion-like layers habitual in these poems meant that composers could select often drastically different compositional approaches, ones congruent with their own agendas, and thereby demonstrate their unique readings of this poetry for music.²²

But it is evident from such a harmonic structure that Schumann did have some sympathy for the uncertainty in Heine's poem and exhibited it, all the while also adhering to both the language's natural stresses and Heine's dictated rhythm.

Robert Franz – *Im wunderschönen Monat Mai*, Op. 25, No.5 (published c. 1870)

Unlike Schumann's simple 2/4 time setting, Franz sets his version in 3/4 time—but that is where the big differences seem to stop. In fact, Franz's setting appears to glean quite a bit of influence from Schumann's—in fact, to ears familiar with Schumann's, it either an homage, or a deliberate knock-off.

Firstly, the key signature is only one half-step below Schumann's, in A^b major. Schumann's upper-neighbor suspensions most clearly at the very beginning with the 9—8 suspension of the C# to the B in the right hand in the opening, and then the subsequent further 9—8 or 4—3 suspensions throughout the piano part

²² Youens, p.122.

are a signature characteristic of his setting. Franz curiously adopts the same gesture of the half-step (9—8) upper neighbor suspension at several points in his setting. Instead of fitting into the ‘normal’ harmonic structure to include only harmonic tones, he does instead:

Ex. 1

Andantino con grazia.

Singstimme. *p*

Im wunderschönen Monat Mai, als
I was in the beautiful month of May, each

Pianoforte. *p*

al - le Knos - pen spran - gen, da ist in mei - nem
small bud burst its pri - son, when all my soul de -

Franz uses an upper neighbor suspension on beat one, and the second half of beat two. Incidentally this occurs on the words “wunderschönen” (in the first and second strophe), “alle Knospen”, and “alle Vögel.”

Thus Franz seems to want to also convey some sort of insecurity in the text through harmony, which, again, like Schumann’s setting, is also shown mainly by arpeggiated chords rather than static, held chords. He sets the song in what appears to be A \flat major, indicated by the arpeggiated piano introduction. However when the

singer begins, the text starts on a D^{\flat} -diminished chord and moves to a deceptive cadence to F minor already on the word “Mai”—so with just one opening measure in the tonic key, Franz then has the first phrase of text go through borrowed chords and deceptive cadences, not to cadence in the tonic again until the end of the second phrase. This certainly indicates some intention toward instability or uncertainty.

Measures six through ten provide another example: the D^{\sharp} in m. 5 leads into a C minor arpeggiated, first-inversion chord in m. 6, which is hinting at a new tonic of either C minor (the mediant) or E^{\flat} major (the dominant). Measures 7-8 dance around the question of which key it will move to until m. 9, when a strong and clear dominant of G major on beat three sets up what will surely be either the new tonic E^{\flat} or C minor in m. 10. However, this does not happen, and Franz takes us back to the D^{\flat} -diminished-led chord progression of the beginning.

Lastly, after exact harmonic repetition for the second verse, Franz makes for quite a different cadential extension beginning in m. 18. On the first beat, instead of the D-diminished chord of the parallel m. 9, he creates a brief diversion to a D^{\flat} (IV), followed on beat 3 by its dominant G^{\flat} (V^7/IV) leading into a second-inversion D^{\flat} in m. 19. This only serves to hint at a new tonality of D^{\flat} major for two measures, because he just quickly jumps back to A^{\flat} major immediately in m. 20. It is a question of personal taste, but perhaps creating such wrenching dissonance is then somewhat ruined, or at least cheapened, by following it with a dominant-seventh chord. While the dissonance of the suspended chords in m. 4 and m. 13 are actually quite beautifully wrenching, the rest of the circling around tonalities makes for a painfully obvious attempt to show instability. In these ways, perhaps Franz was, like

Schumann, also attempting to show some insecurity or vagueness in the text through harmony. If so, he deserves credit for the attempt, but it comes across as forced and somewhat clumsy, not achieving the same effortlessly ethereal affect of Schumann's setting.

Apart from these two overall languid settings of the text, apparently focusing trying to evoke the feeling of longing and desire, described in the text, we can also find several settings which seem to focus on the springing beauty and joy of love blossoming in May. Unlike Schumann and Franz, settings by Vesque, Hensel, and White all avoid any overtly complicated harmonic writing in their settings, opting instead for straightforward, major-key harmonic progressions moving mainly through the tonic, dominant, and subdominant. This demonstrates a sense of ease and simplicity, an uncomplicated interpretation of love in this poem.

Johann Vesque von Püttlingen – *Im Mai*, Op.55, No.4, (published in 1851)

Vesque's setting is in 2/4 time, lending textual emphasis naturally (easily) to the iambic tetrameter of the lines 1 and 5. Indeed when one begins to recite the poem, the first line comes out evenly matched up with such a simple meter. However, then it continues in its irregular rhythms until line 5, and then the cycle of the first strophe. Perhaps Vesque thought of this and that is why he repeats lines 1-2, 3-4, then 1-2, and likewise with the second strophe: lines 5-6, 7-8, and 5-6. However it seems most likely that he chose this series of textual repetition to fit in with his ABA' musical structure. Harmonically, like Franz's, he sets it in A \flat major.

This key, to the previous generation, was characteristic of or representing the grave, “eternity lies in its radius”.²³ However, I believe Vesque’s key of choice had less to do with archaic ideals of affective key characteristics, and more to do with the singer for whom he wrote it. While we do not know for a fact that it was Vogl, a tenor whom Vesque so greatly admired,²⁴ the range and tessitura of the song certainly showcase an exceptional high voice, either tenor or soprano. Again, the harmonic writing is not particularly extraordinary, and any changes to text only exist to support Vesque’s metric and melodic outline. What makes this song distinguishable are elements of the vocal line. From the pick-up note of the beginning to the downbeat of m. 3 the singer must already span a 12-step range and do so easily, as it is basically a pattern setting. Then, in m. 14 must be able to sing out a high B \flat , and one-and-a-half bars later trill an E \flat for three full bars, all with very little time to breathe. In the repeat, for the second strophe, there are markings given to allow for variations in interpretation, for example: over m. 15 is written “ad lib.” in the vocal line and “colla parte” in the piano—meaning, to take liberty with the tempo of this measure, for textual emphasis. One could read this to do a little rubato in the first verse, then much more in the second, to emphasize the “longing” and “desire”. In m. 24 there is a higher melody composed, again, seemingly to take on the second verse as a bit of an ornament; it is appropriate that the higher notes are composed for the text “alle Vögel”, text painting the birds. For all the practical, structural

²³ <http://www.wmich.edu/mus-theo/courses/keys.html> (accessed May 27, 2013)

²⁴ “He was particularly impressed with [Johann Michael] Vogl” whose “performances were ‘truly enchanting...I learned so much from his observations on the performances of German song’.” Youens, p.145.

consideration that seemed first in Vesque's mind, these "showcase" characteristics make this setting rather exceptionally like an aria.

Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel – Three Heine Duets, No.3

Hensel set this poem as the last in the set of three duets on texts by Heine, all taken from *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, but out of his original order. Instead, she sets, in this order: 1) *Wenn ich in deine Augen seh* (IV), 2) *Aus meinen Tränen spruessen* (II), and 3) *Im wunderschönen Monat Mai* (I). Later will be a more in-depth analysis of the minor-key setting of *Wenn ich in deine Augen sehe*, but for now will be a discussion of the closing song of the set, *Im wunderschönen Monat Mai*, especially in terms of its purpose as a harmonic closing to the set. Hensel sets both the first and second songs in G minor, and ends them both in G Major. Perhaps the first time this happens, the G major ending hints at a happier resolution to the longing of the first song, that satisfaction does not come, but instead is prolonged by the also G minor-key of the second song. When this song ends, we are not disappointed again by another minor key in the next song, because she instead sets the third song in C Major—the brightest, clearest, purest key. It is as if the bitterness and tears building up in the first two songs are dissipated by the newness of love in the spring in the third song.

Other musical characteristics in Hensel's setting equally emphasize a joyful, happy interpretation of the text. Marked "Allegro molto, leggiero", the text is set syllabically, making it patter song. Indeed the style is quite reminiscent of a Rossini

or other *bel canto* cabaletta. If one takes the fastest tempo in this indication the song would sound not only joyful and happy, but perhaps even comical. While there are no dynamic markings at all, the texture is so light that the volume cannot be very loud in order to hear all of the music and text going by simultaneously so quickly. It's almost as if it is meant to be a thrilling, exciting secret that the lover just cannot keep in any longer.

Lastly, Hensel's meter of 2/4 perhaps most closely adheres to the rhythmic setting of Heine's—if one reads the poem through quickly, it sets itself up as such a musical meter and such a tempo. Interestingly enough, both the setting by Vesque and a setting by Maude Valérie White have the same meter and roughly the same tempo. While certainly White's setting has none of the pianistic lyricism, nor the “expansive melody” as that of her setting of Byron's *So we'll go no more a'roving*, as quoted by Fuller,²⁵ one easily understands by listening to her songs that she absolutely very intentionally set each poem musically as she felt its meaning. Therefore it is interesting to note that, at least, Vesque, Hensel, White, if not even more others, chose a 2/4 meter and *Allegro* tempo for this poem.

If there were other settings of this poem in print, it is interesting to think about how many would be fast and happy, versus how many are slower and pensive. It rather begs the question of whether Schumann and Franz both were putting some sort of deeper meaning or irony into the poem than Heine himself intended. Is it

²⁵ Fuller, Sophie. *Maude Valérie White*. Grove Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.lib.indiana.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/30212?q=maude+white&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit, [accessed May 31, 2013].

meant to be a lively, exciting circumstance, as some settings indicate? Or is it about a longing never fulfilled, as indicated by the likes of Schumann and Franz? Naturally this just proves the point that a poem and its musical settings are intrinsically separate works of art. The great and beautiful thing about musical settings and interpretation is that we, as the artists, can decide which it means to us, and therefore which setting we present.

Chapter 3

Lyrisches Intermezzo IV – “Wenn ich in deine Augen seh”

It is clear that, as a child, Heine was caught between two worlds, a result of which was a persistent inability to focus on or commit to any one goal, or even decide what he wanted to do, outside of writing poetry.

He was highly intelligent and able, yet incorrigibly lazy at the same time. He refused to apply himself to tasks which he did not fancy, no matter how profitable or necessary they might be. He preferred rather to hide himself in the library of his queer uncle, Simon van Geldern, or else to lie in the woods and sing songs.²⁶

Eventually Salomon Heine took it upon himself to take charge of his aimless nephew. In 1816 Heine joined him in Hamburg. It was there that he came into contact again with his cousin Amalie, whom he'd seen only briefly once before on his way to Frankfurt, and now returned with great gusto to pursue the lasting affections previously created. The compliance in setting up his own cloth-merchant shop in 1818 was most likely a mixture of carrying out the expected duty to his benevolent uncle's intervention, egged on by his mother's consistent machinations, and wanting to impress and possibly earn Amalie's deeper affections. Whether or not the two ever had any physical relations is not known, and largely irrelevant, given the result of his highly romantic poetry that came out of his own gushing infatuation anyway. In any event Amalie never returned his passion; the daughter of a millionaire, pretty and young, she no doubt was simply true to her upbringing, never giving her

²⁶ Browne, p. 44.

penniless cousin a second thought, other than familial companionship, and eventually married John Friedländer, a titled landowner, in 1821.

After his heart was broken by Amalie's continuous indifference, he turned loose, trying to drown his sorrows and take refuge in yet another fantasy world, that of Hamburg's nightlife, in a sort of "Byronism", intentionally "making himself 'mad, wild, cynical, utterly repellent'",²⁷ visiting prostitutes and the like. Meanwhile his passionate love poetry was positively devoured by women who, no doubt thinking they were his autobiographical thoughts and desires, longed to "kiss away the bitter mockery from his lips and heal his bleeding heart."²⁸ Perhaps this wild abandon into non-committal dalliances with the fairer sex was a defensive mechanism. Once acquired by Heine, he never gave this up. He seems henceforth forever jaded about romance, no matter how infatuated or consumed he was by a female. In his own correspondence, for example, writing of a young girl named Hedwig, he wrote:

'I should without a doubt have fallen in love with the pretty child if she had shown indifference to me, but I did not do so only because I knew she loved me. Madame, when you want me to fall in love with you, you must treat me like a villain.'²⁹

He eventually let his business go under in debt, after it lasting only one year, and left Hamburg for Bonn in 1819 to study law, another notion of his mother's and again underwritten by his uncle. Salomon was certainly committed in his duty to provide for his poorer relations, if not also motivated by a fear of some embarrassment if they did not flourish with his support. This is understandably why

²⁷ Brown, p. 35.

²⁸ Youens, p. 4.

²⁹ Stigand, vol. 1, pp. 28 - 29.

he kept supporting Heine (however ungraciously) for most of his life. It was also at this time that Heine began to write less about Amalie, and love, and more about the German Fatherland and the olden days of its former glory.

The Poem

Commonly much is made of typical Heine “sting in the tail” lines, almost always at the end of his poetry. At first glance, this poem is no exception. The speaker is describing all the rapturous feelings of love! Why then, when the lover returns the sentiment with “I love you!” does the speaker then “cry bitterly”? Could it be as simple that, as Brauner suggests, “love can never really be entirely blissful as the first three couplets express [but] must always end in tears”?³⁰ Is it truly an outpouring of the heart ending in lament? Or is it something else altogether? Could the speaker not even be in love at all? With a slightly deeper analysis of the poem, it becomes dubious as to whether the speaker is really in love, or if he was just spitefully mocking the whole event.

	<u>Rhyme Scheme:</u>	<u>Scansion:</u>	<u>Meter:</u>
1	A	- / - / - / - / <i>Wenn ich in deine Augen seh,</i>	iambic tetrameter
2	A	- / - / - / - / <i>So schwindet all mein Leid und Weh;</i>	iambic tetrameter
3	B	- / - / - / - / <i>Doch wenn ich küsse deinen Mund,</i>	iambic tetrameter
4	B	- / - / - / - / <i>So werd ich ganz und gar gesund.</i>	iambic tetrameter

³⁰ Brauner, p. 276.

5	C	- / - / - / - / <i>Wenn ich mich lehn an deine Brust,</i>	iambic tetrameter
6	C	- / - / - / - / <i>Kommt's über mich wie Himmelslust;</i>	iambic tetrameter
7	D	- / - / - / - / <i>Doch wenn du sprichst: ich liebe dich!</i>	iambic tetrameter
8	D	- / - / - / - / <i>So muß ich weinen bitterlich.</i>	iambic tetrameter

The first noticeable characteristic of this poem is its extremely basic rhyme scheme: AA BB CC DD. We know Heine preferred more intricate rhyme schemes but he deliberately used this one. This in itself seems somewhat ironic; for all the beauty of the words' outpouring declaration of love, its construction is at the very least comical, if not downright cringe-worthy. Within the first third of the poems in *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, Heine constructs them mostly in the same or similar subsequent or alternating rhyme schemes, those of which are very simple, sonnet-like. However from XXVI he begins to play more and more with varying rhyme schemes and meters, as well as more poems with greater length, culminating in the most intricate, LXIV, which consists of 44 lines and 20 different rhyme endings.

There is a second and perhaps more important point to consider regarding the poem's construction that contributes to the irony found therein, and that is the relentlessly consistent meter throughout. Immediately the question arises: given that Heine was a great master at both language and poetry, why on Earth would he set such lovely words to so monotonous a rhythm? Admittedly, it could be useful to notice where there may be potential differences in scansion, for example here, in lines 3 and 7. Traditionally, the most important words of a sentence are nouns, then stressed syllables of verbs, adjectives, and, similarly, other parts of speech. As we often see in Heine's poetry, it is difficult to decide which syllable is stressed when, in

the seemingly natural flow of syllabic stress, the noun may not fall on a stressed syllable—for example, in lines 3 and 7 of this poem. If we adhere strictly to the noun = stressed syllable rule (along with the natural stress of multi-syllabic other words), then those lines should look like this:

/ - / / - / - /
Doch wenn ich küsse deinen Mund,

and

/ - / / / / - /
Doch wenn du sprichst: ich liebe dich!

It is plain to see that if one adheres too strictly to the word-stress rule about nouns, then the natural sound and flow of the language is disrupted. Also, in this example, it would thus disrupt the otherwise fully iambic tetrameter rhythm of the poem. Clearly, given what we know of his meticulous revisions,³¹ Heine fully intended to construct it exactly as he did. Thus, the question: why would he do this? Surely, if the poet is capable of them (of which with Heine there is no question), such flowery words of adulation and love rightly deserve a more sophisticated metrical presentation. However, if it was indeed his intention to mock love, it would not be the only time Heine used such techniques to do so. As Brauner writes in his analysis of poem LVI—*Allnächtlich im Traume*:

Far from being a serious lover's lament, the poem is actually rather funny. Heine mocks both the Romantic lover's Angst and the convention of a dream poem." The blatantly unpoetic "süssen Füßen" is Heine's way of showing that the poet's despair is not tragic but ridiculous.³²

³¹ "...Heine was not spoiled by the praise he received. He labored incessantly over every word he wrote, never counting a poem finished until he had perfected its every line. He submitted his best verses to his master for criticism, and when they came back all marked and crossed, he brooded for hours over the corrections", Browne, pp. 65 – 66.

³² Brauner, p. 264

However, I am not sure that Brauner completely uncovered the full extent of the potential sarcasm in *Wenn ich in deine Augen seh*, because he only focuses on the last phrase as the “troubling undercurrent to the hitherto unproblematic lyricism.”³³ I believe a pertinent, critical observation is one made by Robert Frost who once said: “if when writing a poem he found its rhythm becoming monotonous, he knew that the poem was going wrong and that *he himself didn't believe what it was saying*”[emphasis mine].³⁴ Indeed, if one reads quickly through this poem, the monotonous rhythm begins to overtake the words, covering them in a pattern so vociferous that the syllables may as well be sheer nonsense for all one hears. It is quite possible to imagine that perhaps this was an idea shared by Heine, and therein can be found the true meaning of this poem. The last phrase then, is not, in fact, the only “sting”, but rather a single-line summation of the bitter, mocking irony proclaimed by the metrical construction throughout the entirety of the poem. In short, there are the two major points to consider in a musical setting: 1) the poem's overall meter and 2) the treatment of the last two lines of text which apparently most agree make up Heine's notoriously characteristic “sting in the tail.”

³³ Brauner, p. 276

³⁴ <http://server.riverdale.k12.or.us/~bblack/meter.html> (accessed June 10, 2013)

The Music

Robert Schumann – *Wenn ich in deine Augen seh*, Op. 48, No. 4

Between the two points made above there are several common traits within the seven musical settings chosen for this study. The one generally consistent musical device that almost every composer adopts for this poem is that the last two lines must be treated with some sort of modal or harmonic shift in order to emphasize it. Looking at several different settings this device becomes quite tiresomely predictable. This most famous and setting by Schumann is one version set in the $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature. The obvious problem with setting the poem's original iambic tetrameter musically is that there could be found little beauty in a vocal line with such a declamatory, clunky rhythm. In this way, the song's $\frac{3}{4}$ meter is abetting, further aided by the suspended feeling created by the piano accompaniment in the held chords, and the pulsating homophonic chords separated by rests. The words of the poem are beautiful expressions of love, and as such inherently elicit a lyrical, melodic setting on which to flow. It is understandable then, why several composers chose a $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature or even a compound-meter $\frac{6}{8}$ time signature for this poem. $\frac{3}{4}$ time is the time of waltzes—romantic dances for two that often contain a memorable and very singable melody (take the “*Brindisi*” scene from Act I of Verdi's *La Traviata*, for example, or the Barcarolle “*Belle nuit ô nuit d'amour*” from Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann*). In the case of the settings of *Wenn ich in deine Augen seh*, these time signatures allow more space for an echo of the melody, in the pause between phrases of text. For example, in Schumann's

setting, he is able to diminish and echo the melody of the first eight notes of text again in m.2:

Ex. 2

Langsam.
Lento. p

Wenn ich in dei - ne Au - gen seh, so schwin-det all' mein Leid und
When - e'er thine eyes I gaze up - on, Lo, all my grief and pain are

Another example can be found in Wolf's setting:

Ex. 3

Wenn ich in dei - ne Au - gen seh, so schwin - det

So, it is plain to see that the poem's iambic tetrameter is mathematically set up to be dividable by twos. As was said with regard to *Im wunderschönen Monat Mai*, this clearly suggests that the most natural meter for a musical setting would be a simple meter of either 2/4, 4/4, and so on. However if the music was set in such a meter and tempo adhering literally to the poem's meter, it would progress straight through with no room for such melodic reflection.

Unlike other composers' settings, Schumann does not modulate or change key for the last line of text. But there are some notable musical traits to set apart these two special lines of text. Firstly, in m. 13, a change in the accompaniment happens, with a descending melody leading into the declaration of "*ich liebe dich.*" There is a sustained chord, but also a descending arpeggio in a diminished g#⁷ (vii^{o7}/ii), which is a harmonic variant in the tonality, borrowing the G# from the original tonality's (G major) "ii" (A minor)—to which it moves accordingly in the following measure. This is a contrast to the beginning of the piece where both the melodic and harmonic movement is as simple as if it could have been written by anyone, not indicative of the great master of the Lied. The ritardando marked in the right hand of the piano in m.13 sets up the subsequent ritardando in m.14 on "*ich liebe dich*", with a suspension on the word "*liebe*". In this way he makes this phrase stand out as the most important of the song, and the bittersweet suspension of "love" being its whole point. It is a very special moment. The immediately following "*a tempo*" on "*so muss ich weinen bitterlich*" creates a sense of moving forward, acceptance of the fact that this declaration of love makes the speaker cry. Additionally, Schumann marks a tie over the first one-and-a-half beats in the first half of m.14, while the eighth-notes in the second half are dotted under a new tie. To accomplish these indications, one must surely take at least a brief pause between the two. This fits in perfectly with Heine's punctuation there, which is a comma between the two phrases, emphasizing the point of the first part, by the separation of the second.

Lastly, the postlude allows Schumann to further express his interpretation of the poem. In mm.16-21 there are three more instances of this prevalent rhythmic motive in the piano of the sixteenth-note followed by four eighth-notes. One can almost hear the incomplete text “Wenn ich in deine Au–” in these measures, the incomplete text like the incomplete love; an echo of the beginning of the poem like the longing for the beginning of love once more.

These tender and evocative moments by Schumann do not create the impression of spiteful mockery or irony, but rather imply an agony, a bitter weeping in pain, loss, and longing.

Hugo Wolf – *Wenn ich in deine Augen seh*

Wolf notated specifically on the manuscript that that it was “written on Thursday, the 21 of December, 1876”, when Wolf was sixteen years old and still a student at the Vienna Conservatory.³⁵ This is either the signature of a prideful youth, or some sort of disclaimer as being still only a student, not unlike Ives’ own explanatory note on his “*Ich grolle nicht*”. It is interesting that Wolf and, as will be seen later, Dresel, were both very young when they set this poem, and also that Wolf and Ives specifically made some sort of acknowledgement of their youth, or at least the potential of comparison with their songs to the already stalwart settings of

³⁵ Oxford Music Online, s.v. “Hugo Wolf”; <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.lib.indiana.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/52073pg1#S52073.1>; (accessed June 17, 2013).

previous composers. It is as if they already knew then the permanent legacy a song like Schumann's would have, and recognized their place in comparison.

The melodic movement of Wolf's setting is contained in quite a small range; the opening line of six words moves from only a whole step, to a minor third, followed by three half-steps. This tight proximity in pitches implies the intimacy of the text. Indeed the vocal range of the whole piece is contained in only a minor tenth, from middle C to D#, with the highest note at the climax of the poetry, notably on the word "liebe".

Wolf agrees with other composers that the 3/4 time signature is best suited for the poem's iambic tetrameter, and also marks his in another moderate tempo ("Mäßig"). He writes the melodic and accompaniment material in mainly consistent figures of two dotted-eighth—sixteenth notes followed by two even eighth-notes. This pattern makes the emphasis fall on the last three syllables of each line, and only changes from this trend for, predictably, the last two lines of text. At this point Wolf follows suit of several other composers and treats these two lines specially to emphasize their meaning.

Wolf begins the piece in a major key and modulates to a minor key, at the regularly scheduled time—the last line of the poem (however Wolf changes the text from "so muss ich weinen bitterlich" to "dann muss ich weinen bitterlich". Unlike Dresel's text change this one has no significant difference, as both conjunctions are monosyllabic and also achieve the same meaning). Wolf sets the song in B \flat major, where it stays until m.16, when the piano part after "kommst über mich wie Himmelslust" becomes the most active and complicated in the whole piece, with the

left hand having to play on each beat of the measure octaves on G, G#, and A, and each octave followed rapidly by a chord on the sixteenth of the same beat. This agitated rhythm, combined with the rising half-step motion, moving rapidly but not very far, sounds desperate, insistent.

Beginning in m.17 Wolf begins to move chromatically in the voice and in the piano, spelling the accidentals enharmonically in sharps, seemingly in order stay close to the original key signature. Then suddenly, after “ich liebe dich” in m.18 there is a tempo change to “langsam”, which sets up an equally sudden and quite unexpected shift, moving not to a relative minor (as does Dresel and Hensel), but to the parallel B \flat minor to conclude the piece. In this way, Wolf chooses to emphasize the “sting in the tail”, rather than underlying irony throughout the song.

Three lesser known composers’ settings of this poem are lesser known for a reason; frankly there is not very much in the way of outstanding musical quality or value. I include them in this study to show the extent to which certain common musical devices are employed by several different composers, yet at the same point, seemingly to serve the same purpose for the text or overall meaning of the song.

Otto Dresel – *Wenn ich in deine Augen seh*, Op. 2, No. 4

If the composition date is correct, Dresel would have written this song at the very young age of 13. It is said to have been written in 1839, and perhaps first published in 1848, but it was definitely published by Boosey and Hawkes in the

collection 20 *Lieder und Gesänge* in 1892.³⁶ In fact, approximately half of Dresel's songs, numbering around 90, were not published until after his death in 1890, perhaps as a result of his own harsh self-criticism.³⁷ A student of Liszt, Hauptmann, and influenced by Mendelssohn and Schumann, he had for his mentors definitive monuments of the Romantic Lied, and would thus no doubt have felt comparatively diminutive, composing in their shadows.

Marked "Andante espressivo" in 2/4 time, the melody does not always adhere to natural word stresses. Perhaps other composers felt this of the 2/4 time signature—it was too strict to the monotonous rhythm of the poem and therefore had very little room for lyrical melody. Dresel manages to construct a nice enough tune in this time signature, but lyricism was evidently not his primary concern.

What appears to be his primary concern is the meaning of the text, the first clue to this fact is that he changes the poem's second line, from "all mein Leid" to "alles Leid." To keep it as it was originally in Heine's poem makes no difference in either the rhythm of the poem or to his choice of metrical setting, so the substitution seems entirely superfluous. Unless, he meant the literal change of meaning, from just the speaker's pain, to all pain there ever has been, which would give his setting a far weightier meaning.

Despite its composition in the first half of the 19th century, the key signature and accidental notes in it are visually reminiscent of music from much later in the century, like that of Wolf. Dresel begins the piece in E major, yet already in on the

³⁶ http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=7438; (accessed June 17, 2013)

³⁷

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.lib.indiana.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2085054?q=otto+dresel&search=quick&pos=1&start=1>; (accessed July 28, 2013)

second beat of the first measure employs accidental notes with an F-double-sharp, again in the second measure with a B♯, and in the third measure with the A♯. In addition to, or as a result of, this chromaticism, the intervals used in these lines of text is of note—between m.1 to m.2 is a tritone, and likewise between m.2 to m.3. The frequency of accidentals, and especially tritones, known as the “devil’s tone” up until the mid-18th century, are conspicuous in such a romantic text. In fact, they serve the purpose of emphasizing its underlying, conflicting meaning—perhaps Dresel’s interpretation of Heine’s bitter mocking of love. Dresel further emphasizes this point by (very predictably) changing the feeling in m.15 at the set-up to the last line “doch wenn du sprichst ‘ich liebe dich’/so muss ich weinen bitterlich.” He marks the dynamic level “p—dolce” with a “pp” in the last 32nd note of m.15 into m. 16, where there comes a crescendo on “so muss ich weinen” and a decrescendo in m. 17 on “bitterlich”, leading into a key change to C# minor with which to end the piece. By modulating to end the piece in C# minor Dresel further confirms that all along the poem was never meant to be one of warm, fuzzy love feelings, but of a veiled, inner torment in the speaker all along. That the agony of this love not only is the cause of the speaker’s present suffering, but “alles Leid”—all his sorrow of all time.

Maude White – “Liebe”, *Zwei Lieder von Heine*, No. 1

Written in 1878 when the composer was just 23 years old, this song unfortunately does not contain the same melodic or overall beauty that White exhibits in other pieces, such as her “*Ophelia’s Song*”, for example, which contains a

lovely melody with far more interesting movement than of “*Liebe*”, which is basically a two-strophe repetition of the almost the exact same melody (only in different modes, with slight variations in the second strophe), not much range (only an octave) or movement (a few intervals but mainly step-wise).

White sets her version in 6/8 time, as we’ll see later with Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel’s, with a tempo marking of “Andante.” However, unlike other composers who employed either 3/4 or compound signatures to create more room for melodic-motivic echo, this was not, apparently, White’s plan. There is no echo of her melody in between strophes, but she carries on with absolutely no break in between the strophes at all. To emphasize this connection, this is also where she uses the familiar harmonic device of changing mode. White sets and begins the piece in F minor. In m. 13 the first strophe ends in the first half of the measure, and the second strophe begins immediately in the second half of the measure, suddenly, without any progression, in F major. Yet only two phrases into the major key, she goes back to the minor mode for “doch wenn du sprichst: ich liebe dich/so muss ich weinen bitterlich.” Then, on the last syllable of the last word, White uses a Picardy 3rd over a 3-bar cadential extension or mini-coda, to end the piece in F major. So, while she does treat the last two lines of text differently harmonically, like the other composers, she does it by going from minor to major, in reverse to the way that other composers did. By emphasizing the major tonality, White seems to want to emphasize the positive aspects of the text, such as love and health, rather than the negativity in unsatisfied longing, and bitter weeping.

Friedrich Curschmann (1805-1841) – *An Sie*, Op. 16, No. 2

In 1835 Curschmann was described as “without a doubt the most popular composer of our times”,³⁸ and yet, if you ask any singer today chances are no one has heard of him. However he wrote and published 83 songs in his short lifetime of only 36 years. He was an accomplished singer, along with his wife, touring around Europe where his songs became very popular by 1829, though, as Grove Music details, “in reality his songs show little marked individuality, and rely for their effect on an unsophisticated melodic charm.”³⁹ This setting is certainly no exception.

Translated, the title means “To You” (formal pronoun), indicated as written for soprano or tenor, and to be performed “with free presentation”. It is a very simple setting, in common time, in A \flat major, without any modulation, and contained in only 24 measures on a single page.

Overall it is very basic and simplistic in its presentation. The piano accompaniment provides very little of interest and no tension harmonically or rhythmically; it is essentially a homophonic accompaniment to the vocal line. The melody, although in no way disturbing, seems to have no purposeful intentionality; it seems to just go wherever arbitrarily, as if it was composed on a whim, in the moment, and never again thought of or revised. While the song is endearing in its simplistic, old-timey sound, and Curschmann does show some effort at musical

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http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.lib.indiana.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/06961?q=friedrich+curschmann&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit ; (accessed July 30, 2013)

³⁹ Ibid.

gestures such as text painting, unfortunately this does not save it from its overall impression of being not a terribly sophisticated song.

The main point of interest is that, unlike the majority of the other composers, Curschmann emphasizes most of the entire second strophe, rather than only the last two lines. In the other settings it is typical to set up a change or emphasis for only the last two lines of text “doch wenn du sprichst: ich liebe dich!/So muss ich weinen bitterlich”, but Curschmann sees a change in the text from the beginning of the second strophe, where the melody makes an immediate, higher ascent than the beginning of the first strophe, and continues in m.12 with a rhythmic flurry on “kommt’s über mich wie Himmelslust”, the last word of which contains the climax of the range in the song, an A^b. Although mm. 7–9 are also marked “forte”, the added rhythmic movement and the higher range of “forte” measures 11–13 indicate that this, in fact, is the climax of the piece. Curschmann then writes a “piano” dynamic level over the last two lines of text, with a rhythmic echo of m. 12 in m. 14. This softer repetition of the rhythmic gesture, lower in pitch, is like a reflection of the “heavenly desire” in the words “I love you.” The fact that this gesture is repeated also indicates that it is the focal point of the meaning, again, like White, focusing on the positive aspects of the love, not the negative.

Franz Lachner (1803-1890) – “Wonne und Schmerz”, *Der Sänger am Rhein* :
Deutsche Lieder, No. 4

Lachner was an extremely important and significant member of Vienna and especially Munich society and music circles, as conductor of the Munich Opera

orchestra, organist at Vienna’s Lutheran church, and director of the Salzburg Festival, among other prominent appointments. His compositional output is staggering, his vocal music includes several large choral works (masses, oratorio), operas, and over 200 songs, some of which are very lovely, in particular his setting of “Das Fischermädchen” (Op. 33, No. 10). This song, however lyrical, is neither very interesting harmonically nor melodically; it is extremely repetitive and predictable. However, Lachner does make his interpretation of the poem very clear. His title translates as ‘Delight and Pain’, and indeed we easily find musical representations of these themes in his setting. He sets the majority of the poem’s text exactly as it is written by Heine, but repeats just two phrases, predictably: “doch wenn du sprichst: ich liebe dich” and “so muss ich weinen bitterlich”. The declaration of love is apparently the “Wonne”, and the crying bitterly, the “Schmerz”. Also set in 3/4 time, Lachner sets the words with remarkable adherence to natural word stress, apart from one phrase: “doch wenn du sprichst: ich liebe dich”. Throughout most of the song, the most common rhythmic figure is a half-note followed by a quarter-note pattern, as seen here:

Ex. 4



However, the first “ich liebe dich” is a fast, dotted rhythm, diminutive in rhythmic value as a dotted eighth–sixteenth pattern. This text is then repeated but then augmented in rhythmic value, into a dotted half-note tied to a half-note, followed by a quarter-note. There is only one longer rhythmic value on a word or phrase, which is on “bitterlich”, which stretches over five measures. In this use of rhythmic setting, Lachner emphasizes his interpretation of the “delight” and the “pain”. He sees no need of any harmonic interpretation of the text, in changing mode like so many others did. While at this point that seems like a refreshing, new concept, Lachner’s song is plagued by all-too-simple a melody, which leaves us wanting in satisfaction.

Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel – “Wenn ich in deine Augen sehe”,
Three Heine Duets, No. 1

Hensel’s setting is in 6/8 time with a tempo marking of “Andante con moto” (moving with motion), even the word “motion” makes it the fastest tempo marking of the settings I found. I was told once by a conductor in an opera coaching on Mozart’s “Ach, ich fühl’s” that in the mid-18th century the 6/8 time signature was associated with Charon’s movement of ferrying of souls across the River Styx, and was hence associated with themes of death and emotions of sadness. Perhaps Hensel had this in mind when setting this poem. Or perhaps it was a choice based on the flowing lilt of 6/8 time, creating the effect of the ebb (“schwinden”) of the sorrow and pain (“Leid und Weh”).

The compound meter, again, in principle, goes against the simple meter of poem. The naturally falling stresses of the compound beat lends toward accommodating the natural word stress, but again, is removed from the original meter of the poem. Hensel could have had reason for this time signature, or perhaps she chose it arbitrarily, as came to her mind in the moment. Again, there is no way to know for sure, but more specific emotional choices can be made by the performer based on thoughtful consideration to the text's and poet's background.

Hensel frequently uses repeats in Heine's text to suit her construction. It is set in G minor but by the end of the repeat of second line is already in a new tonality of B \flat Major, yet ends the song in G major. In this way Hensel does the opposite of what many composers do and writes the whole song in a minor key and ends it in major, rather than the major key modulating to minor. The next song in Hensel's cycle, "*Aus meinen Tränen sprießen*", is also in G minor (later modulating to end in the major), so she does not modulate to the major key for reasons of immediate harmonic continuity. The third and final song in the cycle, "*Im wunderschönen Monat Mai*", is in C major from beginning to end. Perhaps the meaning in her harmonic settings here is emphasizing the theme of sadness through the first two songs—crying bitterly and flowers sprouting forth out of tears, the minor key of the first two is very appropriate, to end on a positive note about finding love in the month of May. Again, this is a different interpretation to the insecurity and uncertainty of Schumann's, but the perfect example to see that such different interpretations are possible.

Chapter 4

Lyrisches Intermezzo XVIII – “Ich grolle nicht” & XIX – “Ja du bist elend”

There is an interesting common thread in *Ich grolle nicht* and *Ja, du bist elend*, which is Heine’s obvious intentional rhythmic and textual continuity between them.

Heine was meticulous in his revision:

...he labored incessantly over every word he wrote, never counting a poem finished until he had perfected its every line. He submitted his best verses to his master (Schlegel) for criticism, and when they came back all marked and crossed, he brooded for hours over the corrections.⁴⁰

so we can be confident that what he left us with is absolutely his ultimate intention.

Brown writes that Heine was “abnormally sensitive”, and let his critics rile him.

Even when they were few, and small in terms of any wider influence, it would “send him into frenzies of self-defense, fighting back with the fiercest counterattacks of biting sarcasm and insult”.⁴¹ Retrospectively, it is apparent that this was a sort of emotional cover-up, a reaction to his deep-rooted insecurity brought on by such an unstable childhood in terms of financial security, schooling, and religious influence (see chapter 1). Based on his wide observational and practical knowledge of poetry, having attended readings in the highest circles, and with mentors such as the illustrious Schlegel, Heine had sufficient experience to facilitate self-confidence in his knowledge on the subject, and thus not let criticism derail him. However, when faced with problems, and especially with personal critique, Heine was always torn

⁴⁰ Browne, pp. 66-67.

⁴¹ Browne, p. 96.

between his sensibilities and his convictions. This often paralyzed any active involvement on his part in resolutions of said problems: political, personal, or otherwise. He fought against injustice from political and authoritative figures in his own way, i.e. through his writings, but would not stoop to join the masses in their plights. Disdained by nobles and commoners, Jews and Christians, he truly had no home on earth among men. Even when he exiled himself to Paris, where he said he felt “like a fish in water”,⁴² where he soon began writing for German publications such as the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, he started with critiques on art and music, but eventually was inevitably drawn back into the affairs of state, that is, politics and religion. It is a subject Heine both fiercely detested, for all the injustice he suffered from it, and one he simply could not resist. He wrote:

‘I do not hate the throne but only the slippery aristocratic vermin which has made the cracks of the old thrones its habitat....I don’t hate the altars, but only the viciously wise snakes which know how to smile innocently like flowers while they secretly squirt their poison into the chalice of life and hiss slanders into the ear of those who pray devotedly....Just because I am a friend of the state and religion I hate that monster state-religion....’⁴³

From the time Heine was studying in Berlin, he responded simultaneously to both the rationalist teachings of Hegel, and the emphasis on natural growth of Savigny. He began to realize that “revolutionaries must be single-minded men” and that actually “he was not the best tribune of the people, since he had the mind of a rationalist and the soul of a romantic”.⁴⁴ Likewise, in Paris he made an effort to

⁴² Browne, p. 207.

⁴³ Spann, p. 48.

⁴⁴ Spann, p. 23.

disassociate himself from the “unwashed, evil-smelling’ radicals” who attempted to draw him into their haphazard melees. Of Ludwig Börne he writes:

‘It is perhaps metaphorically meant when Börne asserts, in case a king should press his hand, he would afterwards hold it in the fire in order to cleanse it; but it is not at all figuratively but literally meant that I, if the crowd should press my hand – would afterwards wash it.’⁴⁵

However strongly he wrote about his convictions, about politics, love, music, art, or anything else, Heine’s opinions on a given subject fluctuated frequently, and often revealed a previously hidden, or yet undiscovered meaning. He was genuinely expressive with his feelings, but ever torn in his ideals of what should be, versus what was. This is abundantly evident in his poetry as well.

Just as in the poem *Wenn ich in deine Augen seh*, with its exclusive iambic pentameter, the case has already been made for the importance of construction, specifically regarding meter, in Heine’s poems. This five-footed construction is the same in XVIII and XIX, implying the repetitive rhythm would be the same as well. I will not present a detailed rhythmic analysis of these poems, because they are very easy to describe.

XVIII

1	<i>Ich grolle nicht, und wenn das Herz auch bricht,</i>	<i>I do not grumble, even when the heart breaks,</i>
2	<i>Ewig verlornes Lieb! ich grolle nicht.</i>	<i>eternally lost Love! I do not grumble,</i>
3	<i>Wie du auch strahlst in Diamantenpracht,</i>	<i>as you also radiate in diamond-like splendence,</i>
4	<i>Es fällt kein Strahl in deines Herzens Nacht.</i>	<i>no ray falls in the night of your heart.</i>
5	<i>Das weiß ich längst. Ich sah dich ja im Traum,</i>	<i>I’ve known that for a long time. I saw you in a dream,</i>
6	<i>Und sah die Nacht in deines Herzens Raum,</i>	<i>and saw the night in the room of your heart,</i>
7	<i>Und sah die Schlang, die dir am Herzen frißt,</i>	<i>and saw the serpent that feasted on your heart,</i>
8	<i>Ich sah, mein Lieb, wie sehr du elend bist.</i>	<i>I saw, my love, how very miserable you are.</i>

⁴⁵ Eggert, xli.

The whole poem is in iambic pentameter, except for the second line:

/ - - / - / - / - / trochee, iamb, iamb, iamb
Ewig verlorne Lieb! Ich grolle nicht,

However, one can relate the significance of the interrupted rhythm to the meaning of the text—when entirely in iambic pentameter, this rhythm provides continuity, motion moving ever forward. This gives a feeling of intention, purpose, and certainty. To have that one rhythmic exception makes the line stand out, emphasizing the importance to the speaker both of not grumbling and also of the magnitude of the love.

XIX

1	<i>Ja, du bist elend, und ich grolle nicht; -</i>	<i>Yes, you are miserable, and I do not grumble; -</i>
2	<i>Mein Lieb, wir sollen beide elend sein!</i>	<i>My love, we both shall be miserable!</i>
3	<i>Bis uns der Tod das kranke Herze bricht,</i>	<i>Until death breaks our sickly hearts,</i>
4	<i>Mein Lieb, wir sollen beide elend sein!</i>	<i>My love, we both shall be miserable!</i>
5	<i>Wohl seh ich Spott, der deinen Mund umschwebt,</i>	<i>I see well the mockery that hovers around your mouth,</i>
6	<i>Und seh dein Auge blitzen trotziglich,</i>	<i>And I see your eyes blaze defiantly,</i>
7	<i>Und seh den Stolz, der deinen Busen hebt, -</i>	<i>And I see the pride, that heaves in your bosom,-</i>
8	<i>Und elend bist du doch, elend wie ich</i>	<i>And you are truly miserable, miserable like me.</i>
9	<i>Unsichtbar zuckt auch Schmerz um deinen Mund,</i>	<i>Invisible pain quivers around your mouth,</i>
10	<i>Verborgne Träne trübt des Auges Schein,</i>	<i>Concealed tears blur the shine of the eyes,</i>
11	<i>Der stolze Busen hegt geheime Wund, -</i>	<i>The prideful bosom fosters secret wounds,-</i>
12	<i>Mein Lieb, wir sollen beide elend sein.</i>	<i>My love, we both shall be miserable.</i>

Every line of XIX (*Ja, du bist elend*) also contains ten syllables, lending itself also to mostly iambic pentameter, which seems to be Heine's precise intention, like its precursor. But this poem has even more exceptions. Yes, Heine keeps the number of syllables the same, but uses certain words to slyly interrupt the otherwise constant rhythmic flow, which creates added tension to the already troubled nature of the text. Hence, there are a few lines that are not entirely clear: lines 1, 6, and 8. At first, the following scansion seems the most natural for these lines:

Fig. 1

/ - - / - - / - - /	dactyl, dactyl, trochee, iamb
<i>Ja, du bist elend, und ich grolle nicht; -</i>	<i>Yes, you are miserable, and I do not grumble; -</i>
- / - / - / - / - -	anacrusis, trochee, trochee, trochee, dactyl
<i>Und seh dein Auge blitzen trotziglich,</i>	<i>And I see your eyes blaze defiantly,</i>
- / - - / - / - - /	anacrusis, dactyl, trochee, trochee, iamb
<i>Und elend bist du doch, elend wie ich.</i>	<i>And you are truly miserable, miserable like me.</i>

The “Ja,” in the first syllable requires an emphasis. It does mean “yes”, but in this case is best translated as an emphatic affirmation, much like “indeed” or “most certainly”, and hence lends itself toward emphasis. Disregarding this emphasis, however, it is still quite possible to scan the first line in iambic pentameter and the stress would fall on entirely acceptable parts of speech and accommodate natural pronunciation, as such:

Fig.2

- / - / - / - / - /	iambic pentameter
<i>Ja, du bist elend, und ich grolle nicht; -</i>	

In this case, the emphasis (outside of simple, naturally-falling word stress) is on the words “you”, “and”, “not”—as if to say, ‘*you* are the miserable one *and* that does *not* make me grumble/does *not* bother me’. This interpretation seems very sardonic indeed. In fact, with this emphasis it could sound downright spiteful and hateful. There is quite a difference in feeling between these two variations in Fig.1 and Fig.2. The rhythm of Fig.1 seems sing-songy, leaning toward 6/8 time, like a dance. This could be laughter, mocking, or such. The rhythm of Fig. 2 is declamatory, falling into

a common- or duple-time meter, and almost spittingly intentional. However, if one forces the iambic pentameter in the other lines, they turn out to be much more awkward, for example, in the word “TROTZ-ig-LICH”:

- / - / - / - / - /
Und seh dein Auge blitzen trotziglich,

and the line:

- / - / - / - / - /
Und elend bist du doch, elend wie ich.

In this case, very unnatural word-stress (“el-END”) occurs. One could argue, that in leaving these lines in iambic pentameter, as the number of syllables could suggest, that the irregular stress on weak syllables is indicative of the awkward and uncomfortable situation of the misery of unfulfilled love. But it does not sound natural or pleasant at all to the listener, reading it in this way. It sounds rather inane and certainly forced. Perhaps this is Heine’s exact intention—as if the speaker is forcing out these words, that he doesn’t want to admit he is miserable like her. The ambiguity of the assignment of either trochees or dactyls only serves to create the overwhelming conclusion that Heine fully intended the rhythm to be skewed and veiled in its intention.

In any case, the scansion of the first analysis seems to be the most natural in the language, and also provides a potential meaning for the poem. Firstly, the

rhythms in line 1, on “trotziglich” in line 6, and in line 8 suspend the otherwise even rhythmic flow. This might be yet another case for the claim of Edward Cone, that Heine let the other nine lines of the poem run on in exactly the same, predictable, steady rhythm—did he believe himself? Ultimately, the scansion is subjective, and the ambiguity of the poet’s true intention again only stresses his genius ability both within the language, and in affecting strong emotional response across a spectrum of possibilities.

These points can certainly influence the composer in writing their musical setting, but can also influence the way the performer presents them. Does the music pick a side? If not, the performer must pick a side. Does the speaker believe himself? If not, then let the doubt show in the face, let the dynamic markings indicate what point exactly the speaker doesn’t believe. Convincing oneself of the meaning (even if Heine does not tell us for certain) makes for a much more interesting performance.

The Music

Robert Schumann – Ich grolle nicht, *Dichterliebe*, Op. 48, No. 7

Edward Cone⁴⁶ relates Schumann’s even, additional repetition of the words “*Ich grolle nicht*” as an ostinato, putting the emphasis on this phrase as the poem’s central theme, as Heine repeats it already in just the second line. Originally one question in this thesis was why Schumann did not carry on in *Dichterliebe* with the

⁴⁶ See Komar, pp. 117–118.

subsequent *Ja, du bist elend*, but instead he subsequently skipped over three poems to follow with XXII “*Und wüßten’s die Blumen*” (which does make enough sense in textual continuity). *Ja, du bist elend* (XIX) was set by several other composers, sometimes under different titles, and these settings exist well enough on their own. Iambic pentameter is characteristic of Shakespeare’s infamous love sonnets (i.e., #18, *Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?*), and Heine deeply admired the English master’s output; could they have some connection? Perhaps that iambic pentameter is somehow most closely associated with love poetry, and hence Heine used it purposefully in poems that seem to describe (sooner or later, in the case of IV—*Wenn ich in deine Augen seh*) bitterness and heartbreak of love? That is a discussion worthy of its own thesis. In the meantime, Schumann only slightly changes words in some poems through most of *Dichterliebe* (with the exception of No.15, *Aus alten Märchen*, which is almost unrecognizable after the first strophe), but he changes words and repeats phrases freely in *Ich grolle nicht* to fit his setting.

One of the most striking elements of Schumann’s setting is not the wrenching suspensions or dramatic dynamics or texture—we expect such evocative expressions from the master of Lieder—rather, it is in the very last two measures of the piece. The tempo is marked “Nicht zu schnell”; “Moderato”. One can hear a wide variety of interpretations of this marking in the exhaustive number of recordings available. Schumann outlines the C major tonality with arpeggiated chords, and the last three chords are each marked “forte”, and are a simple I—V—I cadence. Such an emphatically simple cadence in an otherwise very dramatic context in the rest of this song seems to be so out-of-place, yet purposefully so. Depending on the tempo,

the more or less striking the last two measures are. Schumann marks a ritardando from the last three eighth-notes of m. 28 on the text “ich sah, mein Lieb wie sehr du elend bist”, coming back to an a tempo in m. 30. Although Schumann does write a crescendo in m. 33, nowhere from m. 30 does Schumann write any sort of accelerando, and yet in some recordings⁴⁷, if the singer and pianist take a slightly faster tempo throughout, it calls further attention to the strangeness of this ending.

Here again the question is, why? Why would Schumann create such a dramatic and melancholically wrenching piece, only to disruptively end it so abruptly? One explanation is that he understood Heine to mean the poem mockingly, ironically. Perhaps this is Schumann’s musical attempt at the infamous “sting in the tail”? Schumann could have intended the meaning to be a musical representation of the speaker’s emotional progression from recognizing the fact of losing his love to lamenting it. The following song in *Dichterliebe*, “Und wüßten’s die Blumen, die Kleinen” is much more playful-sounding, with its tremolo motives in the piano, and a higher tessitura. This sudden change of character does seem to indicate that the speaker perhaps wishes to close the door (or slam it, as the music suggests) on his low, serious stoicism of “Ich grolle nicht”, and allow himself to languishly lament the “verlornes Lieb”, along with all the flowers and nightengales, in the next song.

⁴⁷ For one example, see Thomas Quasthoff/Roberto Szidon recording of *Liederkreis*, Sony Music, 1993.

Robert Franz: *Ja du bist elend*, Op.7, No.6

Franz sets this poem in common time, with a tempo marking of “Largo appassionato”. The issue of tempo is a common thread in all the settings I happened to choose between poem XVIII and XIX, with all of them somehow indicating that the tempo should, above all, not at all be fast. A slower tempo naturally lends itself to a feeling of reflection, or even so far on the negative spectrum of emotion as sadness. The issue of key or tonal center in this piece is also one of central importance. Here is a basic harmonic analysis of each strophe:

- STROPHE 1: CM—c#m—dm—e♭m—B—EM
- STROPHE 2: EM—fm—f#m—gm—BM—EM
- STROPHE 3: CM—c#m—dm—e♭m—BM—EM

Franz sets the piece in the key signature of C major, and indeed begins the first and last strophe in C major. The second strophe is also in a major key, only the major VI, E major. Regardless of what major key in which each strophe begins, it only stays major for a mere two beats, when he then suddenly begins the transition to the first minor key. The harmonic progression climbs consistently by half-steps through minor keys until he reaches the very last word of the strophe—in fact, until he arrives at that place, the listener cannot be sure whether the strophe will finish in a major or minor key. Also regardless of tonal starting place in each strophe, the commonality is that Franz ends every strophe in E major. This could indeed be the irony consistently looked for in settings of Heine poetry, if Franz was actually

considering the 18th-19th century association of E major with joy and laughing pleasure,⁴⁸ when the poem speaks mainly of misery. If this was not Franz's intention, perhaps consistently ending the phrases in a major key simply suggests that the speaker finds some element of comfort in that "we must *both* be miserable", like the old adage 'misery loves company'. Constant moving half-step-wise through each line of each strophe creates a kind of desperate insistency, and the fact that the progression is through all minor keys indicates negative emotion until the very end of the phrase. This says a lot for the interpretation of the poem, because, like Edward Cone suggests,⁴⁹ if the poet does not believe himself, then perhaps he cannot actually be sure of his intention until the very last minute.

The unmistakable overall repetitive harmonic progression of half-step movement from measure to measure in each strophe is especially noticeable in the left hand, through the circle of fifths descent followed by half-step up to the next group of fifths and octave doubling, which sometimes echoes the preceding melody, as from the text "wir sollen beide elend sein" (m. 6), but in any case is consistent between each line of text in each strophe. On the one hand, this could create the impression that the composer did not have many original ideas, so he had to repeat the same motive several times over in his setting. However, I believe Franz framed this poem very intentionally as it is. It very well could be one of the best songs Franz wrote, in terms of its construction very so clearly articulating the meaning of the text.

⁴⁸ <http://www.wmich.edu/mus-theo/courses/keys.html>; (accessed August 27, 2013)

⁴⁹ See Komar, pp.117-118.

Franz seems to follow along the lines of the scansion of Fig. 1. The text emphases do not always, but mostly fall on same words in the music as in poem, creating a certain flow to the mainly iambic pentameter construction. In the scansion of Fig.1 we can see that the second strophe deviates the most from an otherwise even iambic pentameter of ten syllables per line. The second strophe is marked “etwas bewegter”—“somewhat more moving” (i.e., slightly faster). The fact that the second strophe is a major third higher than the other two strophes, and moving faster, gives it a more desperate, anxious feeling, turning it into a sort of B section, even though its construction is the same formulaically as the first and third, which are exactly the same in key and construction. The fact that Franz indicates specifically to return to “Tempo I” at the start of the third strophe implies that indeed the second strophe should indeed have had some noticeable difference in tempo.

Franz is thus seeming to adhere to Heine’s intention of making the second strophe the most rhythmically disturbed—and the meaning here is clear—the more disturbed the rhythm, the more disturbed the emotion. This also gives the impression that each strophe should have some kind of different meaning. The first strophe contains only one deviation from iambic pentameter, in the very first line. The last strophe is entirely in iambic pentameter, implying some sort of resolution both rhythmically and emotionally. That is exactly what Franz achieves in his musical setting by returning to the same exact construction of the first strophe in the third.

Charles Ives – *Ich Grolle Nicht*

As this song was a song composed by Ives early in his compositional output in 1899 and, as he writes at the close of the piece, was written primarily as a study⁵⁰, it does not contain such prominent bitonality or pantonality generally associated with his oeuvre. There is, however, one very notable exception to an otherwise generally, straightforward, diatonic harmonic structure—the music that occurs first in mm.3–4. Outside of those one-and-a-half measures, the rest of the introduction is otherwise typical in its use of harmonic content—it moves from the tonic, to dominant, and inversion of the tonic, a passing chord, to a V⁷ chord immediately preceding the beginning of the text—this is all very basic harmony, certainly nothing outside of the paradigm of the Romantic period. The exceptional music, that which occurs in m.3—what I named the “Herz bricht” music—seems to be functioning as a sort of augmented 6th chord, but with a tone missing to be precisely labeled. In fact, no label would be exact enough to name this chord correctly, but its function is certainly clear and refreshingly original. It serves to move the music from the tonic back to the dominant, to set up the entrance of the text in m.5, as would any other song from the Classical to the Romantic era until this point. However, Ives achieves this in a completely modern way, bypassing any use of the circle of fifths but using enharmonic equivalent spellings and exclusion of tones in the chord which would make it easily identifiable—perhaps thus also interpreting the poem in his own way.

⁵⁰ Ives, p.192.

Ex. 5

Adagio

mp Ich gro- lo

p *legato*

This measure does certainly seem to be motivic, as this music occurs both times the text “und wenn das Herz auch bricht” is sung (mm.7, 30), and also in m.14 and 43, on “Ich grolle nicht”, m. 21 on “das weiss ich längst”—all of this text referring to the breaking heart, the not grumbling, and knowing for a long time that no ray of light falls in the lover’s heart. It occurs as well in the song’s introduction, and then the transitional material in mm. 23-26 between the two strophes. It comes as an echo, and a constant theme throughout the piece.

It is somewhat of an echo of the preceding measure, which begins on the downbeat with a G# in the bass, creating a first-inversion tonic chord, progressing down to a root position tonic chord by beat three. The downbeat of m.4 also begins with a G# in the bass position, but built G#--Cx—B#--G#, a cluster seeming to function as an A \flat chord of some kind, within an E major framework! It creates for a very unexpected but delightful harmonic progression, and this harmonic instability thus creates a certain feeling of insecurity, appropriate for the text.

In m.27 comes the return of the opening introductory material and the melody. After the four measures of transitional material, which includes two measures of a repetition of the “Herz bricht” music an octave higher, followed by two measures of chromatic progression back to the tonic material in m.27. At this point, one expects to hear the voice enter again on the original theme, however, the introductory piano material comes back for one measure, and the voice entry is delayed by only one measure. This harmonic structure creates the expectation is that either 1) the piano will play its entire introductory theme, or 2) the voice will come back in with its original melodic material. Simultaneously both the piano line is interrupted, creating a feeling of confusion, and the vocal line is delayed, creating a feeling of delayed gratification, again, both reasonable feelings considering the text.

Lastly, the agitated material in mm.36-39: the dotted rhythms emphasize the suddenly atonal movement of the harmony, from E major to B \flat major, a tritone away from the original tonic. This is, of course, understandably relatable to the text, which at this point is describing a serpent feasting itself on the lover’s heart. Thus it would be very good for the performers to bring out the rhythmic specificities as well as the text in this section very clearly, to highlight the drama.

Oscar Strasnoy: "Ja du bist elend" (*Echo von Schumanns Dichterliebe Nr. 7*),
Poems by Heinrich Heine, No. 6

Heine very clearly planned these as two related poems, given the wording (repeating use of "elend" and "ich grolle nicht"), and the rhythmic continuity between them. It rather begs the question as to why more composers did not set the two songs together more frequently. Indeed we can find that there are apparently no settings of both of poems XVIII and XIX composed together in a cycle, with apparently only one exception.

Oscar Strasnoy set a group of ten Heine poems in 2010 and conceived most of the songs as "echoes" of, that is, tributes or homages, to movements from *Dichterliebe*. The sixth song in the group drew my attention because Strasnoy's is the only setting I could find of the two *Lyrisches Intermezzo* XVIII and XIX of which one was conceived with the other in mind.

Komar makes a very good point concerning textual continuity in *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, and how Schumann delivers that in *Dichterliebe*, specifically:

Certain poems in the *Lyrisches Intermezzo* are linked to others by virtue of word repetitions: e.g. the first line of No. 18 ("Ich grolle nicht, und wenn das Herz auch bricht") is tied directly to the opening line of No. 19 ("Ja, du bist elend, und ich grolle nicht") [Komar here cites: Cf. Chapter 9, The Skillful Arranger in S.S. Prawer, Heine: Buch der Lieder, New York, 1962, p. 46 ff.]. Only the first of these two poems is found in *Dichterliebe*. On the other hand, there is no lack of verbal associations among the sixteen poems remaining in *Dichterliebe*: e.g. references to the Rhine River and the Cathedral at Cologne, in Songs 6 and 16, and the correspondence between Song 4, line 13 ("Doch wenn ich küsse deinem Mund") and Song 5, line 6 between the words "weinen bitterlich" in Song 4 line 8, and "weinte...bitterlich" in Song 13, lines 7-8, is underscored by a musical correspondence.⁵¹

⁵¹ Komar, pp. 5 – 6.

And now to the question: when two poems are so clearly, inextricably linked by Heine, with their rhythmic construction and word association, why have so few composers set them together musically? Strasnoy's answer was: "sometimes the composer has to forget the verse [rhythm] in order to follow [one's] own musical logic."⁵² Another point is that the obvious continuity by the poet provides a difficult challenge for the composer to not end up setting the same idea twice; in other words, changing, adapting, or sacrificing some or all of a text becomes a necessity in the interest of variety in one's compositions. While Strasnoy may have considered this for his own compositions in this song group, he obviously "echoes" the music of Schumann in his own setting. Indeed, there are several tributes to *Dichterliebe* No. 7 in Strasnoy's No. 6.

The first obvious connection to Schumann's song is the continuous, eighth-note chordal accompaniment throughout, with the same exact tempo marking as Schumann's ("Nicht zu schnell"), as well as the same key signature of C major. This is presumably because of the literal "echo" Strasnoy marks at the end of this song—"attacca *Dichterliebe* Nr. 7". Purists may balk at the idea, but they can rest assured as the composer has said that, while the songs were indeed conceived as "echoes" of the original songs in mind, it is not a particular requirement, as far as he is concerned, that they be performed together at all. However this would make sense for this particular case, if only because of the lack of ending of Strasnoy's No. 6 and the fact that *Dichterliebe*, No. 7 has such a definitive ending that can strongly close them both.

⁵² (Oscar Strasnoy, July 27, 2013, e-mail message to author)

While the poems are switched from their original order and thus do not retain Heine's original rhythmic flow, Strasnoy has done something quite special to make his idea seamless. With the harmonies now afforded in the 21st century, including several neighbor tones and dissonances, Strasnoy introduces the song with a dreamy, tone-clustered ritornello of six measures. This ritornello, or a variation of it, reappears between each strophe of the poem. Measures 1–6 and 54–59 we'll call the "A" ritornello, and that of mm. 19–23 and mm. 37–41 the "B" ritornello.

The A ritornello centers around C major, with the left hand outlining a similar descending line by intervals of 3^{rds} or 4^{ths}, indeed echoing that of Schumann's version including circling 5^{ths}. These dissonances are gentle, and create an ethereal effect. However, in first three measures of the B ritornello it is much more sharply dissonant—in appearance and in sound. It begins in C# minor, moves through a measure of more close dissonance, but eventually comes back to the gentle dissonance again in its fourth measure.

While the melody and piano accompaniment hovers mainly in the middle range, there are a few instances that stand out as possible text-painting moments. In m.30 at "und seh den Stolz" there is a low perfect-fourth interval in the left hand which reaches up to a B \flat . Hitherto the left hand part has been mainly melodic in its movement, moving visibly similar to the vocal melody in slightly augmented rhythmic values. Another moment that stands out is in m. 48 at "hegt", where the left hand has again this low perfect-fourth but this time crosses up to an E \flat above.

While “hegt” translates into English as ‘fosters’, in this sense it almost seems as though the intention is forceful, not fostering or cultivating.

Strasnoy does not change the text one iota, except for an exclamation point at the end of the poem, rather than the period Heine uses. He writes an accent over the words “Ja” and “und” in line 1—though he said directly that the composer may ignore the original verse’s rhythm, this seems to indicate his rhythmic understanding is like that of my second scansion analysis (Fig.2). Despite his frequently changing meter, the word stress falls rather naturally in most cases. However, he writes further accents over “Wohl” in line 5, and “Un-“ (“Unsichtbar”) in line 9. This goes against the natural fall of the word stress, but is more of a musical gesture anyway, as these two syllables begin their strophe, and it is also where the ethereal, tonal chords are interrupted by the sharp dissonance of that syllable’s E^b. The accent will only increase this affect, and thereby achieve the composer’s intention to stress the text.

While Strasnoy intended this as an homage to Schumann, it is also interesting to compare it to Franz’s setting: his liquid chromaticism, in modulating by half-steps through each strophe, but always returning to E major at the end of each one, thereby sticking to a kind of ritornello of sorts. Strasnoy’s contains more overt chromaticism, but also returns to a ritornello (or two) in the same key(s) between strophes. Perhaps this points to some kind of understanding of something existing underneath the “elend” described in each strophe, a returning to an original idea, perhaps, maybe true love? Like Heine’s poetry, it is apparently a question with no absolute answers.

CONCLUSION

That Heine was a master of language and lyricism is an undisputed fact. His poetry, especially that of *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, is unrivaled in its romantic expressivity. Whether through its rhythm, its harmony, or its dynamic musical patterns of complexity and simplification, each song setting of the poem affects various emotions through its specific characteristics. Through a close reading of the poems that pays attention not only to their content, but equally to their poetic features such as rhyme, rhythm, and versification, one finds characteristics that are so consistent that they become traces of information about Heine and his expressive and poetic universe. In the case of “*Still ist die Nacht*” there is his choice of specific words to create a mysterious double meaning. In “*Im wunderschönen Monat Mai*” there is the irony of the longing and desire sprung out of a new, blossoming love. In “*Wenn ich in deine Augen seh*” there is the shock of a distinct bitterness present amidst confessions of love and feelings of wholeness. In “*Ich grolle nicht*” and “*Ja du bist elend*” there is the use of rhythm to create ambiguity and suspension of action amidst an otherwise consistently driving, stoic posture. The musical analysis of these poems also shows how the content and techniques Heine employed are sometimes adopted and melded into the music, but also how they are sometimes left aside, or deformed, in order to serve the interpretation and the musical intentions of the composer. It is clear that a poem and a song setting of the same words are two separate “texts”. A composer may, for example, set poems written decades or even millennia ago. His composition is then remote from the historical context in which

the lyric was written. However, while the historic circumstances may no longer be the same, the constellation of meaning to which a specific emotion belongs can remain consistent and come alive in his music as well as in its performance. In other words: if a musical setting is faithful to the original meaning of a text, any number of interpretive specifics can change and yet the piece will still communicate a very specific core idea. "Being faithful" to the meaning of a text does not equal reproducing it literally in all its details in a musical setting. It can mean a dialogue in which the music responds to, seduces, lends itself to, and even enters into a tension with the text that comes alive in this dialogue. To perceive this harmonious, and occasionally also conflictual relation between a text and its setting can enrich the performance of a musical setting. Knowing the poem and its relationship to the musical setting allows a performer to gain a new dimension in his performance: he can perceive the choices of a composer and the performer can integrate the tensions found within the poem and the music, and present correspondences between the two in his musical interpretation. For example: it becomes possible to sing a song critical of its romanticising of Heine, or one can try to layer a performance, for example: being aware of a different rhythmical structure in the poem that is absorbed in the setting but can be made present at the performer's choice. Clarity in a point of view creates compelling performance; it affects everything from facial expression, to gesture, to the technique of color used in one's voice. This comes through awareness of the background of a piece, in its parts and in its whole. There must be an understanding of its inception: it comes first from the poet, then the composer. But the conception of its final beauty lies in the performers'

interpretation. That is both a great freedom and opportunity, but also a great responsibility.

The wonderful thing is, as long as one keeps within the right notes, rhythms, and such markings of the composer, there is no right or wrong interpretation of a song. But the interpretation is significantly enriched by the inclusion of an enhanced understanding of the lyric and its origins. The text was written as a result of some thought or experience of the poet; likewise, the text was selected for some specific reason by the composer. While we as performers have the freedom to program songs, to organize them into a themed performance, we must still take into consideration their respective milieu. As Anthony Burgess once said, "...where you come from is a part of where you're going". When it comes to Heine, the performers must have a clear understanding of and reasoning behind Heine's infamy in his wit, irony, and Romanticism. This all stems from his deeply varied, often troubling personal life experience, from childhood through adulthood.

Heine was extremely successful at being misunderstood, whether this was always fully intentional on his part so as to foster some intriguing element of mystery, or simply as a result of the hands he was dealt by life. Perhaps one of his legacies was to likewise shroud his poetry in an indecipherable number of layers to keep endless future generations guessing as to their true meaning. The double-meaning in "*Still ist die Nacht*", the irony of "*Im wunderschönen Monat Mai*", the bitterness of "*Wenn ich in deine Augen seh*", the conflict of sentiment and action in "*Ich grolle nicht*" and "*Ja du bist elend*"—these poems embody and demonstrate key characteristics of Heinrich Heine, giving us a more precise insight to his intentions

than any description he wrote of himself, and more information to make our performances all the more true.

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